

Reproof

#0615

Study given by W.D. Frazee—November 30, 1957

We have been impressed with the prominence of Moses and Elijah. They were especially chosen by the Father to stand by the side of His Son on the mount of transfiguration, and encourage Him. Moses and Elijah appear as the representatives of the great harvest of the saved. Moses as one raised from the dead. Elijah as one translated without seeing death. These men are outstanding in their attitude toward sin and the method they used to deal with sin. God moved upon them to reprove and rebuke sin.

They dealt definitely with it. This made them unpopular. They were apposed. The people liked Aaron much better than Moses, because Aaron was soft and yielding. But the smile of God rested upon Moses while His disapproval rested upon Aaron for his yielding to compromise. Elijah was confronted with the question from Ahab, Art thou he that troublest Israel?

Elijah lost no time in answering, I have not troubled Israel, but thy and thy father's house have forsaken the Lord and have served Baal.

In the light of the experience of these two men that God used so marvelously, we will study reproof and rebuke. In the message to the Laodiceans, and we are numbered among that people, I read:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” Revelation 3:19.

Does God love you? Then He will rebuke you as long as there is any sin in your life. When sin is all gone rebuke will be over. God takes no pleasure in rebuking anyone, much less His people. But there is one thing that hurts God far more than rebuking someone, and it is to see that person lost. God deals with sin as the surgeon does with skin cancer. He applies the knife of correction and rebuke that the deadly peril may be removed.

There are millions today that have a view of the character of God. They think God is too loving to do anything drastic about sin. The sad fact is that many people have gotten that idea from the attitude of parents who were too loving to deal sternly and stiffly with transgression.

In the last chapter of Malachi it is the prophet Elijah that is to come just before the great and dreadful day of the Lord to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. Aaron will never get it done. Eli will never get it done. Elijah must come and do it. And it is the message of stern rebuke. There is love there. And it is love that prompts the rebuke. It is love that motivates correction. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” If God loves you He rebukes you.

What does chasten mean? When I was a boy they called it a whipping. I am sorry that it is largely out of the vocabulary of the present generation. There are children today who have never gotten one. There is a certain school of psychology that holds that isn't the thing. Of course, psychologists are very wise, and God's word is old fashioned.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." This is in what message? The Laodicean message. I read:

"I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them" *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 3, page 255.

God points out the spiritual blindness and nakedness. He exhorts us:

"I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see"
Revelation 3:18.

We are blind. We don't see. So God says as many as I love I rebuke and chasten. The main reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction. There is a philosophy that is gaining ground today which says that all our people need is good positive messages of encouragement. Speaking of the love of God in a positive way. They don't need to be reproved. They don't need to be rebuked.

Is the True Witness mistaken then? Now it is true that we need to do a good deal of positive education. But I call attention that when God wrote the Ten Commandments to man in his fallen state nearly every commandment begins with three words—Thou shalt not. Some schools of psychology would say that is wrong on the face of it. It is wrong to start with. It is wrong to tell people what they must not do, for right away they want to do what they are told they must not do.

Have you ever heard that argument? I heard a man once tell an audience of thousands of people that when Adam and Eve were told in the Garden of Eden not to eat of that one tree, right away that was the tree they wanted to eat of. He was speaking against prohibition, and that was his argument.

We need to beware lest the serpent beguiled Eve should also beguile us from the true, high standards that God has given us in His words and the testimonies of His Spirit. That relates not only to truth, but the methods in teaching it and seeing that it is carried out.

Eli talked. He said to his sons, I don't hear good reports about you. These are bad things. I wish you wouldn't do that. He was using some modern language. But they went ahead and did it anyway. It will take more than pious platitude. It will take

more than mere pleading. It takes rebuke and reproof to get God's people ready. We all need it old and young. We all need it until we are ready for the kingdom.

The 9 volumes of the *Testimonies* have in them thousands of rebukes and reproofs. Some of them are found in personal testimonies to Brother A and Sister B and Brother C and Sister D. You can find them all the way through. But it is interesting that as you read them you wonder how so much that fits you was written down before you were born. I can turn to many a page and have no difficulty at all in reading my name. And I am so glad that all this is evidence of my Father's love. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." I am glad He loves me. I am glad He hasn't left me without rebuke.

It is amazing how rapidly we could learn some lessons if we would be willing to get rebuke and do something about it. What is your idea of rebuke anyway? Is it someone getting so exasperated that they blow off the handle and tell you what they think of you? Well if it is, you probably don't like it very well. That is one way to get rebuke. And I suppose if all other means fail, God may allow it sometimes. I don't mean He inspires it. But I have learned a lesson from people whom I have exasperated. It is a hard way to learn it, but it is better to learn it that way than not to learn it at all. I don't think we should seek to follow that method, but when it is used on us we ought to salvage all the good we can get out of it.

