

The Blessedness of Divine Chastening

by J.C. Philpot

The blessedness of divine chastening consists in being one whom God has taken in hand, to whom the Lord has special purposes of mercy, a true-born child of his heavenly Parent.

Scripture: Job 33:19, Psalm 94:12, Psalm 119:97, Isaiah 26:20, Matthew 5:3, John 16:15, Romans 8:2, Hebrews 12:8, James 1:25

Topics: "Divine Chastening", "Spiritual Blessedness"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the true blessedness declared by God's word, contrasting it with the worldly views of happiness. He emphasizes that blessedness is found in being poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering for righteousness, merciful, and pure in heart. Philpot explains that God chastens and teaches His children out of His law to bring them true blessedness and rest from days of adversity, while the ungodly are heedlessly led to their doom, like wild beasts falling into a hidden pit prepared for them.

Transcript

Preached at Providence Chapel, London, on Tuesday Evening, July 24, 1849, by J. C. Philpot

"Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law; That you may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be dug for the wicked." Psalm 94:12-13

What a different estimate men form of blessedness and happiness, from that which God has declared in his word to be such! If we listen to the opinions of men about happiness, would not their language be something like this- 'Happiness consists in health and strength--in an abundance of the comforts, luxuries, and pleasures of life; in an amiable and affectionate partner; in children healthy, obedient, and well-provided for in the world; in a long and successful life, closed by an easy and tranquil death.' I think a natural man would, if he did not use the very words, express his ideas of happiness pretty much in the substance of what I have just sketched out.

But when we come to what the Lord God Almighty has declared to be happiness; when we turn aside from the opinions of men, to the expressed words and revealed ways of the Lord, what do we find 'blessedness' to consist in? Who are the people that the unerring God of truth has pronounced to be blessed? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;

blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Matthew 5:3-11 And again, in the words of our text, "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law." These are the unerring words of God; and by his words man will be tried. It is not the fleeting, fluctuating opinions of worms of the earth; but it is the unerring declaration of the only true God by which these matters are to be decided.

In attempting, then, this evening to unfold what the Lord has here declared to be real "blessedness," I shall,

1. First, endeavor to show in what this blessedness consists; "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, and teach out of your law."
2. Secondly, why the man thus chastened and thus taught is really blessed; "That you may give him rest from the days of adversity."
3. Thirdly, what is in preparation in the meantime for the ungodly. "Until the pit be dug for the wicked."

I. In what does this blessedness consist? Let us endeavor to look at the spiritual meaning of the words--"Blessed is the man whom you chasten, and teach out of your law." WHO IS THIS MAN? He is one whom God has taken in hand; one to whom the Lord has special purposes of mercy; a true-born child of his heavenly Parent; for "If you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers" (there is no exception), "then are you illegitimate children, and not sons." Heb 12:8 If a man, therefore, be exempt from divine chastening, his character is drawn as with a ray of light. He may congratulate himself on exemption from trouble; he may say, 'there has no evil touched me.' But his very exemption is only a proof that he is an illegitimate child. If he were a true-born child, he would come under the rod; but not being such, he escapes these proofs of God's eternal adoption.

We may observe this naturally. The children who are at this moment disturbing us by their noise in the street, we do not chastise; they are not ours. But if you, as a parent, were to see your child making a noise in the street, or otherwise misconducting himself, you would bring him in and chastise him. He is your child; you are interested in him; you cannot let him act as vagrant children do, because he is your flesh and blood. And therefore, while you pass the rest by, as having no concern in them, you bring your own children under especial chastening because they are your own. It is so spiritually. The wild vagrants, to whom the Lord has no regard, the children of Satan, who are filling up the measure of their iniquity, have no rod of chastisement; they are left, like these poor ragged children, to their own ways. But the heirs of promise, the children of the living God, those whom he is training to be with him forever in bliss and glory, he will not allow to go on in their own ways; for them he has a rod of correction.

