

Correct Me • Jeremiah 10:23-24

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Discipline*

1. A visitor to the shop of a famous potter was puzzled by one operation which seemed to have little purpose.
2. The workman was beating a lump of clay with a large mallet.
 - a. it looked as if nothing was happening, and so the one who was taking the tour finally asked, "Sir, why are you doing that?"
 - b. the workman replied, "Just wait and watch the results; then you'll understand."
3. He soon noted that the top of the mass began to quiver and swell as little bumps formed on its surface.
4. The worker said, "Now you can see the need for the pounding. I could never shape the clay into a useful vessel if these *bubbles* remained in it, so I must gradually work them out."
5. The discipline of chastening and the trials God allows are necessary to eliminate the bubbles of pride and self-will.
6. This is the only way the Master can form us into beautiful vessels capable of holding the treasures of His grace.

B. *Hard*

1. We know this, but it gives us little comfort because we still have to endure the trial
2. As we were growing up, most of us experienced some kind of discipline from our parents
 - a. some of us were grounded
 - b. others lost a privilege
 - c. some had to go to their rooms
 - d. some went without dinner
 - e. and probably quite a few of us got a spanking
3. Whatever the form of discipline - it wasn't fun!
4. But it *was necessary* because discipline aims at *correcting* behavior and attitudes that if left unchecked, can lead to ruin
5. Correction isn't pleasurable, but it is necessary

C. *Jeremiah*

1. Jeremiah prayed a prayer for personal correction
2. Let's look at it . . .

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 23-24*

23 **O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.**

24 **O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.**

1. While this prayer seems rather straightforward, it is much more remarkable when you realize the setting . . .
2. Jeremiah has been given a vision of the near future of the nation
3. He knows that even as he speaks, the mighty nation of Babylon is mobilizing for an invasion
4. They will soon sweep down from the north and devastate the land
5. Even the heavily fortified city of Jerusalem will be leveled and the glorious temple will be destroyed
6. The nation of Judah has crossed a line – and there is no going back!
 - a. judgment is certain
 - b. the time to repent and amend her ways is now past
7. Listen to Jeremiah’s lament, beginning with v. 19 . . .

19 **Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is severe. But I say, “Truly this *is* an infirmity, And I must bear it.”**

20 **My tent is plundered, And all my cords are broken; My children have gone from me, And they *are* no more. *There is* no one to pitch my tent anymore, Or set up my curtains.**

8. Jeremiah identifies himself with the nation in it’s devastation
 - a. the judgment is like a wasting illness he has to endure
 - b. and while he is ill, his house is sacked and his children carried away
9. In v. 21, Jeremiah decries the *cause* of Judah’s error . . .

21 **For the shepherds have become dull-hearted, And have not sought the LORD; Therefore they shall not prosper, And all their flocks shall be scattered.**

22 **Behold, the noise of the report has come, And a great commotion out of the north country, To make the cities of Judah desolate, a den of jackals.**

10. The shepherds were the leaders; both the political and spiritual leaders
 - a. they had neglected their duty to lead wisely in favor of leading selfishly
 - b. and as a result, the people had been left to wander off into hurtful and dangerous things
 - c. now the day of reckoning had come
 - d. Babylon was on the march!

11. So Jeremiah prays . . .

23 **O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.**

24 **O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.**

12. In 7:16, God told Jeremiah NOT to pray for the nation – it was too late for them

13. While it was too late for the nation – it was not too late for individuals

14. Jeremiah prays that while the rest of the world around him was falling away, he would not be caught up in the ruin and devastation
15. He cries out to the Lord to deliver him from the *errors* of his time.
 - a. he knew how easy it is to be influenced and corrupted by the status quo, by the environment in which we live
 - b. so he says, “Correct me!”
 - c. “Show me where I am in error. Show me where the lies and deception of this age have wrapped themselves around my mind and heart.”
 - d. “Reveal Your way to me because I know that my way and Your way aren’t the same thing.”
16. While Jeremiah was a prophet who was given the oracle of God to his day, he was also a man who was prone to stumble
 - a. there were times when he misunderstood God
 - b. there were times when the lures and attractions of the time seduced him
 - c. he knew the pull of things worldly, of the flesh
 - d. he could see the bent toward evil in his own heart
17. And he knew that left to himself, he was corrupt and without direction
18. So he appeals to God to not let him get swallowed up in the lies and sins that characterized his day
 - a. it was for all this that judgment was coming
 - b. and Jeremiah wanted to not get caught up in it

B. Colored by the Times

1. The more I study the prophets who lived during this period of Israel’s and Judah’s history, the more parallels I see between that time and ours
2. Historians and theologians say that the Western world has now entered what they call the *post-Christian era*
 - a. when the basic mindset of the average person is no longer framed by the Biblical norms
 - b. Christianity has lost it’s influence – it is now considered by most people to be quaint, but irrelevant to daily life
 - c. Christian morality and ethics, which used to dominate the social landscape, have been replaced by *utilitarian relativism*
 - d. where the slogans, “*I got no problem with that*” and “*It works for me*” are the new morality
3. I doubt anyone here this morning would argue with me when I say that there is an evident decline in *civility* in our nation
 - a. to prove that, let me ask this question:
 - b. do you feel safer on the streets of your city today than you did 20 years ago?
 - c. do you parents feel safer letting your young children ride their bike around the park than your parents did when you were their age?
 - d. do the high school students of today feel safer on their campus than when their parents went to school?
 - e. anyone here not honk their horn anymore, for fear some loon is going to pull out a handgun and start taking shots?
 - f. any of your ladies here carry pepper spray?