Rebuke and reproof is to be given in love. But that doesn't mean they are to be watered down. It doesn't mean the sharp edge is to be blunted or dulled. Nathan came to David, moved by the Spirit of God, and very wisely and tactfully presented to him the parable of the poor man with the one lamb, and the rich man, who passing by his numerous flocks and herds, took that poor man's one lamb to dress for the visitor. And when David's righteous indignation arose at that, and he pronounced sentence. Nathan, looking right at David said, Thou art the man. The Spirit of Prophecy says that if those words were not so rare today we would see more of the power of God.

Of course, it is well when you start to point your finger at a man and say, Thou art the man, that you are sure you know it. Nathan did.

I am not seeking to study the giving of reproof, although it is important. I am seeking to study the receiving of reproof. And no person, old or young, is properly qualified to give reproof unless he has gotten a master's degree in receiving reproof.

Can you take reproof? There are two kinds. One is the kind you deserve, and the other is the kind you don't deserve. Usually God lets us learn something about it on the first kind. But when we have fully mastered that, our lessons are not over. Then we get a postgraduate course on the second kind. Of course, there is a mingling of the two all the way through. But don't think that when you have gotten over everything that deserves reproof that you have passed reproof. You will get reproof for some things you don't deserve reproof for. And once you learn how, it is the easiest kind to take. It is the truth that hurts. I would much rather people would rebuke me for something I haven't done than something I have done. On many points I would much rather people would tell lies about me than tell the truth about me. I know quite a bit about myself.

But we must learn, whether the reproof is deserved and undeserved, that God has a precious lesson in it for us. God allows every rebuke that comes to us. Whether it comes to us as students in school, helpers in an institution, members of a family, members of the church, or whatever the relationship that brings about the occasion for reproof, let us learn to know that it is the Father's love that allows that reproof and rebuke to come to us, and that there is a precious lesson in it for us.

If we had to buy praise and rebuke in the market, and were buying them by the pound, if we paid a dollar a pound for sweet smelling and sweet tasting praises, we might have to pay twenty dollars a pound for rebuke. It is worth far more.

I would like to notice some Bible verses. I am going to give a list of texts from Proverbs:

“And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me” Proverbs 5:11-13.

What a sad picture. The end of the boy or girl that doesn't like reproof and wouldn't listen to their teacher.

“For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” Proverbs 6:23.

Reproof is the way of life. Isn't that wonderful? The way to live is to get some reproof.

“Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee” Proverbs 9:8.

Are you a wise man? You can tell whether you are or not. If someone rebukes you and you love them, you are wise. But if you say that person has it in for me and I am going to have it in for him, that proves you are a fool.

By the way, why should a wise man need rebuke? Do you think they need rebuke? Certainly. Solomon was the wisest of men, and he needed it by the tub full. Too bad he hadn't listened to it more. There has never been a man in this world from the fall of Adam on that needed rebuke.

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise” Proverbs 12:15.

Why is it a foolish man doesn't want rebuke? Because everything he does is right in his own eyes, so he thinks he doesn't need it. But that is why we need rebuke. We need to see how it looks to someone else. I will read an interesting statement. This is a talk that Sister White gave over in Norway many years ago:

“I remember when we were looking for the Saviour to come in 1844 how great was the anxiety of each to know that his own heart was right before God. When we met together the question would be asked by one and another, Brethren, have you seen anything in me that is not right? I know that we are often blind to our own faults, and if you have seen anything wrong in me I want you to tell me. Sometimes errors would be pointed out, and we would all bow before God and seek forgiveness. If any variance or alleviation existed we felt that we could not separate until all were in harmony. Sometimes brethren who had difficulty would be seen going away together to some secret place to plead with God, and they would return with their hearts knit together in love. The sweet spirit of peace was in our assemblies, and the glory of God was around us. The faces of the believers shone with the light of heaven” *Historical Sketches*, page 213.

Would you dare do that if someone asked you to? I remember a woman years ago who asked for something like this, and when she got it she felt awful. It is possible to ask for criticism and what you are hoping for is ok. It is possible to say, I know the way I did wasn't good at all, hoping that someone would say, Oh, you just did so fine and wonderful.

“A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke” Proverbs 13:1.