But, we may observe in the words before us, that the Lord puts chastening before teaching. Is there not something remarkable in this? Why should chastening precede teaching? For this reason. We have no ear to hear except so far as we are chastened. Take the case I have alluded to. Your child does something wrong. Do you instruct him first, or do you chasten him first? You chasten him first. And then, when by means of the chastisement you have brought him to submission, to a proper state of mind, you tell him how wrongly he has acted. The rod smites the body before the instruction drops into the ear. So it is spiritually. In God's dealings with his children, he chastises first; and when by his chastisement they have received an ear to hear, a conscience to feel, and a heart to embrace the truth revealed to them, he drops his instruction into their soul.

The Lord has various ways of chastising his people; but he generally selects such chastisement as is peculiarly adapted to the individual whom he chastens. What would be a very great chastisement for you, might not be so to me; and what on the other hand might be a very severe stroke to me might not be so to you. Our dispositions, our constitutions, and our experiences may all differ; and therefore that chastening is selected which is suitable to the individual. It is as though the Lord has suspended in his heavenly closet a number of rods of different sizes; and he takes out that very rod which is just adapted to the very child whom he intends to chastise, inflicting it in such a measure, at a time, and in such a way as is exactly fitted to the individual to be chastised. And here is the wisdom of God signally displayed.

1. The Lord, for instance, sees fit to chasten some in body. We find this in the Scriptures. In the book of Job especially it is mentioned--"Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in his bones, so that his very being finds food repulsive and his soul loathes the choicest meal. His flesh wastes away to nothing, and his bones, once hidden, now stick out." Job 33:19-21. There we have an instance of an individual laid upon a sick bed, in pain of body, distress of mind, and chastened by his gracious Lord for his good. So we find the Apostle Paul speaking to the Corinthians, who had misbehaved themselves at the Lord's supper; "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." 1Co 11:30 It was their unbecoming conduct at the Lord's supper which had brought on them bodily sickness. The Lord chastened their body for the misconduct of their soul.

So in the case of Hezekiah, we find the Lord took similar measures. The prophet was sent to him with this message in his mouth, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." 2Ki 20:1 Sickness took hold of him, and he was stretched upon the bed of death. But see how it worked in him! "He turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord." He turned away from all human help, and fixed his eyes wholly and solely on him who is able to save. It is in sickness and affliction, oftentimes, that the Lord is pleased to manifest himself to our souls, bless us with his presence, and stir up in us a spirit of prayer. I myself am a living witness of it; the greatest blessings I have ever had, the sweetest manifestations of the Lord to my soul have been upon a sick bed. Illness is often very profitable. Bodily afflictions separate us from the world, set our hearts upon heavenly things, draw our affections from the things of time and sense, when the Lord is pleased to manifest himself in them. And yet there are other times and seasons when we are laid upon a bed of sickness, and yet no blessing is given. I remember once, after the Lord had blessed my soul upon a bed of sickness, when I got a little better, and the blessing had worn off, this thought crossed me, 'O, your spiritual state of mind was not the effect of grace; you were sick and afflicted; it was that, and not anything specially from God that brought those feelings.' Soon after, I was laid upon a bed of sickness again; had I then the same blessed feelings, the same views of Christ, the same spiritual-mindedness in my soul? Quite the contrary; all was hard, dark, dead, and barren. Then I saw that it was not the sickness that could make Christ known, loved, or precious; but the power of God made manifest in it. And thus, sometimes, we learn from our very barrenness, hardness, and deadness, profitable lessons, and are convinced thereby that we are utterly unable to raise up one spiritual feeling in our souls.

2. Others the Lord chastens in their families. Our children are very near and dear to us; they are our own flesh and blood, and touch our tenderest feelings. Now the Lord sometimes may pass by ourselves personally, and 'afflict us in our children or our partners in life'. We find this in the Scriptures. We see how Jacob suffered from his children, by losing one for a time, and others proving thorns in his side, and a grief to his soul. We see this also in David, when he wept out his soul with such bitter sorrow, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would to God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" 2Sa 18:33 We see it in the case of Amnon and Tamar. 2Sa 13 What misery was produced by his children in his

own household! We see it also in the taking away of the child which he had by the wife of Uriah the Hittite; which though it cut him to the very soul, yet he saw as the chastising hand of God for his fearful transgression.

