

# A COMPARISON OF CROSS, PUNISHMENT, AND CHASTISEMENT

[for Prof. Gerlach Final Dogmatics A]

by Marcus Bode

You have probably heard questions that go something like this: If God is so great, why am I suffering? Isn't He supposed to be good? Why does God let bad things happen to me? Why is God punishing me? What did I do to deserve all this trouble? I became a Christian to get away from all the punishments in this life. Why am I suffering now? Why is my cross so heavy? What did I do that makes God want to correct me? Why do good people suffer? How do we look at the rewards of the evil? Does God punish His believers? One person thought so. In the movie, *A Man Called Peter*, the preacher's wife writes letters to all the people she thinks she may have offended during her lifetime. She asks them to forgive her, hoping to get rid of a disease that had her bed-ridden. She thought this illness she had was given because some sin of hers was left unforgiven. Was God punishing her?

These questions and questions like this give us the reason for this paper. The "why's" of human suffering have concerned believers and unbelievers for centuries as far back as Job. When we examine these "why's" we see that there are bigger obstacles ahead of them. The "what's" and the "who's" of suffering are just as large if not larger problems.

What is suffering? Do you consider a scratch on the finger suffering? Is a bad day suffering? Do you consider a dirty look a cross, a punishment, a chastisement, or all three? Does God cause suffering? Is it only the devil who causes a suffering? Are believers receiving punishment here on earth when afflictions strike? Can we refer to an illness as a Christian's cross? What is punishment and when can it be called a punishment? Whom does God chastise? What's the difference between punishment and chastisement, cross and punishment, cross and chastisement?

Only the Bible has the answers. We will try to answer these questions on the basis of the Bible. We will examine the way the Bible uses these words. When we make this examination, let us remember that we are not dealing with terms so much as concepts. When we talk about cross, punishment, and chastisement, we are dealing with words which are inconsistently translated from the Greek and Hebrew. Each instance that the KJV records one of these words has been noted in research. The Greek and Hebrew words have been compared with the different ways in which they have been translated throughout the Bible to gain an understanding of the underlying concept. Cross, punishment, and chastisement are the three terms which neatly fit three concepts in Scriptural understanding. Sometimes the edges are fuzzy. The attempt has been made, however, to trim them to as sharp a distinction as possible to let the facets of God's Diamond shine through.

## II. Cross

The concept of the Christian's cross in suffering is a Scriptural one based on the Bible's own metaphorical use of it. Generally, the word cross refers to a large piece of wood perhaps having a cross stake. It is best remembered by the Christian for the role it played in our Savior's passion. He died on one. He carried one. This use is the predominant one (Mt 27: 40; Mk 15:30,32; Jn 19:25,31; Phil 2:8; Heb 12:2 et al.). Scripture also, however, uses the term cross in a symbolical way to describe the burden or affliction the Christian both takes up and carries. Only six such instances occur in the Bible (Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; 10:21; Lk 9:23; 14:27).

Since the use of the term cross is metaphorical, it carries with it the connotation connected with the literal use. The cross was not considered to be pleasant by any stretch of the imagination. It was an instrument of death. Scripture so associates it in Phil 2:8: "He became

obedient to death, even the death of the cross. “Not only was it an instrument of death, but it was considered a lowly instrument, not fit to be used on a Roman citizen. Again Phil 2:8 seems to emphasize a special horror for such a death with the wording *thanatou de staurou*. We cannot divorce the contempt connected with the literal meaning of the cross from the metaphorical meaning. Luther caught this pejorative sense of the term cross when he said, “But the cross of Christ is the shame and the great indignity which Christ innocently suffered.”<sup>1</sup> This contempt is important to note, for if the cross is to be truly Christian it involves such lack of dignity. “The disciple is not above his master” (Mt 10:24). That this cross is a matter of humility and mortification has been the teaching of the Lutheran Church since the early Reformation years.

For they [our teachers] have always taught concerning the cross that it behooves Christians to bear afflictions. This is the true, earnest, and unfeigned mortification, to wit, to be exercised with divers afflictions, and to be crucified with Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The Apology expands on the humiliation and infliction of the cross:

And of the mortification of the flesh and discipline of the body we thus teach, just as the Confession states, that a true and not a feigned mortification occurs through the cross and afflictions by which God exercises us [when God breaks our will, inflicts the cross and trouble]. In these we must obey God’s will, as St. Paul says, Rom. 12.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian’s cross is never easy, but it hurts. Quenstedt very succinctly strikes at the suffering of the cross when he says, “The cross... is painful suffering, sent... to believers.”<sup>4</sup>

If the cross is then painful and humiliating, what is the Christian’s motivation for taking it? The answer is that without the cross one cannot follow Jesus. Mark 8 puts it positively when it says the Christian bears his cross “for my sake and the gospel’s” (Mk 8:35). This is the Christian’s motivation. Because Christ has removed his guilt and revealed it to him, the Christian is willing to endure the painful humiliation of the cross.

This willingness to which the Christian is moved is limited. The Christian is willing to die for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. As Jesus says, “If any man come to me, and hate not ... his own life..., he cannot be my disciple” (Mt 16:26). The Christian is willing to die, but Paul says that Jesus’ resurrection has taken the sting out of death (1 Cor 15:55). When the Christian dies, he no longer has to worry about eternal death, but can look forward to the crown of heaven.

Not only are Christ and His Gospel the motivation for the Christian to bear the cross, but they are also the cause for the humiliation of the cross. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1 Cor 1:18).

