

THE LORD CHIDING HIS PEOPLE

NO. 1171

A SERMON
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*“He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.”
Psalm 103:9.*

THIS verse has reference only to the children of God. The psalm is for them; they alone can sing it, and this statement concerns them only; for this reason, that the wrath of the great judge of all the earth is removed from every true child of God. Our sins were laid upon Jesus Christ, and He bore them for us; the penalty due to us on account of them, or its equivalent, has been endured by Jesus Christ, our substitute. Therefore, as before the throne of God there is no accusation against a believer, the justice of God has no anger towards him. “Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comfort me,” is the proper language of every justified man! But let it never be forgotten that in pursuance of His gracious plan, God, who has blotted out our offenses as rebellious subjects, has now placed us in a new relationship, for, by *adoption* and the new birth, we have become His children, and He is our Father. Though He neither *can* nor *will* ever summon us before the bar of His jurisdiction, either to charge us with sin, or condemn us for it, inasmuch as Jesus Christ has put that sin away, yet, as our Father, He exercises discipline among His family, and we, as His children, are both chided and chastened for our faults. The sword of justice no longer threatens us, but the rod of parental correction is still in use; the judge no longer condemns, but the Father chides—“For what son is he whom his father chastens not.”

Remember, then, that we are not about to speak of believers under the law, or the anger arising out of the breach thereof; by His grace we are quite clean from all the mire of that slough of legality. We are about to treat of believers as the adopted, twice-born children of God, and of the rule of the Lord's household, and the chiding and chastisement which are necessary to it. The text seems to me to say two things. First, *He will chide*; secondly, *He will not always chide*, neither will He keep His anger forever.

I. The text very plainly says to us who choose to hear it, HE WILL CHIDE. It is implied that He will be *angry*, otherwise it were not necessary to say that, “He will not keep His anger forever.” *Why will He chide?* There are many answers, but we can mention only a few. He will chide His own dearly beloved children, first, because if He did not do so it would seem like winking at sin. Eli did not restrain his sons or chasten them as he should have done, and, therefore, judgments fell upon his house. God is not foolishly gentle like that aged priest; He will sorely smite His children if they follow iniquity. David had never displeased Adonijah at any time in saying, “Why have you done so?” And therefore on his death-bed the old man heard the news that his much-indulged son was seeking to snatch the crown from Solomon, his appointed heir! God is no indulgent David; He does not spare His children the chidings due to their sins. “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” In His people, sin is sin, and even yet more heinous than in those who are outside of the family, seeing that they sin against greater light and greater love of God! Sin is in the elect of God exceedingly sinful; the Lord regards it as an intolerable evil which His soul hates; it must be cleansed as by burning, for He will bring His people through the fire and refine them as silver is refined. Has He not said of His chosen, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities”? A man may suffer a stranger's child to do many wrong things without laying his hand upon him, but he makes his own child to smart if he dares to disobey.

God chastens and chides His children, next, because if He did not, others of the family would follow their evil; example. If I knew a man who lived in sin, and yet enjoyed the light of God's countenance, should I not naturally conclude that I, also, may live as he does, and yet walk in the light as God is in the light? If we had heard of David's sin with Bathsheba and had never read of his horror of soul, his broken

bones and bleeding heart, would we not have inferred that we, also, might fall into the same filthiness, and find it a very small matter to return into the way of righteousness again? Every father among you knows that he has often to chasten his child's bad behavior; not only for its own sake, but for the sake of the younger children, for if the fault were overlooked they might come to do the same. Sometimes a frown which might have been spared the individual, considered by him, must be put upon the parent's face for the sake of brothers and sisters, lest they should fall into the same fault. Remember that the Lord has a large family, and like a wise father He considers the interests of all; consequently He does not allow sin to go unchided, lest it breed folly in others! Moreover, the world outside the regenerated family looks on with unfriendly eyes; if the erring child of God were never chided or chastened, then would worldlings say, "What does it matter that God denounces sin in us, when He winks at it in His own family?"

