

Series: Ephesians

Title: Nurture, Chastening and Admonition of the Lord

Text: Ephesians 6: 4

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Ephesians 6: 4: And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

This exhortation is easy to misunderstand. It speaks of how we are to discipline our children. When chastening, “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.” It means do not be unreasonably severe. Do not chasten in anger. It will provoke the child to anger, to throw off the yoke altogether. In Colossians, he adds, “lest they be discouraged.” (Col 3:21).

But there is something more to it than a warning against being severe. He says, “But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” There are three words here that we must understand. First, “bring up” means “nourish them”—love and cherish the child. Secondly, in the phrase, “in the nurture of the Lord”, the word “nurture” means “chastening.” It is translated “chastening” in Hebrews 12. So he says, “Bring up—nourish, love and cherish—in the chastening of the Lord or the same way the Lord chastens us. Thirdly, “and in the admonition of the Lord” means “to call their attention to and fix their mind upon the Lord and his word.” So as we nurture in the chastening of the Lord we are to turn the mind of our child to the word of the Lord, using the scriptures.

So these three words will make up our divisions. Our subject is the “Nurture, Chastening and Admonition of the Lord.” Our focus will be how the Lord does this to us, his child. The Lord brings the child he loves to obedience, not by merely giving us his law then punishing us for breaking it; but the Lord loves and cherishes his child as he chastens us from error and fixes our mind and affections on Christ, teaching us the truth of the gospel.

THE NURTURE OF THE LORD

First, we will consider how the Lord nurtures his child—Ephesians 6: 4: “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up.” Again, the word “bring them up” would be better translated “nurture them—love and cherish them to obedience.”

The exhortation is addressed to “ye Fathers.” It applies to fathers and mothers. But the father is head of the house because God is the Father of his children; Christ is the Everlasting Father of every child in his house. When God our Savior is our Husband, he is the best of husbands—“he gave himself for the church;” when the Lord is our Friend, he is the best of friends—“he sticks closer than a brother;” and when the Lord is our Father he is the best of fathers.

God the Father loved his children from eternity by his grace without a cause in us. The way he “brought up”—nurtured, loved and cherished his children—is he loves us in his Son, Christ Jesus. He first loved and cherished his only begotten Son—choosing him, choosing to glorify him, choosing to give him an inheritance. (Is 42: 1) Then he loved and cherished his elect by choosing and loving us in his Son. He loved and cherished his children by entrusting us to his Son.

Brethren, there could be no greater way for us parents to nurture our children than to do as God our Father did with his children in eternity, entrust them to God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is how God our Father nurtures us. He entrusted us to his Son, “That we should be to the praise of [God the Fathers’] glory, who first trusted in Christ.” (Eph 1: 12)

The Lord Jesus—our Everlasting Father—nurtured us by being merciful and gracious to us while we were in our unrighteousness. From the time we fell in Adam, we deserved to receive the fierce anger of our Father. Instead, each elect child received mercy and grace. He reserves mercy for his children.

Our Everlasting Father nurtured us by being longsuffering toward his children. He saw all our rebellion, heard all our blasphemous talk, knew all our sinful thoughts, yet he suffered our manners a long time. Children, you may not realize but your parents see much more of your sin than you know. Why don't they kick you out of the house? They nurture and cherish you—bring you up—with much longsuffering because they know how longsuffering Christ has been to them.

Our Everlasting Father nurtured us by being abundant in goodness toward his children. As hateful as we were to our Father, yet he continued to provide us with life, with food, shelter, clothing, protecting us from death after death. Parents, when our children complain about the food we provide, the clothing etc, try to remember how we murmured against our Lord Jesus while dead in our sins—yet he nurtured us, loved and cherished us—abundant in goodness.

Our Everlasting Father bore our ignorant religious talk concerning him. We were once that child who thought we were smarter than Christ's preacher; smarter than Christ's faithful fathers and mothers. When our children exalt the vain idol of their imagination, remember how Christ bore with our vain thoughts concerning him. He did it because he loved us and had an end determined for us.

Our Everlasting Father nourished us by laying down his life for us.

1 John 4: 9: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. 11: Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Fathers, there will be times when our children act like they do not love us. Remember: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." We were rebellious, prodigal sons, who took everything our Father gave us and said, "God is not my Father!" We lived in riotous living as "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of ourselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners." God says such "shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you..." (1 Cor 6: 9-11) But "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." He put away our sins; he made us righteousness in him; he interceded for us; he presented us to the Father. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (1 Jn 4: 10)

Brother Henry Mahan's advice to me when I moved here was, "They have been dealt with in severity and harshness enough; love them to Christ." So our text says, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up"—love them to Christ.

THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD

Secondly, we will consider how the Lord chastens his child—Ephesians 6: 4: "ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture...of the Lord." The word "nurture" is translated in Hebrews 12 as "the chastening of the Lord." Let's read the passage in Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12: 5: And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7: If ye endure

chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8: But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all [God's children] are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9: Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10: For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. 11: Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12: Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13: And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

While we were dead in sins, walking in our ways, we were out of God's way, Christ the Way. We were not partakers of Christ's holiness, not partakers of his divine nature so we were without that holiness without which no man shall see God. We were without life, Christ the Life.

Therefore, when the time of love came that he would give us a holy nature and bring his child into the Way, our faithful heavenly Father began to chasten us and rebuke us, to scourge us. Scourge means God began to spiritually spank his child. He did it for our profit, to bring us into union with him, to make us new creatures, to form Christ in our hearts, to make us partakers of his divine nature, to bring us into subjection to him.

But no chastening is pleasurable while the child is being chastened but grievous. When the Lord began to correct us, it was grievous, so we cried and tried to rebel. Why? What made our heavenly Father's chastening so grievous to us? Chastening is grievous because God crosses the will of his child.

"The carnal mind *is* enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom 8: 7) The law or word of God is the will of God. But our will was for salvation to be by our will. From divine election, to the new birth, to the righteousness of the law, to faith and repentance, to sanctification, to perseverance, to good works, the depraved will is for these things to be by our will. This is why "the preaching of the cross is to them that [are] perish[ing] foolishness." (1 Cor 1: 18)

Therefore, God our Father had to chasten us, using the rod of the gospel. "Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Pro 22: 15) God's rod is his word. He used his law to discipline us. His law brought us to see there is no good in us. It revealed our sin unto us. (Rom 3: 19-20)

We were grieved but because God loved and cherished his child, he would not let our crying stop him from chastening us. As God declares in his word, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." (Ps 19: 18) Brethren, when our children cry at our correction, it is because our will crosses their will. But true love will not allow their crying to stop us from chastening them. Follow the chastening wherewith God chastened us, his children, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb 12: 6)

This world hates God's order and God's word. Depraved sinners think they are smarter than God. Here is an example. These days, the world says it will warp the child if you spank them. God says, "Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." Pro 23: 13-14) It means if you correct a child with the rod then it will prevent the child from dying and shall deliver his soul from hell. It is not speaking of abusing a child. In our text, he is teaching us not to abuse the child, "provoke not your children to wrath."

God never punishes his child, he chastens his child. God has punished his children already in the person of Christ, our substitute. Christ endured the full penalty for all our sin. The justice of God can ever exact again

that which Christ has paid. God never punishes his child; we are never brought before God as our Judge. God chastens us as our Father who loves his child.

Again and again, God shows that this world's teaching is totally wrong. He shows us that chastening a child will not harm the child. God scourges every son he receives. If our heavenly Father spared the rod, we would have been spoiled by our sins and our vain way. If he let our tears stop him from chastening us, we would have died and ended up in hell.

Understand this. God calls believing parents to correct; not to punish our children. The parent who punishes his child exercises revenge; the parent who corrects his child in the chastening the Lord teaches, exercises love and affection. It is not pleasant at the time (it is not supposed to be) but when God blesses his chastening, it will provoke reverence and heart-obedience to God the heavenly Father and his Son, Christ Jesus. If God blesses our chastening of our children, after the parent chastens the child it shall produce reverence and heart-obedience from a child to the parent. Even the parent receives edification in his own heart as much, if not more, than the child.

ADMONITION OF THE LORD

There is one more thing involved which is critical to this fruit being produced. It is the admonition of the Lord—Ephesians 6: 4: “ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but [nurture, love and cherish them] in the [chastening of the Lord, as the Lord does you, his child] and [in the] admonition of the Lord.”

The Lord did not merely chasten us, but as he chastened us from our will and way, he taught us the word of the gospel, fixing our hearts and affections on him. This is the admonition of the Lord.

As the Lord chastened us from our sin, he also taught us the truth concerning our sin. He taught us by the word of the scriptures, through the preaching of the gospel, that sin is not only in our acts of rebellion; but in our best deeds, in our hearts, our nature. Our heavenly Father taught us our sin is against God and his Christ. He convinced us our chief sin was calling God a liar by not believing on his Son.