The agents which constantly attempt to take the Christian’s crown which he is striving to hold onto (Rev 3:11) are the devil, the world, and our flesh. The devil as a roaring lion seeks whom he may devour (1 Pe 5:8). Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7) was caused by a messenger of Satan. The world constantly persecutes Christians (Ac 4:8-2; 14:22). Paul tells Timothy that there are Christians who oppose themselves (2 Tm 2:25). All three are a danger to the Christian’s crown. They are the causes of the Christian’s cross.

God may be said to be the one who lays the cross onto the Christian. However, He does not always lay that cross onto the Christian by His own direct agency. He often uses the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh to do His bidding, as He did in Job’s case.

The source whence suffering comes is clearly stated, for it is Satan who is the cause of a Christian’s affliction. In the end, however, it is God who afflicts (Put forth Thine hand and touch him.” v.11)<sup>5</sup>

We cannot say that all suffering is directly caused by the devil, the world, and/or our flesh. The Bible gives us no such clear directive. It does, however, tell us that some suffering

through which the Christian goes is “of the Lord” (Heb 12:5), leaving it open as to whether the Lord does it by direct agency or not. We do know that the Christian’s cross is either taken upon himself or laid upon him “for the sake of Christ and the Gospel” (Mk 8:35).

The cross, in all six instances where it is used metaphorically, is something which is to be taken up. It employs a voluntary action on the part of the Christian. It is an appeal to the Christian’s new man to suppress his old Adam. So, in taking up this cross, the Christian forfeits everything his old Adam would make him (the new man) believe is to his advantage. Accordingly, the Christian cross is connected with self denial (Mt 16:24), a renouncing of everything that interferes with the following of Christ (Lk 14:33), renouncing our wisdom in spiritual matters (Mt 11:25-26), renouncing peace and tranquility (Mt 10:34; Lk 12:51), renouncing honor among men (Mt 5:11; Lk 6:22; 1 Pe 4: 14), renouncing friendship, affection of father, mother, son, daughter, (Mt 10:35-37; Lk 12:52, 53), renouncing temporal possessions (1 Cor 7:30; Mt 19:21,22). When the Christian bears the cross, he crucifies all the passions and lusts of the flesh (Ga 5:24) and mortifies his “members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:15): “knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Ro 6:6).<sup>6</sup>

The cross includes this denial of the flesh as our Confessions clearly point out. And let no one think that he shall have peace; but he must risk whatever he has upon earth—possessions, honor, house and estate, wife and children, body and life. Now this hurts our flesh and the old Adam; for the test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience in whatever way we are assailed, and to let go whatever is taken from us.<sup>7</sup>

There is a voluntary kind of exercise necessary, of which Christ says, Luke 21, 34: “Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting.” And Paul. 1 Cor. 9:27: “I keep under by body and bring it into subjection,” etc. And these exercises are to be undertaken not because they are services that justify, but in order to curb the flesh, lest satiety may overpower us, and render us secure and indifferent, the result of which is that men indulge and obey the dispositions of the flesh.<sup>8</sup>

There is more to crossbearing than self-denial. The Christian by his self-denial incurs the wrath of the devil and the world. Luther seems to imply that this wrath comes upon the Christian because of this crucifixion of his flesh.

The evil foe and the world hate Christians not because they are sinners and stumble and fall occasionally. No, both the devil and the world could well tolerate that and would be well satisfied with them. But the fact that Christians hold to the Word in faith, that they put their hope in the Son of God, comfort themselves with His death and resurrection, fear God and desire to live according to His will, earnestly desire that through their confession others may come to the knowledge of God and faith, this the devil and the world cannot endure. For this reason they constantly torment the Christians; Satan afflicts their bodies with diseases, as St Paul complains: The messenger of Satan buffets him and impales him, filling his heart and conscience with sadness, melancholy, terror, and the like, or he destroys their property by storms, hail, fire, as was the case with Job...Satan and the world do not hate me on account of my sins ... Why, then, do they hate me? It is on account of this Man [Christ], the Sin-bearer, whom I accept and confess as my God and Savior.<sup>9</sup>

What the Christian then does to crucify the flesh (including the use of God's Word and the carrying out of His will) cannot strictly be called the cross proper, for in itself this mortification of the flesh is not painful or humiliating, but a victory in the Christian's eyes. The afflictions the Christian bears for the sake of Christ and the gospel are his cross. The Apology seems to have this conception and draws this distinction between the cross and mortification inflicted by an outside party or self-imposed.

But in addition to this mortification which occurs through the cross [which does not depend on our will] there is also a voluntary kind of exercise necessary...<sup>10</sup>

Notice that the mortification and voluntary exercise are connected with the cross, but not strictly a part of its essence.

The injury inflicted by the devil and the world is- considered to be cross in the broadest sense. Luther seems to equate only misfortune and grief with the cross.

If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and reckon upon having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies, who will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where the Word of God is preached, accepted, or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross can not be wanting.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, strictly speaking, if we examine the six metaphorical uses of the term cross as Scripture uses it, we see that it always speaks of cross as something suffered as a direct result of forsaking the world. In context, the Matthew 10 passage's use of cross implies that that cross is placed directly on the Christian by the world.. Jesus tells His disciples in v.17 to "beware of men." All the following persecutions are caused by men directly: scourging and inconvenience (v.17); being brought before kings (v.18); being betrayed by brothers (v.21); children rising against parents (v.21); being hated by all men (v.22); being persecuted and having to flee (v.23). In the immediate context, the cross is the hate and persecution a Christian receives from his own family (v. 35-37). The other five times *stauron* is used figuratively, it implies that the Christian will have to suffer to the point of death because he is a Christian (e.g. Mk 8:35).