Would we not say of a minister who preached holiness, but who allowed his own sons to indulge in vice, "Why is it that he does not begin at home?" Is it not natural for us to think that those who are in real earnest for piety and holiness will be sure to show it by the way in which they restrain their own children, and conduct the affairs of their own house? If we see that a Christian man's daughters are the wildest of the group, and the most frivolous of the frivolous, do we not say at once, "What a pity it is that he speaks about evil in others, and yet does not set his own house in order"? It is mentioned as an essential qualification for a pastor that "he rules well his own house; for if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" Of the deacons, also, it is said that they must "rule their children and their own houses well," from which we gather that a man who cannot govern his children can never be anything but a rear-rank soldier of Christ; a poor, feeble Christian at best!

Now, shall it ever be said that the great Father of Spirits does not enforce discipline in His own house? Will the greatest of all householders allow it to be whispered throughout the world that He allows His favorites to do as they please, and His darlings to indulge in sin without chiding them? God forbid! It must not be so imagined! What says the apostle Paul in Hebrews? "Even our God is a consuming fire." He does not say that God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire, for God in Christ is *our God*—and in that character He is a consuming fire, burning with infinite jealousy against sin! The terrified hypocrites in Zion, who are spoken of by Isaiah, asked a hard question, but it is one which we must answer—"Who among us shall dwell with that devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Only he can so dwell who "walks righteously and speaks uprightly," "but he shall dwell on high, his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, his bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure" (Isa 33:14-16). It is not possible for the thrice holy Jehovah to act otherwise towards sin than as fire to feel, hence those who dwell with Him must be pure! God must, for the outside world's sake, judge among His own people, separating the precious from the vile, and passing even the precious gold through the fire to cleanse it from its dross—thus making His people to be a holy people, separated unto His fear. His fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem. Judgment begins at the house of God.

But, beloved, there is another reason which more nearly concerns ourselves—God must chide us when we do evil, for our own sakes, or else the evil would lie festering in us, breeding I know not what of deadly mischief! Often we do not know sin to be sin till the Lord chides us for it, or we do not perceive the high degree of its sinfulness till we hear His solemn tones rebuking us lovingly but sharply, that we may be sound in His fear. This divine Chiding lays open the sore which otherwise might have worked inwardly to mortal sickness. Besides, if sin were not chided, one fault would lead to another, and we should go from bad to worse. That gradual decline which saps the bodily constitution of many would happen to our *souls*—and we would fall little by little. Gray hairs would be upon us here and there—and we would not know it. The Lord reins us up, when our steps are almost gone, and gives us a sharp blow such as a skillful driver deals to a stumbling horse! And then we run more carefully, pick up our feet in the dangerous pathway, and so hold on and hold out to the end. It is necessary, beloved, and for our good, that we should bear His chiding, else sin would, before long, pierce us through with many sorrows! I am never afraid for my brothers and sisters who have many troubles, but I often tremble for those whose career is prosperous; to be emptied from vessel to vessel with trouble is often the best thing which can befall us, but to stand at ease till the lees subside, and yet be there, is the greatest danger of Christians in these days! The dregs of sin fall to the bottom out of sight because we are not agitated by

them, and then we get the notion that we are wholly refined and clear from sin—when it is only because we are not stirred that our impurities do not rise to the surface! brothers and sisters, it is good, sometimes, to be stirred up with a temptation that you may see what a hell there is in the depravity of your nature, and what a fiend you are apart from the grace of God! This humbles you, drives you to prayer, and makes you cry out for real purity—and so it is a blessed thing! But to have ease and freedom from toil, never to have your temper tried, never to have your patience exercised; to have a long period of prosperity is often to breed in you an estimate of yourself which is totally false. You are no better than other men, but you happen not to be as much tempted as other men, and so you become conceited, which is one of the most grievous of calamities!

Now, the Lord can see the residue which we do not see; He knows what lees are at the bottom of the vessel, and, therefore, He chides us, tells us of our secret faults, and makes our faces to be suffused with blushes, though just before this we were full of self-exultation! Remember, also, that while sin would lie in us and fester, and we should also grow conceited, we may be sure that we would never attain any high position in grace if it were not for the chidings of the Lord. His rebukes throw us on our faces before the cross, and we are then nearer heaven than at any other time! Beloved, if we become satisfied with what we *are*, we shall cease to struggle after anything *better*—and become stunted professors! There is grave cause in every one of us for dissatisfaction with our condition from one point of view or another, and, therefore, it is a thousand mercies for the divine reproofs for our weakness of faith, for the coldness of our love, for the distance of our walk with Him! The Lord's corrections are the thorns in our nest which make us soar towards heaven! His chiding shows us our emptiness, and leads us to apply to the fullness which is prepared for us.