- g. any of you taken a self-defense course?
 - h. anyone here have a burglar alarm on their car? Their house?
4. Divorce, abuse, abortion, teen pregnancies, drug addiction, alcoholism, violence, and perversion, have all *skyrocketed* over the last 30 years!
 5. If we had our data projector, I could show you graph after graph of statistical evidence that our culture is slipping rapidly into a state of moral chaos, where right and wrong are determined by nothing more than personal preference
 6. I am no prude – but I will say that the content of so much popular music today is lewd and crude
 7. MTV is little more than an excuse to titillate and inflame the passions of young people – Put some clothes on!
 8. If teens and college age young adults are drawing their ideas about what to wear and how to act from MTV, then we are in for a world of hurt in the next decade as they take over the positions of influence in our culture.
 9. Think about the nightly fare dished out over cable TV.
 - a. in general – does it honor virtue?
 - b. is kindness elevated?
 - c. is purity valued?
 - d. is goodness given a premium?
 - e. hardly – what we are treated to is a steady diet of immorality, hatred, profanity and vanity.
 - f. while purity is cast as naivety
 10. I'd like to read a couple excerpts from a recent column by Charles Colson about the video tapes of the two students who did the killing at Columbine High School
 - a. these boys made a video tape of themselves,
 - b. explaining what they were about to do
 - c. they wanted everyone to know that they weren't just a couple of drugged out crazies
 - d. what they did was cold and calculated
 - e. Colson writes . . .

As shocking as they were, the videos revealed more than the twisted minds of these young murderers may have realized. They gave us a glimpse of the corrosive effects of American popular culture.

What's clear is that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold didn't act out of an uncontrollable rage. On the contrary, they had thought through what they were going to do down to the last detail. So much so that Harris stopped taking his medication so that he would be in the proper emotional state when the time came to pull the trigger.

Experts will spend months analyzing the tapes for clues to the boys' emotional condition, but I suspect we already know everything we need to know about the influences that led the pair to the great tragedy at Columbine.

No one can seriously doubt, after seeing these tapes, the extent to which the hyper-violent world of film and video games helped shape the worldview of these young men. In fact, Harris and Klebold went to great lengths to let us

know that they were not merely imitating other school shootings. They were originals. They wanted the world to talk about them long after they were gone, even discussing who should produce the movie about them.

But what was really striking about their comments was how much the attitudes and ideas expressed on the tapes owe to the nineteenth-century philosopher Frederic Nietzsche, who taught that God is dead and right and wrong are an illusion – all that matters, is power.

How, you might ask, could these two have come under the sway of a German philosopher who died a century ago? The answer is that they absorbed Nietzsche, second-hand, through American pop-culture.

Over the past twenty-five years, movies and television have becoming increasingly nihilistic, which is a state of spiritual impoverishment and shrunken aspirations.

As a result, what our kids are seeing depicted is a world where justice is elusive and where life is meaningless. This is what happens to young minds that have been fed on Nietzsche, intravenously, through what they watch and what they listen to everyday.

Ultimately, it was popular culture as much as it was the failure of parents, school officials, or law enforcement that led to last April's tragedy. And until we wake up to the source of such problems, the chances are very good that we will see even more tragedies like the one in Littleton.

If we really want to protect our kids, we need to see that simply improving school security isn't the answer. The answer lies in confronting a culture that spiritually impoverishes our kids.

11. Living in this world, in this culture at this moment in history, it's inevitable that we will be influenced by it at some level or another
 - a. the reality of daily life and the pervasiveness of the media -
 - b. conspire to press us into a mold that is anything but godly
12. Like Jeremiah, we need to have a healthy distrust of ourselves and admit that left to ourselves we *do not know the way*
13. While I yearn to be like Christ, I KNOW I'M NOT
 - a. I'm sure there are thoughts I have, opinions I hold
 - b. errors I make, things I do
 - c. and attitudes I keep that are *contrary* to the Way of God
 - d. I'm sure the culture around me has tweaked my thinking
 - 1) corrupted me,
 - 2) defiled my moral sense
14. But I cannot see it, so I pray, "Lord, correct me!"
15. Search me oh God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."
16. Now, as I pray that prayer, I realize that the correction of the Lord is NOT a comfortable process –
17. Correction involves discipline, and that is usually tough to endure
18. But it is good because as I yield to it, it produces change that brings me closer to God.

