

Proverbs 3:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

Analysis

My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction. This verse introduces a crucial theme in biblical wisdom: God's loving discipline of His children. It addresses the universal human tendency to resent hardship rather than receive it as divine instruction.

"My son" (בְּנִי/beni) reflects the parent-child framework of Proverbs. Wisdom is transmitted from father to son, representing God's fatherly instruction to His children. This relational context matters—discipline comes from love, not hostility. Hebrews 12:5-11 quotes this verse, explicitly applying it to God's fatherly discipline of believers.

"Despise not" (אַל-תִּתְמַשֵּׂא/al-timas) means don't reject, loathe, refuse, or treat with contempt. The verb conveys active rejection, not passive indifference. Natural human response to hardship is to resent it, question God's goodness, or feel abandoned. This command prohibits such responses.

"The chastening of the LORD" (מֹשֶׁר יְהָוָה/mosher Yahweh) is God's disciplinary instruction. Musar encompasses correction, discipline, instruction, training—sometimes through rebuke, sometimes through circumstances, sometimes through suffering. It's not arbitrary punishment but purposeful training. Athletes endure rigorous training (discipline) for competition; God trains His children for righteousness.

"Neither be weary" (בְּאַל-תָּקַוט/ve'al-taqots) means don't lose heart, don't become discouraged or impatient. Discipline is often prolonged; the temptation is to grow weary and give up. Hebrews 12:3 warns against "waxing weary and faint in your minds." Perseverance under discipline produces spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4).

"His correction" (בְּתֻקָּחוּתוֹ/betokakhto) means His reproof or rebuke. Tokakhah is verbal correction—God's Word confronting our sin, His Spirit convicting, circumstances revealing our need. God corrects those He loves (Revelation 3:19).

Historical Context

Proverbs was compiled for training Israel's youth in wisdom. In ancient Near Eastern cultures, education was primarily paternal—fathers taught sons trades, morality, and wisdom for living. Proverbs reflects this pedagogical context but grounds wisdom in relationship with Yahweh, not merely pragmatic success.

Israel's history demonstrated God's disciplinary pattern. Deuteronomy 8:5 told Israel: "As a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee." Wilderness wanderings, foreign oppression, exile—these were divine discipline for covenant unfaithfulness. The prophets consistently interpreted national suffering as God's corrective judgment intended to restore His people.

The Exile (586 BC) was Israel's most severe chastening. Prophets like Jeremiah warned that despising God's correction through the prophets would result in judgment. Yet even in exile, Lamentations 3:31-33 affirmed: "The Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Discipline was temporary, purposeful, and rooted in covenant love.

Post-exilic books like Ezra-Nehemiah show Israel learning from discipline, rebuilding with renewed commitment to God's Word. The chastening achieved its purpose—restoration and reformation.

The New Testament extensively develops this theme. Hebrews 12:5-11 quotes

Proverbs 3:11-12, teaching that divine discipline proves sonship. Those whom God doesn't discipline are illegitimate, not true children. Paul taught that judgment begins with God's household (1 Corinthians 11:30-32)—God disciplines believers temporally to prevent eternal condemnation.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between God's discipline of His children and His judgment of the wicked, and why is this distinction important?
2. How can we discern whether our suffering is God's loving correction, natural consequences of sin, spiritual attack, or simply living in a fallen world?
3. What does it mean practically to 'not despise' God's chastening—how should we respond to hardship that may be divine discipline?
4. Why do we tend to 'be weary' of God's correction, and what spiritual resources help us endure discipline with patience and hope?
5. How does understanding God's discipline as evidence of His love (rather than rejection) change our perspective on trials and difficulties?

Interlinear Text

מֹסֵךְ רְאֵל תִּמְאֵס אֵל זָקֵן
not the chastening of the LORD My son despise
H4148 H3068 H1121 H408 H3988 H408
בְּתוֹכַתְּךָ
of his correction
H8433

Additional Cross-References

Job 5:17 (Parallel theme): Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:

Revelation 3:19 (Parallel theme): As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Psalms 94:12 (References Lord): Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

1 Corinthians 11:32 (References Lord): But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

2 Corinthians 4:1 (Parallel theme): Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

Hebrews 12:3 (Parallel theme): For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Proverbs 24:10 (Parallel theme): If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.