I cannot, however, stop to show you many more of the wise, tender, fatherly, gracious reasons why the Lord chides His people, but I will answer another question. *How does He do it?* I answer, sometimes He rebukes His people by the sin itself; they sow it and He lets them reap it! There is no more fitting retribution than for the backslider in heart to be filled with his own ways; if you sow wild oats they will make bitter cakes when they are reaped and ground—and you are made to eat them! The Lord treats us as Aaron treated Israel; he took their golden calf and ground it to powder, strewed it on the water and made them drink it! Very sharp and burning is the concoction made from our darling sins; more bitter than gall is the wine which flows from the grapes of transgression. Sin's *result* is its punishment! Abraham's unbelief chastened itself when he found his wife taken by the Philistine king. A worse case is that of Lot; he did not keep the separated path as he ought to have done, but chose to dwell with the men of Sodom. And when he saw all his property destroyed by the flames which fell from heaven; when his sons-in-law perished, and his wife was turned into a pillar of salt; he must have seen in his sorrows the very image of his sins! Who brought this upon you, Lot? Who made you what you are? What but your worldliness? And who but yourself, in your greedy choice of the well-watered plain of Sodom, and your forsaking of the pilgrim walk with God?

Child of eternal love, your God will gather twigs for His rod out of your own garden! Like Gideon, He will chastise you with thorns and briers, and those sharp teachers He will gather from the neglected corner of the field which you should have cultivated for your Lord! Frequently He chastens His people by His providence. Chastisements come to us through sickness of body and depression of spirit, losses in business or failures of enterprise; trouble in the family or attacks from the outside world may be other ways, but here we must be careful to discriminate, for all trials are *not* chastisements—many are sent as tests of integrity, or illustrations of faith; some are sent to afford us opportunities of winning crowns for Christ, and honor for Him! In fact, trials may be regarded very often as great favors and special privileges! “Whom the Lord loves He chastens,” and, “Every branch that bears fruit He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” You must not think, because you are afflicted, that you have been more sinful than others, for it may be you are more beloved! Tribulation is often a gracious *reward* for faithfulness, affording, as it does an opportunity for the exercise of yet higher virtue! Yet many troubles *are* manifestly chastisements. When Rebekah saw her darling son driven away from his father's house, was not that a chastisement for her teaching him lies? When afterwards Jacob found himself deceived by Laban, what was that but a chastisement for the deceit which he had practiced against his brother Esau? God's providence is disciplinary towards His own household; David's sin was followed by a pestilence; Hezekiah's

proud display of his riches to the Babylonian ambassadors brought on captivity; Asa's transgression caused the rest of his life to be troubled with wars. A happy life can be changed into one of care and affliction by careless living, for God may order all events for the correction of His rebellious child! But the Lord as often chides His people by the withdrawal of privileges! Full assurance is one of the first blessings taken from those who wander—faith burns dimly, and those who could once read their title clear, now spell it out with many questions by a smoking lamp, whose light is but a glimmer! They formerly could say, "I know." Now they can barely cry, "I hope." Their faith is weak because it does not now lie in the same atmosphere, since the manifested love of God has ceased to shine upon them.

The Lord also denies His blessing to the means of grace, and they become wells without water, and clouds without rain. The sermon is not sweet as it used to be; even the Bible is not as comforting as before; the joyous assemblies are now sorrowful, the feasts are turned to fasts, the Bethels to Bochims, the hymns to howls. The wail of the mourner will be, "O that it was with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me." Private prayer soon becomes weariness, and all the exercises of secret devotion are carried on as matters of *duty* rather than as sources of enjoyment. The Father also chides His children by taking from them their fellowship with Himself. They dare no longer sing, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." Their cry is, "Where has my Beloved gone, that I may seek Him?" At the Lord's Table the emblems are no longer gates of pearl to admit to the secret chambers of the King! The beloved is gone and the sun is eclipsed; now they are in the dark, though once they basked in the sunlight. Some here know all about this, and they will tell you that there is no worse chastening than to be deserted of God, and deprived of His present smile.

