

Father Abraham

By,
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“Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

-Genesis 12:1-3

The beginning of Genesis 12 represents a major shift in the book of Genesis on a couple different levels. The first shift is in the writing style, from mythic to narrative, and the second is from God relating to mankind as a whole, to God now focusing on a particular people group, namely the line of Abram. I believe both of these shifts are worth exploring before we dive into Abram’s story.

Narrative

“How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

-Psalm 119:103-105

It can sometimes seem strange to us that the biblical authors don’t merely obey the word of God as being true, they describe it with aesthetic appreciation and delight in its beauty. For most today, they see the Bible as being like medicine, although it can be boring and tedious to read, it is good for us so we must do it. The Psalmist here is actually describing the text of Scripture not as *bread*, which would denote its necessity within our lives, but as *honey*, which is appreciated for its sweetness, not its nutritional value. In other words, for this author, the text of Scripture is significant for him in that he can enjoy it in its beauty as well as revere it for its truth, and we are encouraged to do likewise.

This means that when we look at the Bible, we should not merely see the infallible word of God, though it is this, we should also see it as God’s beautiful literary work of self-revelation to His people. In order to do this, we have to understand the various genres of literature present and seek to appreciate them as such. If God merely wanted

to give His people a list of infallible truths, this is exactly what He would have done. The Bible would simply be a list of infallible theological truths and moral commands. But instead, we see within the Scriptures a plethora of writing styles like mytho-history, poetry, proverbs, apocalyptic, prose, and narrative. All are so excellent in their compilation that we can honestly declare with the Psalmist that they are both instructive and beautiful.

All that being said, what is narrative literature, and how does it differ from the mytho-history of the early chapters of Genesis? Mytho-history is a term that describes writing that is both historical, meaning that it is attempting to record real historical events, as well as mythic, meaning it is deeply symbolic and archetypal, hence the helpful term “mytho-history”. While the early chapters of Genesis record real historical figures, like Adam, Noah, and Nimrod, these are not fleshed out characters, you don’t learn much about them and therefore they take on an almost legendary aspect to them. The reason for this is because this type of literature isn’t meant, primarily, to act as a historical account, but instead a symbolic account that can be universally understood and applied across time and culture.

However, narrative literature, even when it is historical, is an attempt to tell a story through the eyes of a protagonist. This story usually follows a formula that begins with a call to adventure, in which the main character is called out of their realm of safety to follow a higher purpose, then follows their moral development within their adventure as they find their place in a greater story. This is actually the most common form of storytelling that there is and it exists across all platforms of media, from books, to movies, even to video games.

This form of storytelling is incredibly impactful and beautiful to us, because it allows us to empathize with another person and understand the struggles of their lives. And by doing this, we can learn what it means to navigate difficulties within our own lives, and even experience vicarious forms of catharsis as we sympathize with their struggles, failures, and triumphs. This has far more weight than simply learning intellectual moral truths. The real world that we inhabit is incredibly complex and filled with gray areas. Seeing someone try to navigate this complex landscape, and even fail to live up to their own ethos, gives us both hope and encouragement towards our own lives. If all God gave us were a list of moral commandments, we would all collapse under the weight of our inability to honor God. But through stories we can center ourselves in another person’s narrative and see how God relates to people in reality, and not merely how He instructs us to live.

Since most Christians don't understand this, they can fail to read the narrative components of Genesis properly. Instead of seeing Abraham as an ordinary human called to inhabit extraordinary circumstances, we can see him as a legendary hero that embodies all that is right. This has caused Christians in the past to try to justify the actions of the Biblical characters. In narrative storytelling, the morality of the story is never given directly, but is shown through consequences. For instance, when we read about Abraham having sex with his wife's handmaid, we are not supposed to conclude that this behavior is good, instead we are to look at the consequences of his actions to derive morals.

This kind of instruction is so vital because, it is one thing for the Bible to tell us that marriage is to be kept sacred between one man and one woman, but to witness the destructive consequences of adultery, not only to Hagar and Sarai, but also to the children, the moral is vindicated and shown clearly. This makes the narrative sections of the Bible, in some ways, more valuable to our own moral development than the clear moral commandments given to us in the various other books. In seeing moral decisions made by real historical figures, we get to witness the positive consequences of good decisions, and the calamitous consequences of bad decisions. More than this though, we get to see the power of repentance and change, which in turn gives us hope to turn our lives around after we fail.

"For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again, But the wicked shall fall by calamity."

