

The Lord Is Master of His Children's Lives.

Solomon knew that his son would be facing difficult decisions - ones that needed the wisdom of the wise of Israel, not the impetuous young¹. So, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon wrote this advise;

Prov 3:11 "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, 12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in."

After the death of his father, Rehoboam faced rebellion on a national scale. The people had been oppressively taxed and wanted relief. He faced a difficult decision. Should he listen to the advise of his wiser, elder advisors who advised conciliation² or listen to the bad advise of oppressing the people as given by the younger men with whom he grew up³. Were the people bluffing? Or was the threat of rebellion real. Rehoboam thought he was answerable only to himself - how wrong he was!⁴ The warning was clear. If he did not listen to the wise counsel of the elders - if he did not choose "wisdom" over the folly of his young friends, he would receive the discipline of the Lord.

Even Solomon, with his might had not been able to stop the divinely decreed events. Solomon knew that the Lord had split up his kingdom because of his rebellion but he did not accept the Lord's discipline. Rather he was going to take matters into his own hand. After he had gotten wind that Ahijah, the prophet of Shiloh had promised ten of the twelve kingdoms to his newly appointed lieutenant, Jeroboam. He tried to kill Jeroboam. Jeroboam fled to Egypt - only to return later to take leadership of the ten northern tribes just as the Lord had promised.

The whole point of this story is this; obey the Lord and if you are disciplined, submit to the Lord or face the consequences. Solomon failed to follow his own advise and paid the consequences with a split kingdom (*read 1 Kings 11:29-39*)⁵ we can learn a very important lesson from this tragic account - whether or not we want to acknowledge it, we are in the classroom of our Master, Jesus Christ. If we choose to be his disciple in the truest sense, we will be a student without portfolio, but will learn much at his feet - we will become more like him. If we decide to "skip class" the consequences will be the discipline of the Lord.

¹ cf. Prov 13:20; 14:7, 8; 15:7; 1 Kings 12:8-11

² 1 Kings 12:6, 7

³ 1 Kings 12:10, 11

⁴ From Rehoboam's point of view he could have kept the whole kingdom intact. However, God in His omniscience had prepared history for a second kingdom under the leadership of another, Jeroboam, son of Nebat. For further reading see 1 Ki 11:28-40; 1 Ki 14:7-16 - this is from Jeroboam's point of view. From God's point of view, see 1 Ki 12:15.

⁵ Read 1 Ki 11:9-11 for this. Just as Saul, heard that the LORD had anointed David, Solomon knew "the jig was up." He was not, after all, the master of his life. His Lord was his Master and he was due for a heavy dose of discipline

When God's Discipline Belt Makes its Sound.

I had a technique to remind my children when they were about to experience the ultimate discipline of **the belt**. Just before application of **the belt** I would pull it off in such a fashion that it would create an interesting sound effect - the slapping of the belt during its exit from my belt loops usually created a great sense of fear in the hearts of the children - many times that was enough to immediately stop their unacceptable activity. When it comes to our relationship with the Lord, I'm afraid we tend to be quite thick. We don't hear the slap of the belt as it exits the loops. Or are we deliberately ignorant of those signs that God is about to give us a "spanking?"

Prov 3:11 "My son, do not **despise** the LORD's discipline and do not **resent** His rebuke,"

I'm afraid that we as adult Christians have the mistaken idea that we are answerable only to ourselves - nothing could be further from the truth. With that kind of an attitude it is a "given" that we are going to overlook an important "hint" from heaven, either in a sermon given or a Bible lesson taught, or in our own devotional readings. That doesn't let us off the hook - God will hold us accountable to spiritual growth. One Bible teacher puts it this way; "either grow in grace or you will groan in disgrace." A point well taken.

Word study on "despise." When we step out of line and refuse to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit (this is God's discipline belt snapping out of its loops), then God "spanks" us. When the "belt of discipline" comes down hard we are warned not to despise this discipline. For the meaning of our attitude turn to Lamentations 3:45 "you have made us *scum and refuse* among the nations." The two words "scum" and "refuse" refers to what we might throw away after washing an especially disgusting filth. This is the meaning of our despising his discipline. We treat his "spanking" like filthy wash water.

Word study on "resent." To be weary of his rebuke or to resent it is to consider God's rebuke to be especially odious. It means to loath, to treat as a stench. We had a possum get caught in our fence a many years ago. We didn't find out about it until we began to smell his decomposing body I had all I could do to talk the Manchester highway department into taking the revolting carcass away. I just did not want to have anything to do with the carcass! This is the meaning of resent (or be weary) here. When we resent God's rebuke - from God's point of view we are treating his rebuke like "road kill."

Learning from God's Discipline - Deut 8:2-4.

Deut 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ **He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna**, which neither you nor your fathers had known, **to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.** ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these

forty years.

This is an especially heart-revealing passage from God's point of view. The use of the phrase "Lord your God" combines the love of God along with his unyielding righteousness, justice and holiness. The Israelites were truly the objects of his "tough love." The whole issue of the Israel's wilderness experience was that they might learn to rely on every word that proceeded from the mouth of God. They could only be learned in humility.

Proverbs 3:11. **Word study on "discipline."** The LXX translates this word *paideuo*. This refers to a son who is in training for his ultimate "adoption" as heir to the head of the household. It has an educational but tough disciplinary flavor.

We should never think for a moment that we can skip God's classroom. We *will* receive God's training - some of it from the "woodshed college." It is not a shame - we should not treat it as an odious experience. Here is an observation that I cannot back with scriptural "proof texting" - if we refuse to learn from God's discipline, then he will repeat the discipline until we do!

Another lesson we can learn from our passage in Deuteronomy is that sometimes when we fall under the discipline of the Lord and then have to face difficult circumstances - then we finally do learn the lesson **he might not remove the difficulty**. In this case staying in the circumstances even though we have learned our lesson means that God is going to bless us in that situation - cursings turn to blessings - we cannot lose!

Word study on "rebuke." Have you ever had to face a spanking for doing something wrong and had your parent patiently explain the reason why you were about to be "whipped within an inch of your life" (from your point of view). Remember the terror of listening to the "rebuke" but really anticipating the spanking? I am told by my children that the rebuke was often worse than the spanking itself because they had to think about it.

Tough Love.

Deut 8:5 **Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.**

This is the whole point of God's discipline. I don't know who coined the term "tough love" but it is so appropriate. The quote in Hebrews 12:8 teaches that the lack of divine discipline is proof of illegitimate sonship - that means that the person who does not receive divine discipline is not actually saved. We should treasure God's discipline⁶ and rest in the comfort that we are his sons and daughters. The challenge is this as we study the book of proverbs - we *are* going to come under the discipline of the Lord. Either we sit at his feet and learn as disciples or learn from the "school of hard knocks" God's divine discipline.

⁶ Hebrews 12:9-11