Then there will happen to you a great withdrawal of power in prayer; you used to ask and have, but now you are made to wait and knock long and loud before the gate opens to you. Once you were such a favorite with the King that when you had His ear, you spoke to Him for your child, and that child's soul was given to you! You sought favors and they came into your bosom at once; you told the Well-beloved your daily troubles with sweet familiarity, and they were all relieved at once! Whatever you asked in prayer, you received, because you kept His commandments; but now you have walked contrary to Him, and He walks contrary to you! The heavens are as brass above you, and your prayer comes back to you unanswered! Thus does the Lord chide you. It happens, also, that the erring Christian's influence over others fades away. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." But when he gets out of step with God, his enemies take license to rage! Look at David! Did not the Lord let loose upon him that cursing Shimei, and open the mouth of Sheba, the son of Bichri, because he had sinned? As for Solomon, the great king, what cause had he to be afraid of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, or Hadad the Edomite, or Rezon of Damascus—until the day when he had cause to be afraid of his offended God? The lions are chained for Daniel, "the man greatly beloved," but they break loose upon the man who follows afar off, and roar upon him till he denies his Master! At times the Lord will chasten His servants by taking away all their success in service. They preached and souls were saved, but now they preach and there are no conversions! They went to the Sunday school class and the children's hearts were melted while they taught; it is not so now. Barrenness has fallen upon all their fields; their land is sown with salt; their vine forgets her fruit, for the Lord has said, "Inasmuch as you have left Me and sinned against Me, I also will leave you to your devices till you mourn and repent, and turn unto Me." May my Lord never thus chide *me*—I would choose any plague rather than that of barrenness!

Moreover, our heavenly Father chides by His Holy Spirit. Many of us know what it is for the Spirit of God to speak softly in our hearts and tell us we have done wrong the very moment we have transgressed; and happy is that man who bows before that voice, for he will thus escape the rod, since the Lord never comes to blows when words will suffice! The Spirit of God often sends home the reproofs of Scripture to our hearts; while we are reading the Word of God we feel that it searches us and rebukes us! So, also, the Lord will employ His ministers to chide us; little is that ministry worth which never chides you! If God never uses His minister as a rod, depend upon it, He will never use him as a pot of manna, for the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna always go together—and he who is God's true servant will be both to your soul! The Lord will also chide you through your own conscience, causing you to judge and condemn yourself! The Spirit of God will quicken your understanding, and then it will be said of you as

of David, “David’s heart smote him.” It is hard hitting when the heart smites, for it comes to such close quarters! But blessed is that man who can thus be corrected, for it is a sad sign when conscience is too dead to be of any service in this direction! I believe our heavenly Father, at times, chides His people through church discipline. I do not mean the discipline carried on by us through the minister, deacons, and the church itself; I refer to that solemn church discipline which goes on in the churches, and is often unobserved. Paul said of the disorders in the Corinthian church, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” Now, there is no reason to believe that these visitations of the Lord upon the churches have ceased.

Indeed, I am persuaded they have not! I have seen those who have walked inconsistently in this place die, one after another; when their inconsistencies have not been such as I could touch, but such as have grieved the children of God, the Lord has, Himself, executed discipline! Many cases which I shall never relate are written down in the tablets of my memory with this verdict, “Removed by the discipline of God.” I have seen others blighted in fortune, chastened in body, and especially depressed in spirit as the result of grieving the Spirit of God in the church. Church sins, such as injure peace and unity, dampen zeal and enterprise, or hinder prayer, or grieve holy men, are surely visited with stripes! There is no need for us to root up the tares, for the Spirit of God does it by His own processes! That same Spirit that was in Peter, and smote Ananias and Sapphira, is still in the church, not destroying *souls*, but taking away *life* or *health* as a solemn discipline upon grave offenses beyond the reach of human jurisdiction! I do not say that it is so in *all* churches, for some churches are barely churches of Christ at all! But when a church lives in the light of God, and when the Lord blesses that church and the Spirit of God is there, discipline from God will be decisive, for the Lord is very jealous for His name in such places! Depend upon it, one of the most awful conditions a man can hold, while it is also one of the most blessed, is to be in membership with a church that is much loved and smiled upon by God—for there is a searching wind of discipline sweeping through it continually of a more solemn kind than I shall care further to describe just now.