-Proverbs 24:16

Narrowed Focus

"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

-Genesis 12:3

The beginning of Genesis has a global focus as God relates to mankind as a whole. But starting in chapter 12, God begins relating to a very particular people group. Namely Abraham, then Isaac, and finally Jacob and his descendants, the Jewish people. In our modern egalitarian society, this seems wrong to us. We would think that God would reach out to all people groups equally instead of choosing one people group to specially reveal Himself to.

"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God."

-Romans 3:1-2

However, we know from passages like this as well as a simple understanding of pagan cultures that this is not how God chose to reveal Himself to the world. Instead of revealing Himself in equal proportion to all people groups, He instead decided to give all mankind access to what we call the general revelation of God through nature, but to the Jews alone did He commit “the oracles of God.” The general revelation that the non-Jewish people, or the gentiles, had access to was through the natural world.

“because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,”

-Romans 1:19-20

It is through the natural beauty of the world, as well as the internal conscience of man, that even the pagan nations could access certain things about God. However, without a direct revelation, they had limitations on what they could know for certain about God. To use a metaphor, it would be like trying to get to know a writer through reading their written works. You would be able to deduce much about someone from looking at their created works, but no matter how carefully you read their writings, there would still be some elements of their person that you would have to guess at. In order to fully know someone, you would have to receive a more direct “revelation” in the form of a biography, or a personal introduction.

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,”

-Hebrews 1:1

In contrast to the Gentiles, to the Jews God revealed Himself more directly. Expressing to them alone His true nature and allowing them more access to His moral character by giving them laws that they were to be governed by. But why did He choose to reveal Himself in this way?

We must remember that the story of Abraham happens after three different worlds were destroyed as a result of man rejecting God’s revelation of Himself to man. The first world destroyed was the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve made the decision to throw off God’s moral commands in favor of creating their own by eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The second world was the world of the flood, in which corruption reigned through the line of Cain and the production of the Nephilim. Then the

third world was that of Babel, when mankind, under the rule of Nimrod, attempted to construct a tower that reached to heaven and rule themselves by their own strength. All three of these worlds were judged by God and destroyed, and each destruction constituted a new, lesser, order in which God revealed Himself to man.

In the garden, man had perfect access to God. When man rejected this, God more or less directly governed the pre-flood world, this is why God doesn't allow for humanity to judge Cain after he murders his brother. After man failed to submit to God's authority in that world, He gives man the ability to govern themselves through a mediated law given by God to Noah and his family. But this is quickly corrupted when man turns his own governing system into an idol which causes God to confuse the languages of mankind to stop the totalizing influence of Babel. Now that the world was broken into tribes that speak different languages, God selects one particular people group, Abram and his family, to reveal Himself to and allows for all other nations to rule themselves by their personal conceptions of God that they derive from nature. The reason for this decision is articulated by the apostle Paul when he spoke to the Athenians in Acts 17.

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, “so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;”

-Acts 17:26-27

Since God had already been rejected by the nations of the earth, He selects Abram due to his family preserving, at least a tentative, worship of the true and living God in contrast to the thoroughly pagan tribes surrounding him. This allowed for God to preserve knowledge of Himself upon the earth through Abraham's family, but to also allow for the pagan Gentiles to “grope” for the true and living God in a clumsy manner and eventually be made ready to receive the revelation of God through His Son.

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

-Acts 17:30-31

The intent of God had been that the Jewish people would retain the knowledge of Him and be ready to receive His Son when He became incarnate, but the heart of man is wicked. This made the Jews, who had been under God's oracles and laws for so many centuries, become complacent and reject Christ when He came. But the pagan nations

who were deprived of this knowledge grabbed a hold of the gospel when it was preached which allowed this message to spread like wildfire throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

There is much to be said about the growth and spread of the church, but for the purposes of studying the life of Abraham, we only need to understand why God chose to reveal Himself in this manner. It was through Abraham and his descendants that God wanted to preserve knowledge of Himself, and to allow for this particular people group to build a nation that would be a light unto the world. A beacon of hope that was supposed to draw the nations of the world to come to Jerusalem and discover the true and living God. Knowing this helps us understand the importance of Abraham's story. His life is not merely an example to us, given in a narrative format, but his story is also the means by which God chose to reveal Himself to man. It is a beautiful story of God having a personal relationship with a man in which He was able to progressively reveal more and more of Himself to Abraham throughout the course of his life, and the lives of his children. It is for this reason that all Christians can rightly say that we are children of Abraham.

