



KINGDOM DISCIPLINE

KINGDOM PRINCIPLE STUDY KP10

READ THIS FIRST

We have already mentioned briefly what Christian discipline is not; it is not leaders excommunicating those whom God accepts because they do not conform to man's rules. In this study we learn of God's mercy and grace in chastening us His sons, as a father who loves us and wants us in fellowship with Him for ever. The most important thing to grasp in our minds is that, contrary to what we feel, God's chastening is always fruitful and has our best interests at heart. If we can really take hold of that we will begin to rejoice at our Father's correction. He will do it anyway so we may as well enjoy it!!

Key Scriptures for this study are:

Hebrews 12:1-12
Ezekiel 36:16-38
II Samuel 11:1-27, 12:1-25
I Chronicles 21:1-30, 22:1
Psalms 91
Philippians 3:1-21

LEARN THESE SCRIPTURES BY HEART

'Pay attention when the Lord corrects you and do not be discouraged when He rebukes you, because the Lord corrects everyone He loves and punishes everyone He accepts as a son' (*Heb. 12:5-6*).

'For Jesus ... is not one who is Yes and No. On the contrary, He is God's YES to all of His promises. It is God Himself who makes us sure of our life in union with Christ; it is God Himself who has set us apart, who has placed His mark of ownership upon us and has given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the guarantee of all that He has in store for us' (*II Cor. 1:19-22*).

THE PROMISE OF THE KINGDOM

The promise of God's eternal Kingdom was first revealed to David the King. It is expressed in one of seven great covenant statements by which the Father has established relationship with men. The seven covenants are often referred to as 'the Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenants!' (*Gen. 2:16-17, Gen. 3:14-19, Gen. 9:9-17, Gen. 13:14-17, Gen. 15:1-6, Gen. 15:18-21, Gen. 17:1-8, Gen. 22:15-18, Gen. 26:1-5, Gen. 28:10-15, Ex. 19:5-6, II Sam.7:16, Jer. 31 :33-34*).

Of the seven, two (the Abrahamic and Davidic) are eternal covenants with eternal promises. While all of the seven are important revelations of God's relationship with the human race as it stands at present, two covenants carry over into the New Creation and are particularly applicable to believers in Jesus. That is why Matthew's Gospel begins with the statement: 'This is the list of the ancestors of Jesus our Liberator, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (*Matt. 1:1*). Jesus is the fulfillment of God's eternal promises. Those who come into union with Him, by the receiving of the Holy Spirit, inherit the promises of the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants!! Praise the Lord!

When Jesus, God's Son, took upon Himself human flesh, He did not take on just 'any flesh' but came in the line of Abraham and David, that He might 'help the descendants of Abraham'- not just Jews but Gentiles also who become Abraham's seed by faith in Jesus. (Note: The genealogies of Jesus in scripture differ - it is presumed that the geology in Luke is really Mary's genealogy. Jesus' dynastic right coming through Joseph his foster father (a son of Jeconiah who because of disobedience has no spiritual children) but His physical descent comes through Mary whose genealogy is traced back to Nathan rather than Solomon (*Heb. 2:14-18, Matt. 1:2-17, Luke 3:23-38, Rom. 4:1-25*).

Now the Kingdom Covenant as stated to David is as follows: 'When you die and are buried, I will make your son king and will keep his kingdom strong. I will be his father and he will be my son. When he does wrong I will punish him as a father punishes a son. But I will not withdraw my support from him as I did from Saul; you will always have descendants and I will make your kingdom last forever. Your dynasty will never end!' (*II Sam. 7:12-16*). So, the promise is kingdom everlasting and the relationship is 'father - son' and, in particular, 'father -son discipline'.

KINGDOM RELATIONSHIPS

The disciplinary relationship revealed in the Davidic Covenant clarifies why it was 'only right for God, who creates and preserves all things, should make Jesus perfect through suffering in order to bring many sons to share His glory'. This is why the writer to the Hebrews states 'pay attention when God corrects you and do not be discouraged when He rebukes you; because the Lord corrects everyone He loves and chastens everyone He accepts as a son'. Praise the Lord! (*Heb. 2:5-13, Heb. 12:1-12*).