Saying that the Christian's cross is strictly that which the world places on the Christian because he suppresses his sinful flesh and because he believes in Jesus as his Savior does not discount the fact that the devil brings troubles to the Christian. When Luke writes that "through much tribulation ... we enter into the kingdom of God", (Ac 14:22), he included the fact tacitly that the devil also takes his cracks at the Christian. Just look at Job. The devil had a heyday with him. Yet, because the Christian suffers at the hand of the devil and at the hand of the world for the same cause (the sake of Jesus and the Gospel), these afflictions caused by the devil are also called crosses. Luther notes such a distinction, yet is hesitant to draw that distinction on the basis of the agent.

The Gospel speaks of a twofold cross. First, that suffering is called a cross which is accompanied by shame and disgrace, when a man must suffer before all the world and must be considered in the wrong; for instance, when a person suffers persecution for the sake of the Gospel and his faith. This is properly called the cross. The other cross is when a man, for instance, suffers sickness, affliction, trouble, and misery in his body or life. This is, properly speaking, not a cross, but an affliction.<sup>12</sup>

Mueller also is hesitant to draw the distinction between the broader and the stricter sense on the basis of the agent.

This life of sorrow and tribulation Scripture fitly calls the cross of the Christians, Matt. 10, 21:38; 16:24; Luke 14: 27. [broader distinction] Especially when Christians faithfully

bear witness to Christ and His Gospel, or when they lead a holy life according to the Word of God, they must always expect to endure trials and bear crosses, Matt. 10:25. Hence by cross we mean that suffering which Christians suffer for Christ's sake. [stricter sense]<sup>13</sup>

Neither does Prof. Joh. P. Meyer seem to come out clearly on this point in the Senior Dogmatics notes. He says, "It is God who lays the cross on the Christians ...Often through the instrumentality of the devil and the world."<sup>14</sup> Since God is not the author of evil (1 Cor 14:33), illness, the hardness and trouble of labor (not the labor itself), the discomforts of weather (not weather itself) which were not present before the Fall of man, it would seem that all crosses are caused by either the devil or the world. I assume that the hesitancy on the part of dogmaticians would be based on the very point that they do not want to say that *all* crosses are caused by the devil and the world, though God does use them to the good of His people (Rm 8:28). With Luther, Mueller. and Meyer silent on the agent in making the distinction between cross in the broader and cross in the stricter sense, we may surmise that in the broader sense trials which are ethically good but seem troublesome to man (e.g. work) may be considered to be caused by God and included in the broader scope of the term cross. In the broader sense then cross is any affliction placed on the Christian by God, perhaps through the agency of the devil and the world suffered for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Luther, however, says it much better: "But the shame and persecution endured for righteousness' sake is the cross of Christ."<sup>15</sup> In the strict sense, cross is the shame and persecution the Christian suffers at the hand of the world for righteousness' sake.

The problem involved with this distinction between the broader and the strict sense of the term cross comes about when we look at an illness, death, trouble, misery, and other common slings and arrows which affect Christians as they do everyone else. These are considered crosses only when they are directly attributable to the unbelieving world which gives the Christian this affliction for the sake of Christ or the Gospel. If a Christian takes ill, unless that illness were caused by an affliction placed on the Christian by the unbelieving world because he is a Christian, we must consider it a cross in the broader sense. Here is a hypothetical example: A Christian is made to stand out in the cold because he refused to help an unbelieving friend shoplift. He catches pneumonia as a result. This sickness is a cross in the strict sense. William A. Kramer pinpoints some present day examples of crosses in the strict sense.

Families in some pagan countries completely disavow the new Christian. Unbelievers at home or at work may ridicule the faith and good deeds of the Christian. Sometimes Christians who do not go along with the crowd may suffer job discrimination. People who stop drinking to excess may not be invited by their former friends. Christians who contribute heavily to the church may experience the taunts of people who spend their money selfishly. Also Christian children sometimes suffer this kind of cross-bearing. Other children may ridicule them because they do not use filthy words, or cheat, or disobey the teacher, or engage in other wrongs.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, if a Christian came down with pneumonia because he was outside in the cold working to support his family, he would be suffering a cross in the broader sense. Although this Christian is suffering for righteousness' sake, the affliction is not brought on by the world. He may, however, suffer verbal persecution by unbelieving friends. They might say, "Boy, is that fella dumb for working out in the cold to support his family. All it got him was pneumonia."

This persecution would be a cross in the strict sense, because he suffered it for the sake of righteousness.

Now, another Christian came down with pneumonia. He had to go into the hospital because he drove his snowmobile around for too long a time one cold day. He was simply having a good time. Since he didn't suffer this for Christ's sake, we can't consider it a cross. If someone criticizes his unsound judgment for staying out too long, we can't consider it a cross in either sense. Again, he is not suffering for the sake of Christ or the Gospel.

We could carry this distinction out *ad absurdum* with examples. Personally, I believe this is a fine distinction and worthy of less note than I have given it.

But there is more to the cross than just definition. The cross further has purpose. The purpose of the cross is much simpler than the definition.

Crosses are often confusing to the Christian. He frequently forgets why they are there. He becomes especially upset when he sees the grass is greener in the pasture of the ungodly. This has been a problem for some time. Jesus tells of it. "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Lk 8:13). There was not much difference in 1530.

