

## Are We Willing To Receive Correction?

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by Wayne Goff

In the course of life's little journey we all need, not only instructions to follow and examples to imitate, but rebuke and correction for words and deeds amiss. And such rebuke and correction, like chastening, "*seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness*" (Hebrews 12:11).

Injustice, in particular injustice of which we become the victims, is resented and opposed. And one of the most resented phases of injustice is to be falsely accused of wrong, to be rebuked for something we are not guilty of. We may be accused of something we have not done; our right conduct may be mislabelled wrong conduct. But this does not occur often, and 'tis far better to be the victim than the accuser. And, this does not mean that we do not deserve and need rebuke and correction for many of our obvious attitudes, words and deeds. For we do need it, and more often than we receive it. But how many of us can receive it with grace, gratitude and profit when it comes?

Each of us is prone to see his own conduct in the very best light possible. This is why we usually bristle at reproof and rise to defend ourselves against any attempt at correction. "*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but Jehovah weigheth the hearts*" (Proverbs 21:2; cf. 16:2). "*There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness*" (Proverbs 30:12). And this is exactly why we fail to gracefully and profitably receive correction. When the conduct we wear becomes the garment of others, we can then clearly see its flaws. Our own sins seem always to look worse upon others. When we receive needed rebuke for things we have done or failed to do, we tend to resent the intrusion, defend our course, reprove our rebuker and forthwith classify him as an enemy. "*So then am I become your enemy by telling you the truth*" (Paul to the saints of Galatia in Galatians 4:16).

"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let them reprove me, it shall be as oil on the head; let not my head refuse it; for even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue" (Psalm 141:5). Such was the attitude and character of David. If we be godly people of conviction, humility and noble purpose, we can even receive with grace and profit correction from the wicked and enemies. More profit can be received from the rebuke of an enemy than from the flattery of a friend.

What makes reproof so necessary is that sin is so pervasive and jeopardizes the soul and needs to be assailed. What makes it so profitable is that it enables us to make corrections and improve ourselves. "*Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish*" (Proverbs 12:1). "*He that correcteth a scoffer getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scoffer, lest he hate thee; reprove a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning*" (Proverbs 9:7-9).

Some of us do fairly well in the face of self-correction, but we lose all sense of composure and perspective when others criticize our spouse and our children. With an attitude of "who are you to criticize anyone?," or "your children are no better than mine," or "my family is as good as yours," we hardly ever receive correction with either grace or profit. We rather receive it with curtness and resentment and add to the wrong criticized by turning against a brother or sister whose intentions were only good.

How we react then to correction, whether we appreciate it or resent it, whether we count him who administers it a true friend or a meddler, whether we defend or correct our conduct, reveals much about our character and our true purpose in life. Therefore, when we say in tones so noble: "If I am wrong, I want to know it, and I will count you as my friend if you will tell me about it," **DO WE REALLY MEAN IT?**

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