1 John 5: 10: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

John 16: 8: And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9: Of sin, because they believe not on me.

In our text, he says, do not punish your child; but do not even simply chasten your child. Rather, when a child needs correction, as we do so, it is a perfect time to teach them from God's word something of what sin is. Teach them that sin is against God and his Christ. He says to nurture and cherish our child is to include admonition in our chastening.

Also, as our heavenly Father loved and cherished us in chastening us, admonishing us with his word, teaching us righteousness, he taught us that our works, which we thought was righteousness, was no righteousness at all. Our outward obedience fell short of God's glory because of the sinfulness of our hearts. The Holy Spirit convinced us that the righteousness of God is his Son, the Lord our Righteousness. He convinced us that Christ is the righteousness of God, teaching us that after Christ purged the sins of his people, God received him to his right hand because God is satisfied with his one offering.

John 16: 8: And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9: Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10: Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more...

Our text, exhorts us to not merely chasten our children, without giving them an understanding of why. But love and chastening also involves using God's word to teach them something of righteousness. When a child has done that which is inequitable it is a perfect time to teach them God's word concerning God's righteousness. It is a perfect time to show them why Christ had to die and why the Lord our Righteousness is now seated at God's right hand.

Also, as our heavenly Father lovingly chastened us, he fixed our hearts on Christ, convincing us that the judgment of God is settled toward his people. He taught us that he is just because he satisfied his own justice. He taught us that he justified us because he laid down his own life for us. The Holy Spirit convinced us that by Christ taking away all our sins, making us the righteousness of God, the prince of this world is cast out—his head crushed—because those for whom Christ died have no sin for Satan to accuse us to God.

John 16: 8: And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9: Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10: Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11: Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Our text, exhorts us to love and cherish by not only turning our child from their error, but use their breaking of our rules, to show them why Christ had to satisfy justice; to show them that God is both a just God and a Savior; that "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*." (Ps 85:10) This is what God did for us and what our faithful Father continues to do for us when he chastens us.

THE EXORTATION TO US

Now, let's hear the exhortation which God gives to us.

First, he says, "ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." (Eph 6: 4) Of course, if we are hard and severe, this will provoke our children to wrath and discouragement. But also, if we merely correct, without teaching God's word concerning sin, righteousness and judgment, then there is no spiritual purpose, no spiritual lesson, no love, grace and truth. It is only law. And though we are right as parents, to command our children's obedience, yet without admonition of the Lord, it is just one sinner demanding another sinner submit.

But rather we are to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph 6: 4) Christ makes his child willing in the day of his power—to submit to him, reverence him, believe on him, obey him—not merely by exercising his sovereign power and right as our Father. But rather, Christ "brings us up", making us to know his love for us, how he cherishes us. As God our Father is chastening us from our vain way, teaching us our sin, why it is vain, teaching us where it leads, he also admonishes us by fixing our hearts and minds on his grace and mercy, his righteousness and truth, his glory in the face of Christ Jesus.

A good example of a faithful father is Abraham. He is the father of all who believe. Of Abraham God said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen 18: 19) We who believe are children of Abraham. We were taught the gospel by children of Abraham. We were taught the Way of the Lord, Christ Jesus; to do justice and judgment by believing on the Lord Jesus. So by saving us through the gospel, God brought upon Abraham the promised spiritual children which God promised him. You see, why we are to include the admonition of the Lord as we chasten our children?

We might think, "This sure will take a lot of time." Yes, that is why God said of his law, "thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou

walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” (Deut 6: 7) How much more should we, who know the grace of God in Christ Jesus, teach our children the good news of God’s grace with the same diligence!

Solomon’s proverbs are to teach his child, “To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity.” (Pro 1: 3) Our Lord Jesus is our spiritual Solomon. He makes faithful, loving, obedient children, not only by making us hear his law and see our sin, but by making us behold our faithful heavenly Father, who in wisdom, justice, judgment and equity, loved us and gave himself for us, manifesting the righteousness of God. That is how he gave us a new will, making our will to be one with his and continues to do so.

Pray that God would give us each grace to love our children, by chastening them from every vain way, while teaching them of sin, righteousness and judgment all taken care of in our great Lord and Savior, our great heavenly, everlasting Father, Christ Jesus.

Amen!