Who with sufficient patience bears the inflictions imposed by God? Who does not frequently doubt whether human affairs are ruled by God's counsel or chance? Who does not frequently doubt whether he be heard by God? Who is not frequently enraged because the wicked enjoy a better lot than the pious, because the pious are oppressed by the wicked?<sup>17</sup>

And I am sure there is not much difference today. Crosses still cause questions. That's only right. But the questions need to be addressed to the Lord. Paul is the prime example in this respect. When he was afflicted with his thorn in the flesh given him by Satan, he prayed the Lord three times (2 Cor 12:8). The answer God gave Paul was one which told him that with any kind of cross God strengthens the Christian. Notice that with the understanding of the cross, Paul took heart, knowing that with this cross did strengthen him. With every trial, God strengthens the believer (1 Cor 10:13).

These crosses the Christian suffers strengthen the Christian in various ways. Crosses build up a resistance to sin (1 Pe 4:2). They are the gateway to God's kingdom (Ac 14:22). Crosses take care of a Christian's deadwood to cause him to bring forth more fruits of faith (Jn 15:2). They give a Christian the chance to pray (Is 26:16). They bring him happiness (1 Pe 1:6,7). They give him "eterna-vision" which lets him look forward to the glories of heaven (2 Cor 4:16-18). God gives the Christian strength to rise to the occasion (1 Cor 10:13).

The Apology to the Augustana similarly speaks of this purpose.

... in the godly they [afflictions] have a better end, namely, to exercise them, that they may learn amidst trials to seek God's aid, to acknowledge the distrust of their own hearts, etc., as Paul says of himself, 2 Cor 1:9: "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." And Isaiah says, 26,16: "They poured out prayer when Thy chastening was upon them," i.e. afflictions are a discipline by which God exercises the saints.<sup>18</sup>

But God has more of a purpose than just the strengthening of the believer. With the crosses God places on Christians, He gives the unbelieving world a look at His power. He lets them see how, for instance, He can heal and be praised for it (Jn 9:1-3). He lets them see the peace of heart and soul the Christian has in the middle of trials (Ac 16:25). The world sees how Christians act and are shown His wonders, leaving opportunity for the believer to tell the things

he has seen and heard. Again, we see that God's strength is made perfect in weakness of His Christians (2 Cor 12:9). This time, however, His kingdom is not only strengthened inwardly, but also outwardly in numbers.

With the purpose of the Christian's cross, we see how beautifully our loving God controls all things to his glory and our good. As Meyer says, "The cross is a token of God's fatherly love."<sup>19</sup>

Quenstedt beautifully connects the Father's love with the purpose of the cross in saying "...the cross ...is painful suffering, sent by God, as a merciful Father, to believers for a limited time, to the glory of the author and salvation of the sufferer."<sup>20</sup>

God successfully carries out His purpose with the cross the Christian bears.

Paul in a very consolatory way treats this (doctrine of election), Rom. 8, 28. 29. 35. 38. 39., that God In His purpose has ordained before the time of the world by what crosses and sufferings He would conform everyone of His elect to the image of His Son; and that to everyone His cross shall and must work together for good, because they are called according to the purpose, whence Paul has concluded that it is certain and indubitable that neither tribulation nor distress nor death, nor life, etc., shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.<sup>21</sup>

Once the purpose of the cross is properly understood as God's loving hand guiding our lives, and not a fierce retribution by an angry God, we can rejoice, knowing that we are being strengthened for life here on earth and hereafter in eternity.

### III- Punishment

The word Punishment is the English word used to translate a number of Greek words (four to be exact) and Hebrew words (also four) into the KJV. These Greek and Hebrew nouns and related verbs may also be found to be expressed in various ways throughout the KJV. In order to arrive at the concept of punishment, we will examine the Greek, which best gives the range and intended force of the punishment concept. The words translated punishment in the New Testament are: *kolasis*, *ekdikesis*, *timoria*, and *epitimia*.

*Kolasis*, translated only once as punishment in the KJV, is the punishment Christ prescribes for those on His left hand on Judgment Day for not fulfilling the law. However, the word *kolasis* is also used in the KJV as "torment" (I Jn 4:18). It refers to the punishment that belongs to (*echei*) fear, whether temporal or eternal isn't indicated. Neither does it say whether the torment is a recompense for fear. From related uses in Scripture, we may assume this punishment is both temporal and eternal to those who fear.

Of greater theological significance is 1 Jn- 4:18: *ho phobos kolasin echei*, "fear contains punishment in itself ." This means that the man who lives in fear (before God) is already punished by this fear. His fear is his punishment. This thought may be linked with the express statement in Jn. 3:18 that the unbeliever is judged already. The opposite of fear is love. Perfect love is free from every fear, because perfect love for God drives out fear before Him.<sup>22</sup>

The related verb *kolazesthai* appears twice in the New Testament, both times translated punish (Ac 4:21; 2 Pe 2:9). The Acts passage says that the Jerusalem dignitaries could find nothing they could "punish" John and Peter for. Evidently they needed to find some action for which they could punish them. Peter tells us that God will punish the unjust from the point of death to Judgment Day.