3. Others again are chastened in their worldly circumstances. We see this in the Scriptures also. Look at Job; a man who in riches exceeded all the men of the East. But how in a moment all was struck away; his flocks, his herds, and all his possessions taken away at a stroke. Ungodly people do not see the hand of God in these things; it is all 'a chance' with them, or an 'unfortunate speculation, which did not succeed.' But when the children of God enter into speculations, or embark their money in enterprises which are not consistent; when a reverse comes, the speculation turns out to be a failure, and the money is lost, it is their blessing to receive it as a stroke from God and as a mark of divine chastisement. Their eyes are then anointed with eye-salve to see that it is a justly deserved stroke; and though it cuts them all the more deeply, yet they receive it as from the Lord, and submit to it as a dispensation of mercy, not of wrath.

4. Others I may say all in their measure, the Lord afflicts spiritually, in their souls. What I have hitherto been treating upon are mere EXTERNAL afflictions--afflictions of the body, in the family, and in circumstances. All these are the dispensations of God, and ought to be viewed as such; and when so viewed, they work together in the soul for good. They must not be put aside; we must not say, 'The hand of God is not in them; it is all a chance.'

Nothing comes to a child of God as a matter of accident or chance; it all proceeds from God, and all is dealt out in measure and for certain purposes. If the Lord touches our bodies, it is for our spiritual good; if he brings affliction through our children, it is for our spiritual good; if he afflicts us in our circumstances, it is for our spiritual good. When the eye is opened to see, the ear to hear, the heart to believe, and the conscience made tender to feel, we know and confess that these things are sent from God. Here is the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. Infidelity says 'it is a chance;' for unbelief sees the hand of God in nothing--faith says, 'it is the Lord;' for faith sees the hand of God in everything.

Now though a few may escape these outward troubles, yet there are spiritual afflictions which we cannot and must not escape. If we do escape them, woe be to us; we are only signing our death-warrant; only proclaiming aloud, 'We are illegitimate children.' If we are God's children, we shall have spiritual afflictions; and these will consist, proportionately to light and life in the conscience, in painful convictions of guilt; in deep repentance and grief of soul on account of our backslidings; in a discovery of our evil ways and crooked actions; in sorrow for the many things we have done which conscience bears witness against as sinful. The denial of answers to our prayers; the shutting up of the throne of grace to our cries; the darkness of mind that we labor under; the trying thoughts we may have at times concerning our state, or the dealings of God with our souls; the inability to raise up faith, hope, and love, in our hearts- these all are to be viewed as chastisements.

Is it not so naturally? Your child has done something wrong, and displeased you. Do you look upon him now as kindly as at other times? No! You keep him at a distance; you do not let him dine with you today; you abridge him perhaps a part of his food; you make him go to bed early and in the dark; and if you do not visit him with positive stripes, you manifest by your reserved countenance and serious look that you are displeased; you will not take him upon your knee, nor embrace him like his brothers and sisters, but send him to bed without a kiss. What are all these but marks to the child of your displeasure? These are chastisements; and if the child is tender-hearted, he will go sobbing to bed because his parent is displeased with him; for he knows he has brought this displeasure upon himself. It is so spiritually.

The Lord deals with us as a parent does with his children; he does not smile upon us, does not give us a kiss, will not speak kindly to us, or look upon us as in times past with looks of favor and love, and will not, as it seems, hear us when we call. You teach your child by similar means your displeasure. When you are reserved, and keep him at a distance, he knows the reason, and he feels the reserve as a mark of your displeasure. So it is with God. When he denies answers to our prayers; shuts up his manifested mercy; leaves us to wretched, desponding, and gloomy feelings, these are all chastisements, and are to be received as such; and when they are so received, they work good effects in the soul, for they produce submission, resignation, quietness, meekness, and humility.