The Chosen People

“And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

-Galatians 3:29

This does not mean that the church has “replaced” Israel, simply that we are recipients of the legacy of Abraham. Through the faithfulness of Abraham to heed the call of God, God was able to reveal Himself to the world, and through Abraham's line, Jesus was born. But Paul in Romans 11 makes it clear that God is not done with the Jews or the nation of Israel even though they had rejected their messiah.

“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”

-Romans 11:1

“I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh

and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

-Romans 11:11-15

With Israel centered in the news right now after the October 7th attack on Israel by Hamas, and their counter offensive into Gaza, I want to have a little bit of an aside to discuss this chapter in light of recent events. For some Christians, they believe that the church has fully replaced Israel and therefore the state of Israel is of no concern to us. I find that hard to square with the above passage. Still other Christians look at Israel and the Jewish people with an almost mystical perspective and find it hard to criticize Israel. For me, that is reading a little too much into the above passage. What is clear, is that God is not done with His people, or with the nation of Israel. There is a future time in which the Israelite people will, en masse, come to recognize Jesus as their Messiah and this will signify Christ's return. This is prophesied here by Paul, as well as in the Zechariah 12.

This truth does not mean that we should treat Israel, or the Jewish people as a whole any differently than any other people group. We should pray for peace in Israel, and we should seek to evangelize and minister to the Jewish people, but not in greater proportion to any other group. Personally, I believe that Israel is an ally to the United States and has a right to defend themselves from an overtly genocidal terrorist group. And, having actually fought terrorists in Afghanistan, I can say from my perspective that they are conducting the current offensive with an impressive amount of restraint and precision. However, I believe that Christians can openly disagree about whether or not our country should provide aid to Israel. However, what should be disconcerting to all of us is the growing level of anti-semitism in the west.

Across numerous universities right now, protests and encampments have sprung up with protestors chanting "death to Israel" in Arabic and "From the river to the sea Palestine will be free." This chant, though seemingly only for the liberation of Palestine, is actually a call for the end of the Israeli state and Palestine to rule over all land from Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea. Also, I am not aware of any other country placed under as much scrutiny as Israel as it conducts its current offensive, or any other country having to continuously justify its right for existence. We have to be clear, the current scrutiny is not actually holding Israel accountable to fair and balanced judgment, it is holding them to a standard that is untenable and beneficial to their enemies that hate the very existence of Israel, as well as the United States. This rising animosity is surprising, but biblically, it is predictable.

“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

-Revelation 12:13-17

Passages like this show us why Satan would be especially interested in harming the Jewish people. It isn't necessarily because they oppose him in some special way, but it seems to be out of a pursuit of vengeance for being the people who guarded the oracles of God and brought the Messiah into the world. Political commentator Andrew Klavan wrote a really interesting article a couple weeks ago entitled "Antisemitism is the Devil's Flagpole" in which he argues that whenever a Christian culture strays away from God, they tend to uniquely embody antisemitism as a form of their rebellion against God.

“The atavistic habits of some of the converted were at war with the Jewish God who had colonized their hearts and culture through Jesus Christ. That inconvenient deity who demands care for the weak, forgiveness for the sinful and sexual decency and fidelity for all does not settle easily into the toxic soul of fallen man.

This explanation of antisemitism remains valid when others fail. Some claim that antisemitism is a reaction to Jewish exceptionalism. But the Jews of pre-Nazi Germany wanted nothing but to assimilate into a nation they loved. Others say that Jew hatred grows out of envy of Jewish success. But many of the Jews of Russia were dirt poor when the Cossacks burned their villages in orgies of rape and murder. And of course, the antisemites pretend the problem is not with them but with the Jews themselves.”

-Andrew Klavan - “Antisemitism is the Devil's Flagpole

All people have been persecuted at some point or another during world history. The uniqueness of the Jews is that they have been globally hated, for various disparate reasons, and those who have persecuted them have tried to exterminate them instead of merely oppressing and enslaving them. It is this chosen status that the Jews have that explains the unique animosity that they bear. While there is wonderful joy in being chosen by the King of the universe and source of all beauty and love, this election also carries with it animosity from the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) as well as a more profound responsibility before God to be faithful to His revelation. In the musical

“Fiddler On The Roof”, when the main character Tevya learns that his small village might be subjected to a Russian pogrom he says:

“I know, I know. We are Your chosen people. But, once in a while, can't You choose someone else?”