The NT uses the verb *kolazein* twice, in Ac. 4:21 and 2 Pt. 2:9. Only the latter is theologically important with its reference to divine punishment: ... "the Lord knoweth

how to reserve the unjust under chastisements until the day of judgment.” The phrase *eis hemeran kriseos* has in view the time between death and judgment. For the ungodly this time is filled with punishments. They remain in this dreadful state until the day when their fate will be finally decided.<sup>23</sup>

The *kolasis* type of punishment gives the scope of the worst type of punishment available: eternal death, here on earth and hereafter in eternity. It is the punishment for unbelievers imposed as a punishment for sin. When men use the term, as did the Jerusalem dignitaries they wish to make it their own prerogative and not God’s.

Thus we see a twofold sense emerge. Punishment in the strict sense (to which we will limit ourselves in the final analysis) is an eternal and temporal recompense for sin which manifests itself in suffering here on earth, in death, and in eternal damnation for the sinner. In the broader sense, men look upon it as being any type of recompensatory suffering, whether the agent is God or man, whether the suffering is just (inflicted by God or His ministers) or unjust. Notice that this is an acceptable usage since men cannot finally judge one’s hearts, but must deal with them on the basis of confession on the basis of action.

The word punishment occurs in the KJV for the word *ekdikesis* only one time (1 Pe 2:14). Here the civil authorities are to punish evildoers. The Lord gives them this responsibility. This punishment is irrespective of persons. They are to punish on the basis of action which is deemed evil by the Lord. Governors carry out this punishment. They carry out God’s purpose. Therefore whoever suffers this punishment is punished by God.

In the other six instances in which *ekdikesis* occurs, it is translated either vengeance or avenge (*poiein ekdikesin*). These are: Lk 18:7; 21:22; Ac 7:24; Rm 12:19; 2 Cor 7:11; 2 Thes 1:8. Noteworthy is the Lk 18 passage which says that even God’s elect will be avenged. Thus in the sense of *ekdikesis* one can say that God punishes Christians. In fact, in Rm 12:19 God says that vengeance (*ekdikesis*) belongs alone to Him. He may take that vengeance or punishment out by means of His ministers (as in 1 Pe 2:14 and 2 Cor 7:11). Man, however, has been known to usurp that authority as did Moses by killing the Egyptian (Ac 7:24).

The essence of punishment may be anything suffered on account of evil (real or supposed). What the government hands out up to death (Rm 13:4) or even anything up to and including eternal damnation (2 Thes 1:8) are the *ekdikesis* type of punishment. This final punishment is reserved only for God.

The purpose of punishment is that God may vent His wrath on sin and uphold what is right in the sense of *ekdikesis*, Meyer brings this out nicely in his analysis of the related verb *ekdikein*.

*Ekdikein* may have either a good or a bad connotation; it may mean either to ‘avenge’ or to ‘correct.’ When the widow pleaded with the unjust judge, she said, *ekdikeson me*: “Protect me in my rights” (Luke 18:3). In his instructions to the Romans Paul warns: *me heautois ekdikountes*, “not avenging yourselves” (Rom. 12:19). In 7:11 of our present epistle [2 Cor] we found the verbal noun *ekdikesis*, as the climax in a process of recovery in Corinth, a thorough righting of their sad state of affairs. In the present case Paul aims at repentance - or else a “delivering unto Satan” [2 Cor 11:16] of the disobedient.”<sup>24</sup>

How then do we define the punishment of *ekdikesis*? It is retribution inflicted to recompense sin and free the Christian. God performs it either directly or indirectly through His ministers. Again, there is a second sense in which *ekdikein* is used. Here it is any temporal punishment up to the point of death performed by man to compensate for an injustice, supposed or real.



The third Greek noun which the KJV translates “Punishment” is *timoria*. It is used only once (Heb 10: 29). It is used in much the same way as is *ekdikesis*.

Hebrews 10:29 says that the punishment of the Christ hater and Spirit-despiser will be sorer than the punishment of those mercilessly killed for despising Moses. In this instance God punishes sin with eternal damnation.

The related verb *timorein* is used twice (Ac 22:15; 26:11) to describe what Saul did to Christians before his conversion, when he changed his name to Paul. Punish used in this way seems to describe an action rendered in return for one’s being a Christian—not necessarily including death.

The purpose of *timoria* is also twofold. It both avenges and corrects. God avenges rejection of His Son. Saul uses blasphemy to correct the supposed evils of belief in Christ. Both are done to avenge or correct evils, supposed or real.

*Timoria* has virtually the same twofold definition of *ekdikesis*, yet not as clearly or fully laid out. It is a recompense for sin meted out by God. It is corrective action taken to change the action of an evildoer, supposed or real.

The fourth word, *epitimia*, is used only once (2 Cor 2:16) to describe what the Corinthian congregation did to the man taken in incest. His punishment as gathered from v.7 was not to be forgiven and not to be comforted. This punishment led to sorrow and repentance on his part.

The related verb gives us the same tenor. The punishment is always verbal. KJV consistently translates *epitiman* with the word rebuke.

Meyer states that “*Epitimia* is punishment in the sense of rebuke or reproof.”<sup>25</sup> Only so far does it go. It is just a matter of words. It does have a twofold objective, however. It either corrects or convicts. In the case of the man caught in incest it worked correction. When Peter rebuked Jesus (Mt 16:22) he intended to correct Jesus teaching of the Son of man’s death. Although correction was the intended result of rebuke, when the rebuke was not heeded, retribution sometimes followed. When Jesus rebuked the Samaritans (Lk 9:55), they refused to listen to Jesus. The intended result may have been to correct them. However, their punishment for not allowing Jesus was that they did not hear the Gospel.

*Epitimia* is a word of condemnation intended to either work recompense or seal one’s fate.