In these, and other various ways, of which time will not suffice to mention the tenth part, God chastens his people. The Lord chastens those whom he loves; and "blessed is the man whom he chastens." There are many afflicted, but only few chastened--many have abundance of worldly trouble; but only God's people are really chastened, so as to see and feel the hand of God in the rod, and submit to it as such. Here is all the difference between a believer and an unbeliever, between a child of God and an infidel.

We pass on to consider the second part of the blessedness of the man whom God chastens. "And teaches him out of your law." We have just hinted at the reason why chastening precedes teaching. We have no ear for instruction until we feel the stroke of God upon us. It was so with the prodigal. Until he was brought to his right mind by strokes of hunger, he did not think of his father's house; he had no heart to return; but a mighty famine sent him home. So it is with God's children; as long as they are allowed to wander in their backslidings, they have no heart to return. But let the rod come--let them be driven home with stripes; then they have an ear to listen, while God teaches them to profit, instructs them by his blessed Spirit, and speaks into their heart those lessons which are for their eternal good.

"And teaches him out of your law." We would, I think, much err from the mind of the Spirit, if we confined the meaning of the word "law," as some do, to the law strictly and properly so called. "The law" in the Scriptures has a very wide signification; it means, in the original, instruction. The word is Torah, which signifies 'teaching' or 'direction.' And as the law given by Moses was the grand instruction that God gave to the children of Israel into his holiness and purity, the word Torah, or instruction, became fixed in a definite manner to the law as given at Sinai. But the word in itself has a far higher meaning, signifying instruction generally; and thus we find, in the New Testament, that the word "law" is not confined to the law of Moses given in thunder and lightning upon Mount Sinai. For instance, we read of "the law of the Spirit of life" in Christ Jesus, which has "made me free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2 The "law of the Spirit of life" there mentioned does not mean the law given on Mount Sinai. Again, "Whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Jas 1:25 "The perfect law of liberty," does not, cannot mean the law given at Mount Sinai; it is the gospel of Jesus Christ; the instruction, the Torah, which the Spirit has given of the Lord Jesus, and therefore called "the perfect law of liberty."

So, in the Old Testament, "O how I love your law; it is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97 David was not meditating all the day upon the words given upon Mount Sinai; he was not utterly consumed with terrors by meditating upon the strictness and holiness of God as revealed in that law; but he was looking into the gospel, and in that law he delighted all the day, as beholding in it the glories of the Lamb.

And thus, in our text, when it says, "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law," it does mean, I grant, in the first instance, the law strictly speaking as revealing the purity, holiness, and perfection of God; but we must not limit it, as some do, to the law definitely so called. A man,

then, is blessed whom God teaches out of his law--that is, brings near those things which the law reveals, and seals them upon his heart. The law is a manifestation of God's purity, holiness, justice, majesty, greatness, and glory; and was given upon Mount Sinai in thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes, to show forth the majesty of God. Now the Lord, in the first instance, teaches his people by showing to them out of the law his purity, holiness, majesty, the perfection of his character, his indignation against sin, and his wrath against sinners. And every feeling of guilt produced by a manifestation of God's purity, affection, uprightness, justice, wrath, indignation against sin, and direful vengeance that burns to the lowest hell--every such conviction, and every such feeling is a teaching out of his law. But there are some living souls whom God has taught, and is teaching out of his law, who because some definite words of the law have not been applied to their heart, are full of fear that they never had the sentence of the law written in their conscience.