Now let us ask, *when does God chide?* I will answer very briefly, that He does not chide for every sin; His word chides for every sin, but I mean that the *Lord* does not, for every fault, actually chasten us in the sense here intended. He is angry when a sin has not been mourned over and repented of. When it is known to be sin and yet committed again; when it threatens to become chronic, so that the man will continue in it and it will become habitual, He is sure to chide! When a sin has special flagrancy about it; when it indulges the grosser lusts, or some utterly contemptible passion, or is associated with pride and presumption, He is sure to chide. Surely, also, He will rebuke when the opulence follows upon high privileges; if you lie in God’s bosom, you must watch that you do not offend; a common subject may do without punishment, but he who is the King’s favorite must not even think of it! We will take remarks from strangers that would wound us terribly if they came from those we love or from friends; if you are among the King’s courtiers, He will watch your walk with a jealous eye! Chiding is sure to come when the offender is not in circumstances which would suggest an excuse for his fault, such as a sudden temptation, or a fierce trial. Anything like a deliberate act of sin is certain to bring down the Father’s anger!

When the poor man in his extremity acts as he should not to gain bread for his babies, God will never view his offense in the same light as the greed of the man of wealth. Is not that an incidental lesson of Nathan’s parable in which the rich man’s many flocks aggravate his robbery of the poor man’s ewe lamb? Brethren, the sin which in me may be very grievous might be comparatively overlooked in you. And the sin which in you is pestilent before high heaven, might be far less grievous in another brother whose circumstances are less favorable than yours, whose temptations are stronger, and whose natural temperament, perhaps, may have a weakness in that direction. Anyway, the Lord does chasten His people, and displays both His wisdom and love in so doing.

II. We have been gazing at the black cloud; now let us look at the silver lining. Here is the text, itself, in its sweetness—“HE WILL NOT ALWAYS CHIDE.” What does that mean? It means that He will not chide for every fault. Of course, as I have already said, His Word chides even a sinful *thought* in His people, but the Lord does not fall to blows about it; He does not grow angry so that we feel His anger for every fault, but only for some, otherwise He would be chiding every minute! It means, too, that

He does not chide long. Oh, how often does He just chide for a moment, and then He has done, like a mother who speaks an angry word to her child and kisses it the next minute—

*“He will not always chide,
And when His strokes are felt,
His strokes are fewer than our crimes,
And lighter than our guilt.”*

It means, again, that He does not hold any grudges! That is the real meaning of the second clause. The words, “His anger,” are in italics; they are not in the Hebrew; they are supplied by our translators to complete the sense. It means just this, “Neither will He keep a grudge against us.” Many will say, “I forgive you,” but you know very well what sort of forgiveness it is! They pardon you because they cannot help themselves, and they forgive until the first opportunity comes of showing their spite. Not so with God! He has no grudge against His children; He smites them and has done with it! Whenever God uses a rod on His children, He always burns it as soon as He has done with it! He does not put it up by the mirror as I have seen it in some families, but He destroys it, for He hates the sight of it. Thus He used Sennacherib as a rod, and then He broke him in pieces! He used Babylon for the same purpose, and then blotted it out of existence! He employed Assyria, also, but He destroyed her power. The rod reminds Him of His children’s cries, and He cannot endure it.

