

June 27, 2020

Hello Brethren,

The Bible is clear that God is going to bring corrections and punishment on this world before the return of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:18; Isaiah 13:11; 66:16; etc.). There can be little doubt that the trials that are afflicting the world today are part of that process. Much of it currently seems to have been created by men and we are pulling problems down on our own heads – but there is coming a time when the punishment will be swift, severe, and coming directly from our Creator!

So I want to ask, how do we respond when to correction? We can all think back to when we were children and were corrected by our parents – and it was never enjoyable! No matter how gentle, loving and even merciful they may have at times been, it still stung to be corrected. And of course, sometimes it was our little tale ends that stung – no doubt often deservedly!

Does it get any easier to accept correction as an adult? If you can honestly answer “yes” to that question, then you are a rare individual! Most people still find it quite distasteful to be corrected – and yet virtually everyone is in one way or another throughout life. Perhaps by the words or example of a spouse, a neighbor, a boss or supervisor, a coworker, brother or sister in the Faith etc. Not all of these times are deliberate, and sometimes the person giving the correction doesn't even know he or she is doing so. But when it hits us, as always it stings.

Now we have to make a decision.

The author of Hebrews, traditionally identified as the Apostle Paul, writes: “*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*” (Hebrews 12:11). He validates what we just read: it stings to be corrected, but if we respond well it will always lead to good and positive results.

Our God provides correction for us in many different ways, including all the ones I mentioned above and more. Regardless the heart and intent of the individual, he or she can still be used by God to deliver a message to us, showing us where and how we may need to make changes.

So, how do we respond to correction? William Barclay in his commentary brings out several possible reactions to correction, and I believe his thoughts bear our consideration too. I want to share his categories along with my own thoughts too.

When corrected we may...

1) Resignedly accept it. This is the stoic “stiff upper lip” type of response. No rebellious action or reaction is taken, but neither is it accepted with an open heart. It is taken as an action coming from a position of power, and there is no choice but to assume a kind of defeated acceptance. Very little can be truly learned and ingrained this way, and there is little if any growth.

2) Accept it with a grim sense of just getting it over as quickly as possible. I can't tell you how many times I saw this reaction in our children as they were growing up. They weren't interested in learning so much as just being done with the punishment. With this approach there is never any gratitude for pointing out something wrong or potentially harmful, only some resentment combined perhaps with embarrassment. The result is always a conspicuous lack of learning anything from the correction!

3) Accept it with an attitude of self-pity. I would refer to this as the Eeyore approach to life. You may remember that ever-discouraged donkey on the Winnie the Pooh cartoons. No matter what happened to him, it was always tragic. When another character greeted him with a cheerful "Good morning!" he would always respond "If it is a good morning, which I doubt."

With this kind of an approach to correction all we can see is ourselves, our hurt and how we are just being beaten on again. As with the first two, there is no positive growth, or even a mindset that allows for seeing the positive or the potential for learning and growth.

4) View correction as a punishment that is greatly resented. The basic question seems to be "What did I ever do to deserve this?" Often this approach generates an open anger and open opposition to the correction. It views the correction as unjust or over-the-top or even just plain mean and vengeful. It is very difficult for the mind with this attitude to ever ask "What does God want me to learn from this?"

Each of these four responses easily come from a carnal and selfish mind. And none of them will bring about the results that are intended by the correction, nor will they bring peace of mind and happiness to us. But there is another and much better option available:

5) To accept the correction as ultimately coming from a loving Father who only wants the best for us. To do this will require seeing God's detailed involvement in our lives, and having a living faith that He always has our best interest in mind. Even if someone spews angry emotional vomit all over us 95% of which isn't even true – chances are there is a point or a lesson we can learn from the whole thing. This approach has the ability to see that everything can be used to make us a better and wiser son or daughter of God.

So once again, how do we respond to correction? Something to think about...

Tomorrow my family and I will be in Van Buren for morning services, and then we'll drive down to Mena for afternoon services. I wish you all a wonderful Sabbath!

Best regards,

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