But there is one mark, if not more, whereby we may know whether we have ever had the application of the law strictly speaking to our conscience. What is this? The law "brings bondage," that is, it generates or produces bondage in the soul. Now there may be some here this evening, who may say, 'I do not know that I ever had definite words applied to my conscience, such as, "Cursed is every one who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But let us see whether by bringing your experience to the word of God, you cannot find that you have experienced what sometimes you do not fear have not. Have you never felt bondage? Has your soul never been shut up, and unable to come forth? Have you had no slavish fear of God? Have you never been as it were bound in fetters of iron, and felt that nothing but the mighty power of God coming into your soul could set you free? Have you had no slavish fears of death? We read, that there were some who "all their life-time" were subject to this fear. Have you had no fear of death when the cholera is going about? Have you had no dread lest that dreadful scourge might enter your door, and you might be stricken with the fearful malady? Has no groan or sigh gone up to God through the dread of it? What is this but bondage? And what brings bondage but the law?

Not the letter, but the spirit of the law--because it brings, that is, generates, as a father, in the soul, what the dead lifeless letter cannot possibly do, a spirit of bondage. If you have felt this bondage, this fear, these doubts, these manacles and chains, which your sins have wreathed round your neck, then you have been taught "out of the law;" aye, you have felt the law; for it has produced a spirit of bondage in your soul.

Let us see whether we cannot find another mark. It is this; "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Have you any knowledge of sin? Have the sins of your evil heart ever been felt? Have you ever seen the purity and perfection of Jehovah; and felt the justice of God in his holy law? Do you ever feel that had God sentenced your soul to eternal damnation, he would be just; that you had deserved it all, and brought it on your own head? Can you say, that he would be just in condemning you to the lowest hell? If you have felt this, you have been taught out of God's law; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin."

But we pass on to consider "the law," in a different point of view. The "law," as I have already noticed, signifies not merely "the law," strictly speaking as the sentence of condemnation; but it includes also the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ--"the perfect law of liberty; the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus;" that law which was in the heart of the Redeemer, when he said, "I come to do your will, O God; yes, your law is within my heart."

Now, as the Lord teaches his children "out of the law," strictly so called, so he teaches them "out of" the gospel; and to my mind there is something exceedingly sweet and expressive in the words "out of the law." It seems to convey to my mind, not only that the law is a treasure-house of wrath, but that the gospel

also is a treasure-house of mercy. And as those who know most of the law are only taught "out of the law," and not the whole of the law, only a few drops as it were, out of the inexhaustible wrath of God; so out of the heavenly treasure-house of the gospel, "the perfect law of liberty," it is but a little of grace and mercy that in this life can be known. As Christ said to his disciples in promising the Spirit; "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:15 He cannot take "all," and show it unto them; for none could live under the sight.

The Spirit, therefore, takes of the things of Christ, and shows here a little and there a little; some little blessedness here, and some little blessedness there; a suitable promise, a gracious testimony, a comforting text, an encouraging word, a sight of atoning blood, a smile of his countenance, a view of his Person, a discovery of his righteousness, or a glimpse of his love. This is taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the soul. And thus, the man whom the Lord takes in hand, he teaches "out of" the gospel by making Christ experimentally known, and revealing his dying love. And thus he teaches each and all "out of his law"--both the law from Sinai, and the law from Zion.

But, observe the connection between chastening and teaching. This is what I am wishing to impress upon you. Suppose you are in a carnal state of mind; say you are a man of business, have done a good stroke today, have got something which has wonderfully pleased your covetous heart, have been carried away by some worldly project. But you have come to chapel this evening. Are you in a fit state to hear the word of God? Is the Lord about to teach you now out of the gospel? You are not the man, nor is your soul in a fit state to receive it. But suppose it otherwise. Say, the Lord has been severely chastening you of late; you are just recovering from a painful sickness; have lost a child; had an affliction in your family; something trying has happened today, yesterday, or the last week in your worldly circumstances; or the Lord has set to his hand, and wrought more powerfully upon your soul than he has for months past; you have been cut up with convictions, felt your backslidings, and could scarcely bear to creep to chapel, lest you should hear your own condemnation.