The text especially means that there is no eternal wrath for a child of God. He may be angry with me, but my soul, in her deepest agony, clutches at this thought, “He will not *always* chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.” Anger forever is for the ungodly! Oh, you unconverted ones; He *will* keep His anger forever against you! So long as God’s word is to be understood as it stands, we shall believe that as surely as His love is everlasting, so is His wrath eternal against the impenitent! He will keep His wrath forever against *you*, but not against believers! Blessed be His name, when the rod makes the bluest welts, we may still rejoice that He will not slay us, “neither will He keep His anger forever.” I may lie tossing on the bed of pain, but I shall never make my bed in hell! I may be brought to poverty, but not to perdition! I may suffer loss, but I shall not, myself, be lost eternally! What a comfort is this! The positive meaning of the text is that the Lord will soon leave off chiding—but *when will He leave off chiding?* Beloved, He will refrain from chastening when we begin *repenting*—when we come to tears—*then* He will cease from rebukes! He wants to make us see the sin and mourn it, and then will He cease to see it and forgive it!

He will chide till we come to Jesus Christ as we came at first. When He brings us to our knees with, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” He will no more send us away unheard than He sent the publican away unblest. Go, poor prodigal, and weep your confession into your Father’s bosom—and He will not make mention of chiding, for He forgives graciously and upbraids not. He will chide us till we forsake our sin; the rod and our backs will never part till our hearts and sin are separated. When we put an end to sin, there shall be an end to chastening! Often the Lord will not refrain from chiding till the results of the sin as well as the sin, itself, shall have been removed. He will chasten us till our bad example shall have been, in a measure, counteracted by our sorrows. For instance, David’s foul sin would have done great mischief to the church, but David’s bitter repentance has become a cure for that evil. When Christian people are able to see that you have to suffer and sorrow because of your sin, then, as far as they are concerned, God’s reason for chiding you will have ended, and He will turn to you in His infinite Mercy.

Do you inquire of me, *why is it that God will not always chide His people?* Blessed be God, there are many reasons for it! One is because He does not mean to confuse chastisement with punishment! The law is angry *forever*, but the gospel is full of *pity*. God would not have His children treated as if they were slaves—they have not come to Sinai, but to Zion! Moreover, if the Lord *did* always chide, our spirits would fall before Him, for we would be crushed! When He rebukes, our beauty fades away like the moth, and if He continued to do so we should die. It is always a sad thing, when a parent crushes a child’s spirit, as is sometimes done, and the child is made obedient and stupid, too. God will not thus injure His children, and, therefore, He will not always chide. To chide too much might lead to other sins, for if the sin is love of pleasure, we might be chided into despondency, unbelief, despair, and I know not what! The great Father stays His hand, lest in driving out one devil He should drive 10 in, as some parents do. He will not always chide, lest His enemies should exult over His people, for they are always

ready to say, “Aha, so we would have it.” The wicked world is glad to exult over a chastened saint, but we can say, “Rejoice not over *me*, O my enemy, for the Lord will not always chide.” He has said, “For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercy will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord my Redeemer.” After all, remember that when God chastens His children, He loves them just as much as when He caresses them; there is no change in Jehovah’s love, though there may be changes in His ways of showing it!

It never *pleases* God to chasten His children; He does not afflict willingly; when He sees His beloved broken down and humble, He is pleased with their *humility*, but He grieves for their *misery*. Judgment is His strange work; He delights to see His people rejoice—He is a happy God, and He loves to have a happy people. Now, if he always chastened them, they would be always wretched, and, therefore, He will not always chide lest the sweet fruits of the Spirit, which are joy and peace, should never be brought forth in their souls! Beloved, are you being chided this morning? Then let me give you this word of good cheer—when you were a sinner, dead in sin, and had no thought of Him or desire towards Him, yet He came to you in His love. Do you think that *now* He will reject you? You whom He has bought with blood? You who have lain in His bosom? You who have known, in days gone by, sweet fellowship with Him on the hill Mizer and the Hermonites? Will He now forsake you? Oh no, He will turn again! He will have compassion upon you, for, “He will not always chide, and neither will He keep His anger forever.”