Are you a wise son? Some sons are so wise they can't listen to their father. But is that real wisdom? No. It isn't. It is the kind of knowledge that Paul says puffeth up. And some young men get very puffed up.

Some American author told about how when he first went to college and came home his father didn't seem to know anything. But several years later he came back and it was amazing how much his father had learned in those few years. Of course, it was the boy that had gotten conceit out.

You who are in your teens, God knows that you and I don't have to go through those periods of conceit and foolish arrogance. John the Baptist didn't, and I am sure I know the Lord Jesus didn't. The idea that certain follies are necessary to certain ages is simply not so. You don't have to be fools just because you are in adolescence.

The world does. That is the bus they are traveling on. But children, if you will take the Bible and listen to these texts we are studying this morning, what a world of heartache you can be save yourselves, and what a world of heartache you can save your parents and teachers.

“A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent” Proverbs 15:5.

Notice how these two verses go together. A wise son heareth his father's instruction, but a fool despiseth his father's instruction. Yet isn't it interesting how human wisdom thinks it is a mark of wisdom to resent and reprove reproof and correction?

"A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise" Proverbs 15:12.

Does this indicate that we must wait for the reprover to come to us? There are times when we could seek it out. There are some reproofs so valuable that you can get them only by going after them.

"He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding" Proverbs 15:32.

We sometimes think that we are working for our own interest and against others when we despise reproof, but it is the other way around. We are sinning against our own soul when we despise it.

"A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool" Proverbs 17:10.

I want you to notice the working. He doesn't say it will do him more good, but probably it will. Notice he says that reproof enters more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool. A hundred stripes laid on the back of a fool ought to teach him something, but sometimes all they do is get on his back. But a wise man will take a reproof, and it will enter into his mind and heart.

Reproof hurts. And there are some souls that reproof hurts more than a whipping would. I think it ought to be that way. I don't think there is anything wrong with reproof for sin hurting us. I would hate to get such a hard shell like a turtle that it didn't hurt. It ought to. If it would hurt us bad enough we would never do it again. And I don't think we need to do too much in trying to sweeten up reproof in the sense of making it a palatable potion. It ought to be given in love, but it is still castor oil.

Parents need to watch this with children. There are some children who know that when their parents disapprove in what they have done it hurts them more than a whipping would hurt some other child. There are some children that the only way to learn is, as a friend of mine said, to put the application of the board of education to the seat of learning. But children are different, and some can learn merely by reproof. And the wiser we are the less of the physical it takes, and the more of the mental reproof can be received.

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" Proverbs 23:13-14.

I wonder why Solomon put that text in. Well, I suppose that some of us might remember that when we got something we felt like we were going to die. But Solomon said it will not kill him. Instead of killing him, it is going to deliver his soul from hell. Do you believe that? Do you believe that beating a child with a rod will

deliver them from hell? I know there are some references to balance it, but those references need balancing with this.

I fear that the popular philosophy of today has made its impression on the remnant people. I fear that there is a philosophy in vogue today that looks upon whipping as being undesirable, and more or less a confession of failure on the part of the parent. Like every other thing it has been abused. Whipping can be overused. Children can be given too much food. But I haven't heard that if some children are over fed that no children should get any food at all. No, there is a proper amount of food. Most children somewhere along the line need the correction that is administered in a physical way. I think those who have studied it in the light of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy and human experience will agree that much of it could be given at an early age.

Someone was telling me of some of our missionaries in a foreign field who have some well-behaved children. Early in the life of some of the children, their grandfather, who was a doctor, came to visit. He came in and a child was crying. Presently the father said to his daughter, what about this? Being a doctor he got busy and asked a few questions. He made a diagnosis. He said, is it time for the child to eat? No. Is the child dry? Yes. Are none of its clothes too tight? No. All right, then there is no reason for it to cry. He went over and administered what Solomon is talking about here. And that little child learned. A few years later he never remembered it. He got it early enough to implant the lesson deep in his heart.

So I want to appeal to every parent, remember Solomon's counsel, "Withhold not correction from the child." And let me tell you that parents who withhold that correction from the child, thinking they are doing a service of love, are only postponing the hour of chastisement. And that you wouldn't give to the little child he must get out in society as he meets the angry looks and frowns of people who don't love him, and they are whipping him because of his disagreeable traits of character that you were too kind to prune away.

Sooner or later the child is going to get it. It may be in a prison cell. It may be in a reformatory. It may be in the electric chair that he will get that whipping which some mother or father was too lenient to administer.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" Proverbs 27:6.