You are the very person whom God is chastening that he may teach out of his law. You were not in a fit state before to hear; you were thinking how tedious the minister was, and wondering when he would finish the sermon; your mind was full of wandering thoughts, or you were caviling at all you heard. But now you have an ear to hear; a sigh and a cry in your heart, and lips when you come to chapel; and in groaning out your petition before you come, you say, 'O Lord, will you speak one word to my soul tonight? Will you kindly look upon a poor vile backslider? O do manifest yourself to me!' This is teaching following chastening. You must have chastening first; you must first be brought to your senses, have a heart given you to feel; have many stripes laid upon you to bring your wandering feet back to the paths of righteousness; and then the gospel is for you.

The promises of mercy, the sweet invitations, the forgivenesses with God, and all the blessings which the gospel is filled with, are for those whom the Lord brings down and chastens. And therefore, there are very few people who are really in a state fit to hear the gospel, the precious love of God as revealed in the Person of Christ. This is the reason why we have so many hardened antinomians in our day; so many dry, doctrinal professors, whose lives, conduct, and conversation are disgraceful to the name they profess. It is because they are not chastened. And this makes them the bitterest enemies to real experimental truth, and to the men who speak out of the fullness of a believing, exercised heart. There is a connection, therefore, between being chastened, afflicted, exercised, and being taught "out of the law." God does not teach, and afterwards chasten for disobedience--but he first brings down the heart with labor, and then sows in it the seeds of instruction.

II. But we pass on to our second branch, which is, the reason why the Lord chastens and teaches his children--"that he may give them rest from days of adversity." There are "days of adversity" coming; and these may be more serious than any one at present expects. We may have days of great adversity and troublous times as regards the country generally. We may have persecutions. We may have calamitous times as regards business, trade, and worldly circumstances; and these things affect all men. We are so linked together, so dependent upon each other, that whatever touches one touches all. If troublous times come, they will touch the church as well as the world. What a blessing, then, for God's people, if they have a rest from the "days of adversity;" if they have a God to go to, a Jesus to lean on, a lap to be dandled in, and a bosom to pillow their aching heads.

But, supposing the political horizon is not overshadowed; supposing worldly matters are peaceable and quiet, there may be "days of adversity" of another character. You may have a long and painful sickness, be brought into very trying circumstances; you that are now in comparative comfort may be brought down to poverty; you may have a very heavy affliction in your family; and see little else but "days of adversity." These will come, and we cannot prevent them. We can no more say "the day of adversity" shall not come, than we can say, tomorrow will not be a rainy day, or that the shadow will not attend tomorrow's sunshine. The Lord, then, knowing the "days of adversity" which are in store; knowing that sickness and death are coming, has prepared a rest beforehand; "Come, my people," he says, "enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by." Isaiah 26:20

But how do we get this "rest?" By being chastened and by being taught. Until we are chastened, we make the world our home; and a very pleasant paradise it is. Our children, our friendships, our pursuits, our worldly ease, the many airy castles that we build up, are all very pleasant to us until strokes of chastisement come, and the Lord begins to afflict us in body, in family, or in soul. Yet how kind it is, and all the kinder for being painful, for the Lord to chasten us back to our true home. Our child may perhaps be away from home; there is a storm gathering; the thunder is ready to break forth; and he is about to be exposed to the lightning's flash. If he loiters, are you dealing unkindly with him if you whip him home? Is not every stroke a kindness that brings him out of the thunderstorm? It is so spiritually. The Lord sees that there is a thunderstorm gathering; the lightnings are about to flash; the rain to pour; the hail to strike. Is not every stroke a kind stroke, a stroke of love that brings the wanderer home to find shelter under God's wing until this storm be overpast? We might be wandering abroad in the world with our heads exposed to the lightning stroke; we might hear the warning peal, and be yet too far from home to get there in time; but the Lord foreseeing "the days of adversity," comes with strokes and drives us home. He will not let us lie down in the green fields and flowery meadows, and sleep under the trees.