What then is punishment on the basis of these four words? Punishment is an action (from words to eternal damnation) exercised by God (either by Himself or through His ministers) upon sinners to recompense them for sin. Punishment may either lead to repentance (a preparation for the Gospel) or simply be the wages of sin, death.

The question is then rightly asked, “Now can God punish the Christian if He says, ‘To them that are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation’ (Rm 8:1)? Besides that, the Confessions clearly say, ‘Christ has borne the punishment of sin.’”<sup>26</sup>

The answer is that God punishes the Christian (*qua* Christian) because his body is still subject to sin to some extent. His old Adam constantly struggles against the new man “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). Thus, the Formula of Concord speaks of the Christian being punished.

For the old Adam, as an intractable, refractory ass, is still a part of them (Christians), which must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching of the Law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off, and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection, when he will need neither the preaching of the Law nor its threatenings and punishments, as also the Gospel

any longer; for these belong to this [mortal and] imperfect life. But as they will behold God face to face, so they will, through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, do the will of God [the heavenly Father] with unmingled joy, voluntarily, unconstrained, without any hindrance, with entire purity and perfection, and will rejoice in it eternally.<sup>27</sup>

So then, punishment comes to believer and unbeliever for their sins. Both suffer punishment temporally. Every form of suffering the unbeliever receives here in this life is punishment. Those things which the Christian suffers apart from his sufferings for Christ's sake and the Gospel's are punishments. The unbeliever has one added feature to his punishment: eternal death.

If a Christian pedestrian were to cross against a red light and his leg was broken, it is a punishment by definition. If a Christian receives a traffic ticket for speeding, it is, properly speaking, a punishment of God, meted out through his minister, the police. If a Christian is verbally abused for the idiocy of his foolish jesting by an unbeliever, it is a punishment. That unbeliever with his blurred knowledge of the law as written on his heart corrects on the basis of God's Word, unclear as his knowledge may be. So also, when the unbeliever acts to persecute the Christian on his blurred understanding of the Law, he is, to his and the world's way of thinking, punishing the Christian for being a Christian. Of this kind of punishment, the Christian need not worry that it is punishment from God, for it is not. It is, properly speaking, a cross.

#### **IV. Chastisement**

Chastisement in essence may be anything from words spoken to the destruction of a nation. It may be physical affliction or a mental blow. It may be death. It may be any infliction leading up to death. It may be pain. It may be only a fine of a hundred shekels. It may be dispersion and it may be apprehension. It may be any portion of the learning process.

The one chastised is always human (a man, a psalmist, David, nations, Christ, us). The one who inflicts the chastisement may be God or one of his ministers or it may be a man (Rheoboam, Pilate). The Lord may inflict any type of chastisement to the point of suffering the death of hell. The chastisements man, God's minister, inflicts fall short of death. They are limited to physical or mental infliction, up to, not including, death. At least, no instance of the use of the term chastise in Scripture gives us the right to say that chastisement can be more severe than a physical or mental beating (cf. Lk. 23:16,22; 1 Kg 12:11, 14; 2 Chron 10:11,14) when performed by a man. The only times God chastises to the point of death are when he destroys a nation (Ho 7: 121 10:10) or lays wounds and stripes upon the Lamb, Christ (2 Sam 7:14; Is 53:5). Only by our knowledge that Jesus suffered all the pangs and torments of hell on the cross, can we ever hope to assume that God chastises people (in this case, person) with eternal death. Is 53:5 tells us that the chastisement given the Lamb works healing. We may assume that whatever it took to heal the breach between man and God was suffered in Christ's chastisement. Therefore, even the fact that Jesus was forsaken by God and thereby suffered the pangs of hell (Mt 27:46) can be understood to be part of the essence of chastisement when it is inflicted by God directly. Hell suffering inflicted by God upon man (except in the case of Jesus Christ) may never be said to be chastisement. The Bible uses the term of chastisement given by God to man as suffering short of death (Rv 3:19).

Only Jesus' death is spoken of as a chastisement. The implications of this fact are profound. Those who endure chastening are treated like sons by God (Heb 12: 7). It is significant that God's only Son suffered the supreme chastisement of death. We who follow Him in chastisement suffer comparatively little, but receive all the benefits of sonship. Speaking on Heb 12:7, Kittel gives us the interrelationship of chastisement and sonship.

The reference is to chastisement as a guarantee of sonship, and consequently of God's grace and forgiveness. Hence it is not enough to say that *paideia* is a training which makes the athlete strong and unconquerable for the contests. The experience of suffering at the Father's hand sets the Christian alongside Christ. It thus shows him plainly that he is the Father's child, loved by Him, received by Him as a son. Hb. 12:7f.<sup>28</sup>

Chastening appears to be suffering for the Christian. We have a universal statement that that chastening—all chastening—is unpleasant for the Christian (Heb 12:11). Chastisement is what is used on children to correct, not to punish; to teach, not just to recompense. As Kittel says, 11 ... *paideuein* means 'to treat as a child-'—included not only instruction but whipping too, as frequently attested.<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting to note that physical chastisement in the Greek culture was restricted to the parent.<sup>30</sup> Thus the suffering done by the son is due to the blows of the father. Since Christians have a loving Father, who protects his children (Mt 4:6), they may be assured that what they receive is from His hand or, at least, under His guidance. It is done by a loving Father to correct His son to grow in grace.