A good friend will wound you now and then. It is too bad to terminate a friendship because of a rebuke. It ought to be the thing that ties friendship together. I appreciate friendship. I have a few, but I don't think any man ever gets more than a few of the kind of a friend that loves him enough to tell him the truth as they see it.

A few weeks ago I was visiting with a friend of mine, and I am planning to write him a letter and say, Dear So and So. I want to thank you for two things. First, you told me exactly how you looked at something I was doing. Second, you gave me a chance to be frank with you.

“He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”
Proverbs 29:1.

Ah, yes. This is the text that the Lord set ringing in my ears during the night that led me to present these things this morning. Over and over it went through my mind. Oh, dear one, has God reproved you on a certain point again and again? Has He reproved you through a parent or a teacher, a minister or some fellow church member, or through certain circumstances? Has He brought you again to a certain point, and you bowed up and stiffened your neck and said, Nobody is going to tell me what to do? Listen. He that is reproved gets a hard neck. He can hold up his head. He doesn't bow down in sorrow or repentance or meekness. He can hold his head high and boast of the fact that nobody is going to tell him what to do.

What happens? “He shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

Look at Judas. He would not receive reproof. King Saul would not be corrected. And when the prophet of God came to him and pointed out that what he had done was wrong, Saul stood up and defended himself. He excused his transgressions. Finally God said, I can't use you.

David, a man that committed sins far more grievous, God could use because David got down on his face and accepted the reproof. He cried to God. He got forgiveness. He admitted his sins when the rebuke came instead of standing and defending himself.

As I have pointed out, this is for all of us. We all need reproof. We all need rebuke. We all need correction. Oh, let's ask God to give it and thank Him for it.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” Proverbs 29:15.

The Spirit of Prophecy says that any child that is permitted to have his own way will bring his father and mother to shame. Yet I see parents asking little ones what they want to do about this and that. And right in the presence of the child they will say, Oh, she won't take that. She won't do that. She won't eat that. She won't go there. A child left to himself brings his mother to shame.

I leave these texts with you. I hope you have made a list of them dealing with the question of reproofs and correction. Now I want to give a thought on our attitude toward others who are receiving reproof. It is very important.

“Whenever reproofs are given the enemy seeks to create in those reproofs a desire for human sympathy” *Historical Sketches*, page 137.

There is many a soul who is going to burn in the lake of fire because some church member sympathized with a soul under reproof. We are told that one of the brightest lights in this denomination, Doctor Kellogg, would have accepted the reproof in the crisis hour if it had not been for those who were close to him who

sympathized with him under reproof, and held up his hands against the Spirit of Prophecy. That is a sad thing.

You say sympathy is Godlike. Sometimes it is devilish. Back before this world was created Lucifer would never have gone to the lengths of rebellion that he did if he had not had the sympathy of the angels in heaven. It is because one third of those bright beings finally rallied around him that he thought, My, I have got millions with me. They tell me I am right, and I must be right. They tell me that God is wrong to rebuke me in this way, and God must be wrong.

“Reproof always hurts human nature. Many are the souls that have been destroyed by the unwise sympathy of their brethren; for, because the brethren sympathized with them, they thought they must indeed have been abused, and that the reprover was all wrong and had a bad spirit” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 3, page 329.

It is a hard thing today for parents to reprove and rebuke their children without friends and neighbors and relatives stepping in between the parent and the child, telling the child that it is being abused.

“Those who step in to destroy the edge of sharp reproof that God sends, saying that the reprover was partly wrong and the reproofed was not just right, please the enemy. . . . Some will lay blame upon the one whom God has sent with a message of warning, saying, He is too severe; and in so doing they become responsible for the soul of the sinner whom God desired to save, and to whom, because He loved him, He sent correction, that he might humble his soul before God and put his sins from him. These false sympathizers will have an account to settle with the Master by and by for their work of death” *Ibid*.

Reproof is like surgery. It pains like surgery does. And like surgery, it is not something that is to be done all the time. No doctor with a knowledge of the human body would be taking a knife out every time he sees a patient. And no parent and teacher who understands the subject we are studying will be reproofing and rebuking all the time. That is picking and pecking, and it make a raw sore that never heals.

Let no one take license from what we are studying this morning to be pecking at people. That is not a healthful thing in a home or church or anywhere else. Let us go to God, the Faithful Reprover, and let us learn from Him how to give reproof, and how to deal wisely with those who are under reproof. And let us plead with Him when we are reproofed that we may cultivate a spirit of appreciation, remembering the words of the True Witness to the Laodiceans, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

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W.D. Frazee Sermons
P.O. Box 129, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org