

For Meditation and Self-reflection

Hebrews 12:6: *“For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”*

Zephaniah 3:8-9: *“Therefore wait for me,’ declares the LORD, ‘for the day I will stand up to testify. I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them—all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger. Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder.”*

Job 5:17-18: *“Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For He wounds, but He also binds up; He injures, but His hands also heal.”*

2 Corinthians 5:21: *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Christians are not exempt from the discipline of the Lord. God disciplines those whom He loves, and He loves the whole world. The fires of God’s judgments are symbolic of a process of purification, whereby we are cleansed from sin and restored to right relationship with Him. The imagery of refinement by fire is that of a crucible in which pure gold is separated from the worthless ore.

Those of us who have received Christ as Savior are not exempt from God’s chastisement and correction. Our sins were not heaped upon Jesus in order that we might be freed from God’s chastisement. A better way to understand the atonement is that on the Cross of Calvary Jesus endured the pain and humiliation caused by our sins. It is *“in Christ”* that we become righteous, as we identify with sufferings of Christ and lean on Him for the help we need to overcome our sinful behavior.

Instead of being freed from the negative consequences of our sins, we instead should regard those consequences as a form of Godly love. We don’t have to go it alone. Christ carries us on His shoulders, so to speak, as we navigate the trials of life and learn from them. The negative consequences of our sinful behavior are a form of correction, not retribution.