There is only one instance in Scripture where God is said to chastise the heathen (Ps 94:10). The word used here is *goyim*, regularly meant to be heathen nations. However, the word may also refer to foreign nations and peoples which come to Christ during the Messianic period (cf Is 2:2f). Ps 94 states that God will correct with this chastening of the *goyim*, thereby saying that what was characteristic of these peoples, namely their unbelief, would be changed to belief. So we see that even this verse shows that God chastises only His sons, whether they know they are sons or not.

When in Scripture we read that God instructs men to chastise, they only act as His ministers upon His children. Fathers are told to chastise their children (Eph 6:4; Prov 13:24; 19:18; Dt 21:18; 8:5). Timothy is told to chastise "them that oppose themselves" (2 Tm 2:25). Timothy is to use Scripture to "correct" (2 Tm 3:16). He never tells the government to chastise. We could say that Pilate wanting to chastise Jesus and Rheoboam wanting to chastise the people were way out of line. God wants governments to punish, to use the law as a curb, never to take the place of those to whom He has entrusted the spiritual care of His children- God does not entrust chastisement of His children to the devil and the world. However, He may use them to unwittingly chastise His children, as a father may use his belt.

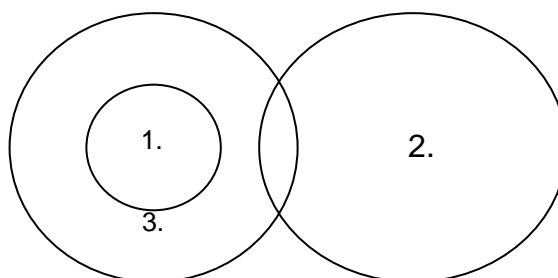
Two things stand out. Only God's children (be it known to them or not) are chastised. Whatever they suffer is a chastisement (Heb 12:11).

Chastisement as Scripture uses it is a very broad term used to describe all the sufferings in a Christian's life. That includes all the afflictions he suffers for Christ's sake and the punishments he suffers because he still has his sinful flesh clinging to him.

Chastisement has the same purpose as the cross: to strengthen the Christian or to "profit" him (Heb 12: 10). He also in his suffering is a witness to the world of the great power of the Word in comfort and strength. He is a living testimony (Jn 9:1-3; Ac 16:25).

#### V. Comparison of terms

The following diagram illustrates the interrelation ship of cross, punishment and chastisement.



A brief review of the definitions:

1. Cross—What the Christian suffers for Christ.
2. Punishment—What the sinner suffers for his sins.
3. Chastisement—Christian suffering for any reason.

How cross, punishment and chastisement interrelate:

1. A cross is always a chastisement, but a chastisement is not always a cross.
2. A cross is never a punishment, and a punishment is never a cross.
3. A chastisement may be a punishment and a punishment may be a chastisement.

#### Interrelationship 1

The difference between cross and chastisement must take into the account that a Christian in concretum is both sinner and saint. Although Peter tells the Christian not to suffer as a thief, etc. (I Pe 4:15), yet, because the Christian still has his old Adam, he might. Cross and chastisement together look at the whole Christian.

#### Interrelationship 2

Punishment and cross are two distinct concepts. God does not punish the Christian for being a Christian. Neither can a cross be said to be on an unbeliever, because an unbeliever does not suffer for the sake of Christ, but receives only punishment for his sins, dealt as God sees fit during his time of grace.

#### Interrelationship 3

There is some crossover between punishment and chastisement. Christians are both saint and sinner. Because they are still sinners. Though they are striving against the flesh, they do disobey laws or do stupid things they may regret. Thus, we say they are punished. However, because they also have a new man, that punishment serves to correct not just their actions, but also their attitude toward sin. What for the present might seem like a punishment is actually a chastisement which God gives to strengthen the believer. The Confessions seem to recognize this strange occurrence and show us that the harshness of the punishment-chastisement is somewhat alleviated by prayers and good works.

Afterwards even we concede that the punishments by which we are chastised (Lat. *poenas quibus castigamur*), are mitigated by our prayers and good works, and finally by our entire repentance, according to 1 Cor. 11, 31; “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” And Zech. 1,3: “Turn ye unto Me and I will turn unto you.” And Ps. 50:15: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble.”<sup>31</sup>

Into this category which is both punishment and chastisement we may place an incident such as the death of King David’s baby by Bathsheba. We can say that the Christian is punished, yet he is chastised because through it he profits (Heb 12:10). God punishes the sinner only to correct in the Christian’s case. God does not exact a recompense from him. Christ has already paid sufficiently. He has taken the guilt of our sins, so that we do not have to die eternally.

We say that an unbeliever is punished. However, in this case, we may also say that he is chastised, if it turns out that he comes to faith. Before his conversion we consider everything that happens to him to be punishment, although we know that after conversion, even those trials that beset him before he came to faith were chastisements.

Essentially, cross, punishment, and chastisement can be the same thing. Oppression, for instance, can be suffered by a minority group member for the sake of Christ [cross]. Oppression can be suffered by a minority group Christian because he is in the minority [chastisement]. It can be suffered by a minority group unbeliever simply because he belongs to a minority

[punishment]. What we are dealing with is suffering viewed from three different ways, depending on who is suffering and why he is suffering.

