

“GOD LOVES YOU WHEN HE’S CORRECTING YOU!”
by Rom A. Pegram (5/13/18) – Mother’s Day

The train chugged its way through Indiana at twenty-four miles per hour. Now, that doesn’t seem like a terrible speed. That is, until you take into account how long it takes to stop a 6,200-ton train ... and what lay upon the tracks ahead.

“That’s a baby!” yelled Robert Mohr, the attentive conductor.

The engineer, Rodney Lindley, had thought it was a small dog, but the thatch of blonde hair and the colorful clothes made it all clear.

Emily Marshall, a child of nineteen months, was playing on the rails. She had strayed from safety as her mother picked flowers in the garden.

Well, it was all chaos and shouting at the controls of the train. The engineer hit the brakes, but there was no way the train could stop short of a disaster. Mohr, forty-nine and a Vietnam vet, had to think quickly.

He threw open the door, moved along the catwalk to the very front of the engine, and—at the risk of his own life—leaned forward, steadying himself with one arm as Lindley continued to pull frantically at the brake. The train slowed to about ten miles per hour—still much too fast. Lindley said, “I felt like we were just eating up the rail, going faster and faster.”

As the great locomotive approached, Emily heard the noise and sensed danger. “She sat up and watched us for what seemed like an eternity,” said Lindley. Then she began to crawl off the rails, but not fast enough. Just as the train was about to go over her, Mohr, at the leading edge of the locomotive, stretched out one leg as far as he could and, like a field-goal kicker, booted the baby over the edge and down the soft embankment. Then, he leaped down, picked up the crying child, and comforted her.

Emily came out of the near fatal experience with cuts on her head, a chipped tooth, and a swollen lip.

The mother, of course, was deeply grateful for what was done to save her child. But, I wonder if that little girl truly comprehended how blessed she was that a stranger with a big foot kicked her down a hill. She was trying to play, there was a lot of noise, and suddenly something jarred her and sent her tumbling like Jack and Jill. And it hurt!

Perspective makes all the difference, doesn’t it? What seems hurtful from one vantage point, when seen in full perspective, can turn out to be an act of compassion. And sometimes ... that’s how it is with discipline/correction. Sometimes we have to hurt a little now ... so we won’t hurt a lot later. And if you’re a parent or an adult who watches over children, you already know this to be true. Listen to what God’s word has to say about this subject today (Proverbs 3:11-12, NLT)...

My child, don’t reject the LORD’s discipline, and don’t be upset when he corrects you. ¹² For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.

But, do we always agree ... when it comes to discipline or correction that comes our way? C.S. Lewis noted that sometimes people have a very shallow view of God’s correcting love. Here’s what Lewis had to say:

“We want, in fact, not so much a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven...whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, ‘a good time was had by all.’...I should very much like to live in a universe which was governed on such lines. But since it’s abundantly clear that I don’t, and since I have reason to believe, nevertheless, that God is Love, I conclude that my conception of love needs correction.

As Scripture points out...it is for people whom we care nothing about that we demand happiness on any terms: with our friends, our lovers, our children, we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptible and estranging modes.”

What brand of love would keep that conductor from rescuing a happily playing baby on the grounds that a good boot is rude and painful? What brand of love would have kept your moms (or dads) from scolding you for not doing your homework (or whatever bad behavior you were about), since scolding would have put a damper on a pleasant dinner? As Lewis points out, *the willingness to administer discipline to prevent a greater harm is a mark of true love!* And that’s where God’s coming from, folks.... Let me give you some concrete reasons from God’s word:

THE (SPECIFIC) REASONS FOR GOD’S DISCIPLINE. God disciplines—at times—to punish us... Why do we punish our kids? Hopefully not for revenge or out of cruelty, but ... we punish our kids because we want their behavior (which could be harmful to them in the long run) to change!; Psalm 89:30-32 (MSG) helps explain; this psalm speaks to this idea of discipline...

If his children refuse to do what I tell them, if they refuse to walk in the way I show them, ³¹ If they spit on the directions I give them and tear up the rules I post for them ³² —I’ll rub their faces in the dirt of their rebellion and make them face the music.

So, God does discipline us—at times—to *punish* us ... to induce change in our lives that will be good for us. Also...

God disciplines to protect us... 2 Corinthians 12:7b shares: “...So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.” For Paul, who wrote this letter to the Corinthians, this was a God-given protective discipline designed to prevent a soul-destroying problem! We don’t know exactly what the ‘thorn in my flesh’ was, but we do know that he suffered greatly (physical, temptation, persecution); three times he asked God to remove this ‘thorn,’ and three times denied... Instead, God gave Paul the grace to endure the pain ... and sometimes that’s what God does for us, too ... *for our own good*; God *protects* us! Then sometimes...

God disciplines to purify us... Hebrews 12:10b says, “...God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.” Hebrews 12:5-10 is the key passage in

all of scripture for understanding God's *correcting* love ... and, ultimately, the reason is we might 'share in his holiness'—being set apart for God's purposes in this world; it's the difference between being an eternal asset for God's Kingdom ... or just a temporal one, at best! There you have some specific reasons for God's correcting/disciplining love. But, let me speak for a moment to the rationale behind all of this...

What's the rationale behind God's discipline? Let's look at this whole scripture—Hebrews 12:9-10 (NLT)...

Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? ¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.

In other words, our human fathers disciplined us as it seemed best *to them*; our Heavenly Father, on the other hand, disciplines us as it is best *for us*. Our human fathers disciplined us for earthly reasons; our Heavenly Father disciplines us for heavenly reasons. Does that make sense? God always looks at things—even at our well-being—in light of eternity! That's the rationale for God's discipline... Finally, I want you to see what we get out of this love of God—the result...

THE RESULTS OF GOD'S DISCIPLINE.

God wants us to receive holiness... Hebrews 12:10 tells us, "For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness." Holy means 'set apart for God's purposes', so God is getting us ready for his purposes for our lives, both here and in eternity! God doesn't want us to come up short; God doesn't desire for us to be found 'wanting'; he wants us ready...

God wants us to receive righteousness and radiate peace... Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." Are we more concerned about the temporary pain in this world? Or, like God, are our eyes on eternity? Isaiah 32:17a confirms this when the prophet says, "And this righteousness will bring peace...." This is the PEACE Jesus wants us to have—the peace of knowing that we're all right with God!

Just like parents (*like our moms here today*), God wants there to be a positive outcome in raising us, too! It's true: the trials that bring us to maturity are often painful—in some way. But *who wants to remain a child forever*? Not me. I want to be a fully grown, mature disciple of Jesus Christ. I want the traits God wishes to instill in me through his perfect love—traits that'll be evident only if I trust him ... even when I can't see him or feel his loving hand...

GOD LOVES YOU ... EVEN WHEN HE'S CORRECTING YOU! That, folks, is the nature of God's love—a love that won't let go, no matter what ... a love that will do whatever it takes for your own good! But, here's the question for us today: *Will you let God do whatever it takes?* You can trust God that much, you know... You can trust his LOVE! But, will you?