

"And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; They Ceased Not From Their Own Doings, nor from their stubborn way." Judges 2:19 KJV



Israel's Judges were Israelites. Being the firstborn in my family carried great responsibility. We lived in the middle of the Amazon rain forest and danger lurked everywhere, every day. I had three brothers and one sister and was often placed "in charge" of the two youngest. My other two brothers were usually "self-supervised" which frequently led to disaster or gleeful interruption of my "babysitting." I am well acquainted with the frustration and total lack of control experienced by God's "babysitters." If we had a fresh wound, we could not go swimming in the Atacuari River in front of our house. We never gave a thought to being piranha chum and microbe mansions; all we did was sulk, because we wanted to swim! Dad was keeping just us alive! Punishment had to be severe to impress us with the gravity of keeping the rules. Your pastor is God's babysitter or under-shepherd, and is directly responsible to God, NOT TO YOU, for your spiritual welfare. He has instructional and directional authority over the local Church, not punitive. His job is to warn and remind. God's people often have little or no desire to do right until caught and punished. Then they are "sorry," but there's a right and a wrong kind of "sorry. The question is; "Sorry for what?" Sorry for being caught or for doing wrong? We often say, "Sorry!" to God, but why? Do God's "timeouts" anger us? Do we forsake sin or sulk and run back to it? God Tries us to prevent greater danger. Once, I got so angry with my siblings, I locked them all in the bathroom til my parents got home. I figured; one room was easier to repair than six. It was one of the few times I avoided punishment even though they lied about it. No one can fool God! He Knew "before the foundation of the world" every "thought and intent" of every man's heart and Knows what you'll be thinking next week this time. If that doesn't scare you, you are an utter fool! My siblings gave little thought to consequences! Dad never "spared the rod." He didn't "wear you out" as the expression goes; he wore himself out "wearing you out!" But it was exactly what I needed to bring me closer to God. God's Chastisements will never be as severe as an eternity in Hell Fire! You can hate God for Protecting you, and you will burn for it. Every day you wake up is another opportunity to repent and escape eternal death. "The LORD Is Not Slack Concerning His Promise But Is Longsuffering to us-ward, Not Willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." We will never fully appreciate Father's Great Love without experiencing His Great Wrath. When I had children of my own, I understood a Dad's love. God Corrects you with trials, because of His Love for you!

Our stubborn way will oft dismay,
And keep our foot from off the Way,
When we should heed our Lord's command,
And stay the ground whereon we stand! –CGP

Chastening teaches us to "keep our foot from evil," the Path of obedience holds God's Providence to enrich our life. We tell our children "No" to protect rather than deprive, but are rarely understood. God's Children react the same. We view danger as desirable and Commands as drudgery.

"For whom the Lord Loveth He Chasteneth, And Scourgeth every son whom He Receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God Dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without Chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Hebrews 12:6-8 KJV