#### VI. Why the hassle?

These distinctions are necessary to understand the sufferer. Whether he be believer or unbeliever, we as Christians will want to know what to say to the sufferer. Being able to distinguish these three will help us know how to talk to the afflicted. We need to know that one who does not consider himself to be a believer must expect eternal punishment now and in eternity. The afflictions which are given him here on earth may lead him to faith, thus his punishments may be viewed also as chastisements which God uses to correct him. If the sufferer is an avowed unbeliever, we cannot treat his affliction as a cross. We cannot announce to him any Gospel. We cannot tell him that God is treating him as a loving Father to train up His child, but is punished now and will suffer worse in eternity where there will be no break from punishment. He cannot expect eternal life and present hopeful comfort. He has no reason to rejoice. When he asks why God is punishing him, we can only say that he is being punished for his sins and can look forward only to punishment. Once we have made him aware of his sin and punishment, we can then tell him of the loving God who died for his sins and took the punishment upon Himself in order to relieve the sinner from the punishment he deserves and has earned. When God works faith in his heart to accept God's promise of salvation, we can point him to the fact that whatever he suffered and now suffers is no more than a loving correction dealt him by a gracious God. What was once punishment for sin is now viewed as punishment for correction, or chastisement.

To the one-time Christian who no longer believes we must tell him that whatever happens to him is pure punishment. Yet when he repents, we can announce to him that his sins are forgiven. No longer does he have to regard his affliction as punishment, but as the loving correction of a heavenly Father.

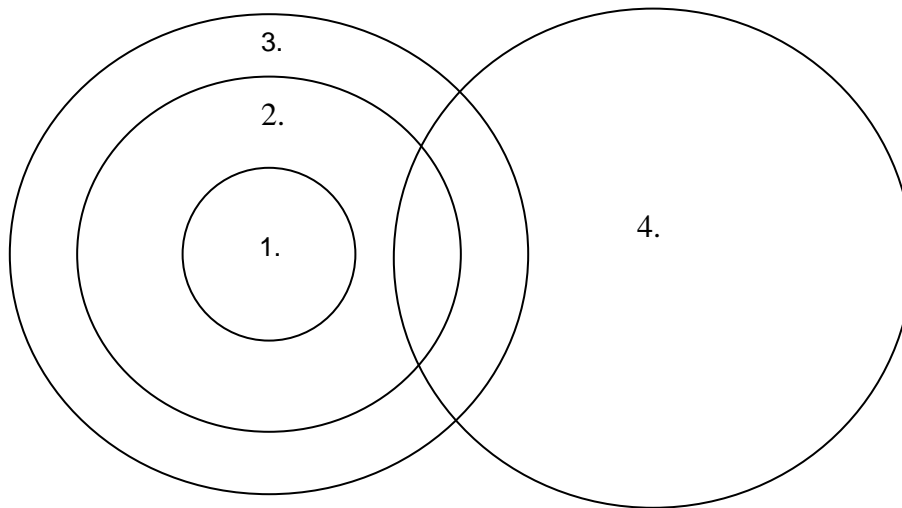
To the believer who is suffering we have a wealth of comfort to offer on the basis of cross, punishment, and chastisement. We need to understand that the sufferer before us is destined for heaven, is a child of God, and enjoys God's favor. What he is now suffering may or may not be for the sake of Christ. If the sufferer is suffering the pain of broken bones for a speeding accident, we can tell him that although this affliction is a punishment of God, it has a salutary purposes to show the Christian that he has a loving Father. This loving Father is preparing him to live as one of His children. Sometimes, because he still carries his sinful flesh, that punishment hurts. Recognizing that this punishment has been given to help him in this battle against his old Adam, he can take comfort in the God who not only has saved him, but also protects him.

To the mother who believes and now is in the pains of childbirth we can give the comfort that she is suffering a chastisement. Although this chastisement may be a curse (Gn 3:16) and therefore a punishment of God, yet she can rejoice, not only because she is receiving a child, but she knows this pain is a token that she is in the protection of a loving God intent upon her best interests. Incidentally, notice that although she is suffering as a faithful mother for righteousness' sake, her pain is a punishment. We see that cross in the wider sense and chastisement may be the same thing. If she asks why God is punishing her. we can say that it is not meant to repay her for her Christian righteousness. It is an affliction given by the devil to punish her for being a Christian mother. But God frustrates the devil's plan and makes it fit into His own. She can be confident that since Christ has conquered the devil, this affliction lasts only a little while. It is a sign that God loves her.

## VII. Conclusion

I have only scratched the surface of the implications. Unfortunately after reading this paper, I see that it is just another one of which you could say, "More of the same."

Yet, there is one clarification which I would like to make in the diagram. Chastisement includes everything a Christian suffers. Cross in the wider sense excludes those things not done for the sake of Christ. Cross in the narrow or strict sense is only that which is done to the Christian for the sake of Christ by the world. The diagram as previously given did not include a circle for cross in the broader sense.



1. Cross in the strict sense.
2. Cross in the broader sense.
3. Chastisement.
4. Punishment.

This is the place for an admission. I wish I now had the time to rewrite this paper. From the time I began typing this final draft to the present, my thinking on the matter has become better crystalized. I was thoroughly enwrapped by the subject. My only hope is that my understanding of the comparison came out as clearly as I think I understand it. Any comments will be appreciated.

*Endnotes*

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4. Schmid, Heinrich, D.D., The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1875) P. 499
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7. Triglot Concordia (St. Luis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1921) p. 715, quoting Luther's Large Catechism.
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25. Ibid., p. 36,
26. Triglot Concordia. p. 171, quoting the Apology.
27. Ibid., p. 969, quoting the Thorough Declaration.
28. Kittel, vol. V, p. 622.
29. Ibid., p. 620.
30. Ibid., p. 600.
31. Triglot Concordia p. 197, quoting the Apology.

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