

And if, on making such an inquiry, he finds cause to conclude that it is not now with him as it was in the months past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon him, oh, let him thank God for this needful discipline! let him be deeply humbled in his soul because he has thus provoked the Lord to anger, and let his earnest prayer be not so much that his sickness may be removed as that the cause of it may be taken away.

3. We learn further from this passage that to the true Christian *sickness is not a mark of God's anger, but of His love.* Verse 6 tells us that "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." This is a quotation from Prov. iii. 12, and the meaning is that it is a universal law that God sends affliction of some kind on those whom He truly loves. God had one Son without sin, but not one son without suffering. All God's children need correction, and they all receive it. All the vessels of mercy need scouring, and they all get it. Of the wicked it is said (Ps. lxxiii. 5), "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." The Lord in mercy saves His people from such a lot. They are emptied from vessel to vessel, tried by one affliction after another, deprived of the dearest earthly friends, and stript of every earthly possession, lest they should come into the condemnation of the world. There are many instances like the following: A worthy man, whom God had prospered in his outward estate, and who lived in ease and plenty on his farm, suffered the world so much to possess his affections that he became for the time spiritually cold and indifferent. The church of God was attended only irregularly, closet prayer was entirely given up, and family prayer was only occasional and heartless. The man was on the down grade, but the Lord had mercy upon him. First his wife was removed by death, but he still remained worldly-