And now, brothers and sisters learn the lessons of the whole subject! The first inference is, here is consolation for the house of Israel! The Jews have been chided, and God’s wrath has smoked against His chosen, but they will be gathered together one day, and the fullness of the Jews shall be brought to the feet of Jesus. Let Israel write this over her synagogues, and let believing Jews inscribe this upon their doorposts—“He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.” His dear people, Israel, He has not put away forever, for the Lord says, “Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement?” He will yet bring the seed of Abraham to Himself and comfort them in His bosom! Let this be a lesson, also, to ministers. We have to chide, sometime, by preaching the law and the terrors of the wrath to come, but we must not let a sharp tone *rule* our ministry! Our preaching must be quick and powerful, but as God does not always chide, so neither must we! There is to be the thunder and the lightning, but there must be the soft shower after it—we must not always chide! This is equally a lesson to all of you. If God will not always chide, then *you* must not! Have you a child who has done wrong? Chide, by all means, but do not *always* chide! There is the difficulty involved in the example to the rest of the family, but still I pray you forgive, for your Lord says He will not always chide. God is wiser than we are—and if it would be right always to chide, God would have done it—but He acts otherwise.

What the Lord does is a model for us, so let us copy Him. If He would always chide us, where would we be? But He will not! Therefore I beseech you, forgive the wrong, forgive the wrong at once, and take your child to your heart. Mark your disapprobation of the offense, kind Christian parent, but still forgive your child! Be angry and sin not, and you can only be so by not being angry too much or too long. Here, too, let us say, do not always find fault. Condemn the fault, mistresses, if there is a wrong in the servant, and speak of it very plainly, but do not be always complaining of your servants, or, as people call it, “nagging at them.” For if you do, they will very soon hate you, and all chance of doing them good will be gone. By perpetually finding fault, you will make them eye-servers or unhappy employees. Do not always blame, but praise when it is due! Certain people never praise anybody; they think it will puff them up and spoil them. How many times in a year do I receive the following fatherly advice, “I hope your work will last, and I pray that you may be kept humble,” and so on; a good lady once told me that she prayed every day for me, that I might not be proud. I replied, “You put me in mind of my own neglect, for I have never prayed that prayer for you, and must begin.” “Oh, no,” she said, “there is no occasion for *that*; there is no danger of *my* being proud!” “Then,” I said, “I had better begin at once, for you are already proud.” These people think a vast deal of themselves if they imagine that a little of their praise would exalt us above measure! I believe that a judicious word of encouragement and commendation is often more useful than censure—and certainly censure has all the more effect when it comes from one who has spoken justly of you on former occasions.

Children and servants will not thrive on perpetual chiding any more than a horse on constant whipping. A very good gentleman had a faithful manservant who came to him one day after 10 years' service and said, "Sir, I must leave you." "Why is that?" the gentleman asked, "Have I not treated you well?" "I have no fault to find," was the answer. "Have not I paid you enough? Do you need more?" "Oh, no, sir," he said, "but sometimes, do you know when we have been traveling together, and have roughed it both on sea and land, if you had spoken one kind word to me I would have stuck to you as long as you lived. But you have never spoken to me except when you gave your orders." Our honest faithful dependents look for encouragement, and they ought to have it! The Holy Spirit and the apostolic writers speak well of good men and so should we.

The last word concerns God's dealings with us. That is the chief thought of the text. Let us carry it away with us. He is chiding you, dear sister; He is chiding you, my brother, but do not think that it will last forever! "He will not always chide." The sun went down last night, and a little child who had never noticed it before might have cried and said, "Father, Father, the sun is gone away! I saw him go down behind the hills! It is dark! What shall we do?" "Oh," you say to him, "do not fear, my baby, he will be up again tomorrow." Go, then, and tell every broken heart that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." The Lord may chide today, but He will kiss tomorrow! Now the smarting of His rod is terrible, but tomorrow the sweetness of His love will be entrancing! Be of good courage, then! Go speedily to your offended Father and confess the wrong which brought you chastisement. Humble yourself in His sight, and He will smile again! Forgive others, and then expect to be forgiven yourself, for verily, verily I say unto you, the time of the opening of the dungeons is come! The night of mourning is almost over! You soon shall rejoice in the Lord!—

*"Come, let us to the Lord our God
With contrite heart return!
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The desolate to mourn!
His voice commands the tempest forth,
And stills the stormy wave;
And though His arm is strong to smite,
'Tis also strong to save!"*

Therefore, be of good courage, all you that hope in the Lord! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 103.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (VERS. I), 136 (VERS. I), 211.

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