DISCIPLINE IS TO MAKE US PERFECT

It is sometimes difficult for us to understand God's discipline because we tend to have a short term view of things and human concepts of discipline. We need to see and know that God always disciplines us for our good; so that we may share in His holiness! Being human, we are often confused, saddened, angry and

frustrated by His rebuke when we ought to rejoice that He cares enough to correct us. We should realise that **we can never be so sure that we are His sons as when He corrects us!** Still, sad or happy, He will still correct us whether we like it or not and bring us into righteousness for His own name sake, i.e. once we have repented and agreed to be His sons!! If we are going to call ourselves by His name then He insists that we bear it in a way that will not disgrace Him. The Ezekiel statement of the New Covenant shows the specific things God promises Himself He will do in us to make sure His sons do not disgrace the family AND do not miss the inheritance!! That is what we need to keep in mind. Without His correction we would never find our way let alone be fit to dwell with our Holy Father in His forever Kingdom (*Heb. 12:10, Ez.36:16-38, Ps. 23:3*).

ALL DISCIPLINE IS GOOD

‘God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all’. ‘Every act of giving and every perfect gift comes down from our Father the creator of heavenly lights who does not change or cause any shadow by His turning. By His own will He brought us into being through the word of truth so that we should have first place among all of His creatures; (*John 1:5, James 1:17, John 1:12-13*).

Tracing the history of God’s dealings with men, we see the pattern that His correction is always positively for our good and never for evil, in the long term. He knew before He created the world the events of man’s history and pre-ordained Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. He has always been aware as He corrects His people of His perfect plan to bring us through all testing and difficulties. His plan is that we should live in union with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, by whom Jesus Himself was raised from the dead (*I Peter 1:15-22, Rom. 8:11*).

ADAM AND EVE: Adam’s correction was the cursed land, thorns and thistles and plain hard work necessary if he was to eat. Eve received trouble and pain in childbirth and subjection to her husband. They were both cut off from Eden lest they live forever in disobedience. BUT, Salvation in Christ was preached to them (their seed would crush the devil; God would clothe them with righteousness through the shedding of blood! (*Gen. 3:16-19, Gen. 3:22-24, Gen. 3:15, Gen. 3:20-21*).

CAIN AND ABEL: Abel accepted God’s correction and offered *by faith* what God required. In that way he continues to be a witness to us of righteousness to this day. Cain, having no sense of his state of sin and the need for atonement did his ‘own thing’ and was rejected; even so God’s promise was still available to him if he would just do what God said. Even the murder of his brother did not keep him from God’s care and protection! (*Gen. 4:4, Heb.11:4, Gen. 4:3, 5-7, Gen.4:8-15*).

PRE-FLOOD SOCIETY: God’s correction for the total depravity and wickedness of pre-Flood society was tremendously severe. They were offered, though, a place in the Ark (a type of Christ our saviour) which they refused. The Lord renewed His covenant with Noah and his descendants, looking forward to the coming of his seed - Jesus the righteous - who would take away the sin of the whole world (*Gen. 6:3, 5-7; Gen. 6:17, Gen. 7:19-2-1, Gen. 6:18, Gen. 9:1-19*).

ISRAEL’S CORRECTION: Israel’s correction was on the basis of their failure to keep the bargain of the Mosaic Covenant. The Law demanded certain behaviour from the people for Jehovah to be their God of special provision - but, being without the inner resources of the Spirit, they continually failed to meet God’s meagre demands. Idolatry was the main problem. The elders of Israel actually saw God on the mountain but within days fashioned a golden calf to appease the people. Aaron’s feeble excuse was that the ‘people made him do it’ is a perfect illustration of the basic corruptness, disobedience and poverty of relationship at the heart of all unredeemed men (*Ex. 24:9-11, Ex. 32*).

It is not possible to rehearse the whole of Israel’s history here. Sufficient to say that finally, after insufferable and continual disobedience the Lord removed them from the promised land altogether. BUT, not without promise of their eventual return.

The sad history of Saul, Israel’s first King, and God’s final rejection of him is another tragedy of man’s disobedience. But God already had in the ‘pipeline’ the newly anointed one whom he would deal with as a son - David (*I Sam. 8 to 15, I Sam. 16:1-13, II Sam. 2:4, II Sam. 5:1-5*).