His strokes are strokes dipped in love; and, however cutting to the flesh, if blessed by the Spirit, they are made instrumental in driving us home, bringing us to our right mind, and showing us where true rest is only to be found--in Christ, in his Person, love, blood, grace, and suitability; in all that he is and all that he has. What a wise and kind parent, then, he is to chasten us, though painful at the time, and to teach us out of his law and gospel, that he may give us rest from "the days of adversity."

III. But we come to our third point; what the Lord is preparing in the meanwhile for the ungodly. There is no chastening for them; no teaching for them; no preparing a rest for them; or preparing them for rest. What, then, is awaiting them? What a striking figure here the Lord makes use of! "Until the pit be dug for the wicked." What is the figure? Is it not this? In Eastern countries, the ordinary mode of catching wild beasts is to dig a pit, and fix sharp spears in the bottom--and when the pit has been dug sufficiently deep, it is covered over with branches of trees, earth, and leaves, until all appearances of the pitfall are entirely

concealed. What is the object? That the wild beast intent upon bloodshed-the tiger lying in wait for the deer, the wolf roaming after the sheep, the lion prowling for the antelope, or the elephant breaking through the jungle, not seeing the pitfall, but rushing on and over it, may not see their doom until they break through and fall upon the spears at the bottom.

What a striking figure is this! Here are the ungodly, all intent upon their purposes; prowling after evil, as the wolf after the sheep, or the tiger after the deer, thinking only of some worldly profit, some covetous plan, some lustful scheme, something the carnal mind delights in; but on they go, not seeing any danger until the moment comes when, as Job says, "they go down to the bars of the pit." The Lord has been pleased to hide their doom from them; the pit is all covered over with leaves of trees, grass, and earth. The very appearance of the pit was hidden from the wild beasts; they never knew it until they fell into it, and were transfixed. So it is with the wicked; both with the professors and the profane. There is no fear of God, no taking heed to their steps, no cry to be directed, no prayer to be shown the way; no pausing, no turning back--on they go, on they go; heedlessly, thoughtlessly, recklessly; pursuing some beloved object--on they go, on they go; until in a moment they are plunged eternally and irrevocably into the pit!

There are many such both in the professing church as well as in the ungodly world. The Lord sees what they are, and where they are; he knows where the pit is; in what part of the wood; how situated in the jungle. God knows their steps; he sees them hurrying on, hurrying on, hurrying on. All is prepared for them. The Lord gives them no forewarning, no notice of their danger; no teachings, no chastenings, remonstrances, no frowns, no stripes; they are left to themselves to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until they approach the pit that has been dug for them, and then down they sink to the bottom!

This will never be the case with the righteous. They are forewarned; they take heed to their ways; the Lord chastens them before times; he teaches them out of his law; he gives them right and deep views of his purity and holiness; and shows them also the refuge which he has prepared for them in the love and blood of the Lamb. Thus, in "the days of adversity," they have a solemn resting-place in the bosom of God, in his covenant faithfulness and love.

Now do you lay these things to heart? How have you come to chapel this evening? What has God done for your soul? Has curiosity or some other motive brought you here? Or do you come hoping to hear that which will do you good, and be spiritually and lastingly profitable? Have you found anything spoken this evening suitable to your case and state? Can you find, looking back on the dealings of God with you in providence or grace, that he has been chastening you? Do fix your eyes, you who desire to fear God, on this mark- say to yourselves, 'Lord, have I been chastened of you? Can I see in my various afflictions the hand of God? Have they done my soul good? Have they been a voice speaking to my heart? Have they brought forth in me the fruits of holiness? Can I say, Lord, "Blessed is the man whom you chasten;" and I am that man?' If so, you are not the wicked. God is not digging a pit for you; he is chastening you before times that he may "give you rest from the days of adversity;" you have a God to go to, and a blessed bosom to lean upon when "the days of adversity" come, and the wicked fall headlong into the pit.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/the-blessedness-of-divine-chastening/>

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