19. In a paper mill what a contrast between the heap of filthy rags and wood pulp at one end and the pure and spotless white paper at the other!
 - a. what a trial the rags and wood go through before they emerge in another form!
 - b. they are ground to a pulp, bleached, pounded, pressed, and finally dried
20. Through the process of discipline and correction, God is talking our filthy rags and turning them into fine, bright linen robes

C. Don't Be Afraid

1. Christian, don't be afraid of correction
2. Yes it is usually hard, but do not fear it because the end is blessing
3. The surgeon has to cut in order to remove the cancer
4. And God never wounds unless He intends to heal of something greater
5. Proverbs 3 says,
 - 11 **My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction;**
 - 12 **For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights.**

D. Cleansing

1. The last night Jesus was with the disciples, after their supper, he took a basin of water, wrapped a towel around his waist and then made his way round the circle of disciples, washing their feet
2. The last in line was Peter
3. When Jesus got to him Peter thought he had figured out what was going on and declined to have his feet washed
4. He probably thought that Jesus had been waiting for one of them to say this very thing and to acknowledge that as the Christ, he was above such a menial task
5. But Jesus' response to Peter's objection must have surprised him
 - a. Jesus said, "Peter, if I do not wash your feet, then you have no part with me."
 - b. Peter then reversed himself and said, "Well, in that case, don't just wash my feet, give me a bath!"
 - c. Jesus reply is enlightening – "Peter – you are already clean through the Word I have spoken to you. All you need now is to have your feet washed."
6. The point was this:
 - a. these men already belonged to Jesus – they were His followers, and though they followed imperfectly, they still belonged to Him
 - b. they were clean; their sins stood forgiven by their faith in Him as Savior and Lord
 - c. but as they walked the streets of Jerusalem, their sandal clad feet became dirty and soiled with grime
 - d. they needed to let the Lord apply His tender cleansing to wash away the impurity so that their fellowship with Him would be unhindered
7. We are already clean through the message of the gospel – our sins are forgiven

- a. but as we walk the streets of this world, our feet get dirty
 - b. we get splattered by the lust and corruption of the age
 - c. the hem of our pants and dresses get frayed and stained
 - d. so we come to the Lord Jesus, and we sit quietly at His table, and we ask Him to come and wash our feet and apply His cleansing to the stains
 - e. all so that our fellowship with Him can be renewed
8. That's what correction is all about
- a. it's coming to the Lord and saying, "Lord, search me. Show me where the world has stained me."
 - b. "show me where corruption has influenced me"
 - c. "and then Lord, forgive and cleanse me so that I am never tarnished by those things again."

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Immersion*

1. The battle with the world is a daily; we cannot get away from it
2. It's pervasive; and it's worse for some of us than others
 - a. you may work somewhere where temptation is thick every day
 - b. maybe you face constant pressure from friends or relatives
3. Because we live in a fallen world where the restraints once in place by a general acceptance of the Bible, have now been jettisoned, it's essential that we spend time with the Lord
4. Time with Him is a *counteractant* to the influence and power of the world
5. Picture a piece of virgin wool
 - a. if I immerse it in a vat of dye, the longer I leave it there, the deeper and more pervasive the color will be in the wool
 - b. but if I first put the wool in a zip lock bag before putting it into the vat, when I draw it forth, the wool will have picked up no color from the dye
6. We live in a vat of black dye called the world
 - a. left to ourselves, we will be stained
 - b. but if we immerse ourselves in Christ before we go out into the world, then the world will not stain us.

B. *Who Do You Hang With?*

1. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 Paul writes . . .
- ³³ **Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."**
2. Paul reminds the Corinthians that it's important to exercise care in their use of time
 3. Don't hang out with those who will put a negative influence on you
 4. Don't watch the TV shows that inflame and incite lust
 5. Stay away from those places and situations that you struggle with
 6. Don't play chicken with sin!
 7. Let me share with you something I have been trying to do for years now
 - a. when I am watching TV or a movie. Or even listening to the radio,

- b. the tendency is to let your mind slip in to neutral and just let the images and ideas flow without exercising discernment
 - c. it's like when we are being entertained, we drop the guard
 - d. keep the guard up
 - e. think about what is being said and done
 - f. what spirit is behind it?
 - g. what is being exalted?
 - h. what does God say about what is being presented?
8. Instead of just being a sponge that soaks up the pollution of the culture, sharpen your spiritual discernment and discover ways to turn the emptiness of the modern age into an appeal to the power and truth of the gospel.

C. Hebrews 12

1. I want to end today by reading some of Hebrews 12 . . .

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

5 "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

2. Are you being trained by God's chastening?

a. are you yielding to Him?

b. or are you resisting Him?

3. Do you invite the Lord's correction? Or are you already perfect and don't need it?

4. I love the way this passage starts –

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run

with endurance the race that is set before us,

5. While we live in this world, the fact is, above it is a gallery, filled with all those who have gone before
6. And while we are here – we run a race, like a steeplechase, over hurdles of sin, and through pools of adversity
7. Our life is not about stopping to sit on the hurdle or stop and swim in the pool
8. We are running a race **THROUGH** this world.
9. Press on Christian – Press on to the Prize!