DAVID’S EXPERIENCE OF CORRECTION

The Lord describes David as a man ‘completely loyal to me, obeyed my commands, did only what I approve of’! His history is like a burst of light across the pages of Old Testament scripture. David’s relationship with his God looks forward to the New Covenant. David sinned but God forgave him and declared him righteous (*see above*). David built a tabernacle without a veil between the Holy place and the Most Holy place; David ate the shew bread even though he was not of the priestly line and God allowed it! No wonder he could say ‘You know all about me and you are treating me like a great man. How great you are!’ (*I Sam. 15 to 31, II Sam. & I Chron.,1; Kings 1-1:8, II Sam. 7: 18-29, I Chron. 17:17, Rom. 6:23*).

David was a man like us; he knew sinful desires of the flesh and eyes and human pride. He also experienced what we experience when we turn aside from the Lord - that the wages of sin is death!

Bathsheba: Lust, adultery and murder to cover up! The wages - the death of David’s son. BUT David

repents and accepts God's punishment. See his response to the death of his son: he washed, anointed himself, changed his clothes and went into the Lord's house and worshipped God. The people did not understand this sort of behaviour. But David was a man after God's own heart! (*II Sam. 11:1-27, II Sam. 12:1-25, II Sam. 13 to 18*).

Note: The death principle did not stop with the death of the baby; it continued in Amnon and Absalom; many times David would have taken the punishment for their sin on himself. He survived but the cost in his family was terrible (*II Sam.13*).

David's Census: Pride, Satan's sin, the sin of Babel, was known to David too! God was displeased and smote Israel. David was convicted of his sin and the Lord let him choose his punishment! Three years famine, three months overtaken by Israel's enemies or three days pestilence in the land by the sword of the Lord. David chooses the hand of the Lord! The severest but the shortest correction! 'Don't let me fall into the hands of man' was his cry. David is not Aaron. He does not attempt to cover up his sinful acts or excuse himself like Saul. He takes his punishment and is distressed that his people suffer and not him. This time he is not so ready to worship - the correction leaves him cringing in righteous fear of the Lord (the beginning of wisdom) (*I Chron. 21:1-30, I Chron. 22:1, Ps. 111:10, Prov. 1:7, Ps. 19:9*).

OUR FATHER'S METHODS OF CORRECTION

Our Father has four main ways of dealing with sons who have strayed into disobedience. If we know what they are it will help us recognise what is happening to us instead of being confused and sinking into condemnation and self pity. Let us never say that we do not deserve His correction; the fact is we do not deserve His mercy.

FAMINE: One common way in which our Father shows us that we are not walking as He desires is to quietly withdraw His presence. Actually the truth is that we go walking away from Him, instead of following us, as He does much of the time (even though He is Lord). In the famine experience He just lets us wander off alone. Suddenly we are aware that God is not there! How alone we suddenly feel when He is not available to us! An incident in the Song of Solomon sums it up. We become preoccupied with ourselves and do not heed quickly the Lord's commands; when we decide to move in our own time we find Him not there. We become so impressed by the Lord's past grace in our lives that we forget that He desires to take us on to better things. Those who know the Lord's ways rejoice in the famine. They wait patiently knowing that the Lord will gather them again with fresh revelation and directions; for He has promised never to leave us or forsake us (*Ez. 14:13, Song of Sol. 5:3-8, Hab. 3:17-18, Is. 54:7-9, Heb. 13:5, Ez. 14:15, Josh. 7: 1-26*).

EVIL BEASTS: Another common way that God deals with His sons is to let us fall into the hands of our enemies. He usually uses this method when He wants to deal with sin in our lives. Israel's sudden defeat at Ai is one of many Bible examples. The defeat led to Joshua seeking the Lord and Achan's disobedience being revealed. So it is with our lives. God exposes secret sin for our benefit. Let us not resort to fleshly methods to avoid correction. Note Zedekiah's history of rebellion, seeking help from Egypt when God had delivered Israel into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, is a profound warning in this regard, Egypt being a type of the flesh. Let us, rather, pray like David and seek correction from secret faults (*Ez. 17:11-21, II Kings 2-4:17-20, II Kings 25:1-10, Ps. 19:12-14*).

PESTILENCE: We know that wholeness (body, soul and spirit) is the provision of the cross and that there is available to us the possibility of divine health. However, it is also true that scripture abounds in incidents of God sending sickness upon His people for correction. In particular, this type of correction seems to be mainly for the sin of murmuring and complaint against the Lord's dealings in our lives, unbelief and doubting. The minute we fall into doubt, we are exposing ourselves to sickness in my experience. Note the recorded case of Miriam, and God's quick deliverance to admission of guilt and Moses's intercession (*Ez. 14:19, Is. 53:5, Matt. 8:16-17, I Peter 2:24, Num. 16:41-50, Num. 12:1*).

THE SWORD OF THE LORD: It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God but David preferred it. It is quicker and cleaner than any of the above! 'The Word of the Lord is living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart... all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do!' This type of correction usually occurs when God has spoken to us but we have not obeyed! It is the same as if the cloud of God's glory in the wilderness had moved but the Israelites remained camped. We are no longer under the covering of God's presence and are exposed to the elemental spirits of the universe. Temptation becomes greatly enhanced - particularly lust of the flesh and eyes; dreadful thoughts fill our minds, we become greatly distressed. There is no escape for us EXCEPT to catch up to God quickly. Watch out for this experience and learn to detect it - you will know it because you know that God has spoken to you to do something. Perhaps you are waiting for further confirmations or instructions when God has said Go, we had better Go! (*Ez. 14:17, Heb. 10:31, Heb. 4:12-16*).

The great thing about the sword of the Lord is that it never leaves a scar. David recognised this. Though its dealings are severe, it delivers us clean and whole, ready to continue on in holiness with our Holy Maker and Redeemer.

THE PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Our God is a God of relationships. Disobedience results in separation; righteousness (doing what God asks us) releases peace and joy in communion with our Father through Jesus by the Holy Spirit. We need to work daily at keeping this relationship with our heavenly Father. This means **labouring to enter into the rest** (ceasing from dead works of our own); striving to enter the straight gate (seeking to find what God wants us to do) (*Heb. 4:9-11, Luke 13:24*).

A great hindrance to keeping this sort of relationship is our tendency to do things by methods and rules rather than by specific instruction as the situation arises. We have a natural tendency to build methods and rules out of past experiences with the Lord. We think that if we have learned how to do something, that it will please the Lord if we use our knowledge rather than 'bothering' Him for specific instructions. It will not please Him for He is not interested in our activity - He is interested in fruitful relationships. Abide in me! He wishes to know us as Adam knew Eve and produced Cain! If we will just learn to seek Him each day, opening ourselves to Him, seeking His ideas so that our activity is pleasing to His heart and a blessing to the nations. Then we will be among those who 'dwell in the secret place of the Most High' and 'abide under the shadow of the Almighty'. Read Psalm 91 and see the rewards!!! (*John 15:4, Isaiah 55:6-11, Ps. 91:1-16*).

Paul knew this secret. He had the best religious education but it resulted in him becoming a persecutor of God's people. Later he declared himself to have totally discarded his religious education in favour of 'knowing Him, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death'. He put away all past experiences, good though they may be, and was pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus. He saw his citizenship in heaven - not in 'Christian' activity on earth! (*Phil. 3:1-21*).

Brothers and sisters, whatever we do, wherever we go, even though it be totally under God's direction, 99.9% of what happens to us will be God writing fresh instructions on our heart. For that is His prime objective. If there is any overflow of blessing to others that is to His glory and to His praise! (*Jer. 31:33*).

THE DIVINE NATURE

'God's divine power has given us everything we need to live as His sons through our knowing Him who has called us to share in His glory and goodness. He has given us the very great and precious gift He promised so that by means of this gift we may escape the destructive lust that is in the world and may come to

share in His divine nature! For this reason, do your best to add to your faith GOODNESS (= show the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness), to your goodness add KNOWLEDGE (of God written on your heart), to your knowledge add SELF CONTROL, to your self control add ENDURANCE, to your endurance add the CHARACTER OF GOD, to your character add BROTHERLY LOVE and to your brotherly love add 'laying down your life' for friends and foe alike. These are the qualities we need... so try even harder to make God's call and His choice of you a permanent experience ... In this way you will be given the full right to enter the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! (*II Peter 1:3-11, Lev. 10:8-11, Eph. 4:17-32, Eph. 5:1-17, Job 23:10*).

QUESTIONS

1. Write down the eight covenants in your own words. Identify and describe the particular principles of relationship in each.
2. How did God preach salvation to Adam, Cain, and the pre-flood peoples?
3. Why did God abandon Saul? Why did He not abandon David?
4. What does it mean 'the wages of sin is death'?
5. What is God's purpose in correcting us?
6. Describe two times God has corrected you. Does this fit the 'famine/beast/pestilence/ sword' pattern? If not, what principle did you see in it?

Post your answers to:

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