Christians are also elect by believing in the Jewish Messiah, and so we also bear this same wonderful access, and adversity. While the Jewish people are seemingly unparalleled in their persecution, Christians are a close second. From the very start of the church, Christians have been hated and persecuted by every people group on earth. Even though we have relative security in the west right now, it is important to remember that throughout the world, specifically in Asia and the Middle East, Christians are still persecuted and hated. And yet, with all this persecution, the treasure that is in God remains worth the cost.

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”

-Hebrews 11:24-26

So while my heart breaks for the growing antisemitism in the world, as well as the unjust persecution of the church in these other countries, I pray that this could be used by God to remind His people of their election before Him. And that those faithful people being unjustly persecuted would be reminded of their treasure in Christ and to be able to suffer well in the knowledge that God sees their faith and will reward them in His presence.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

-Matthew 5:10-12

Election

That being said though, it is relevant for us to understand other principles behind God's election of the Jews and how it applies to our personal election before God. For the sake of brevity I will limit myself to three additional elements. Our election is first

unconditional, second it must be participated in, and third it gives us absolute assurance.

Unconditional

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

-John 6:44

Since our God is personal, just like with any human person, a relationship can only become possible if both parties choose to pursue one another. But unlike a human person, God is also perfect, which means that it is impossible for anyone to be worthy of a relationship with Him on the basis of their merits. While there does seem to be reasons why God chose Abraham, we must not get the idea that God’s election of Abraham, or his descendants, was because of some innate superiority present within them.

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; “but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

-Deuteronomy 7:6-8

By definition God’s election is undeserved and therefore facilitated by His immense grace. In the old covenant, God’s election was of a particular people group and was established within a particular nation. This means that anyone who is ethnically Jewish is a member of these chosen people and that is why the sign of this covenant was given to male children in the form of circumcision. For the Christian, we too are elected by God to be a part of His church, but this election is not given to us at birth, but at our decision to follow Him.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

-John 1:12-13

When you couple this verse together with the above verse from John 6:44, the picture becomes a little more clear, while still remaining complex. The Christian is chosen by

God, but this election is revealed, not by birth, but by that person's decision to come after God. If anyone has made the decision to follow Christ, that person could only make that decision if they were first drawn by God. And this drawing has to be unconditional for the Christian, since the call of God is for sinners, and not for the righteous.

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)..."

-Ephesians 2:1-5

Participation

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. "Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these.' "For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, "if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, "then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever."

-Jeremiah 7:3-7

The mistake that the Israelites made was believing that since they were elected unconditionally, their behavior did not matter before the Lord. When prophets like Jeremiah called them to repent for their sins, false prophets rose up and contested that they did not need to repent because of God's sovereign election of them, proved by the temple of the Lord residing in their nation.

What Israel failed to realize is that election is not only a privilege, but an awesome responsibility. The Jews were the guardians of the oracles of God, the light of the world that proclaimed the goodness of God to their pagan neighbors. God took seriously their role upon the earth, and so He judged them more harshly than their surrounding neighbors. But, fortunately for the elect of God, the grace of God is not merely a passive force that unites us to God, but an effective force to draw us to honor and glorify Him. When Israel refused to participate with this grace, and took God's acceptance as a given, they ceased to repent of their failings and drove the presence of God from their

nation. The ultimate expression of this was when the nation failed to receive their messiah and had Him crucified. We as the modern church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, should learn from the errors of Israel.

“For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.”

-Romans 11:16-20

Here Paul is warning the church to not become haughty and make the same mistake as the Jewish leaders during the time of Christ. We are sovereignly chosen by our God and endowed with immense grace and mercy. But this grace is not passive. God has given us this grace that we might grow in our worship and love for Him.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

-1 Corinthians 15:10

Notice that Paul attributes his works to the grace of God that was within him. The wonderful truth of election is not that we are merely loved by God, but that His love has an effect within our lives and gives us the power to repent of our sins and walk after God. While we won't be able to do this perfectly on this side of heaven, since God Himself is our treasure, we know that every step towards Him is a step towards our true reward. But we also must be reverent in our relationship with God, knowing that while He is exceedingly merciful and gracious towards us, we should never take His grace for granted and treat it as an excuse to sin.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

-Philippians 2:12-13

Assurance

“My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him. “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How

can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror.”

-Hosea 11:7-9

Even though the nation of Israel fell into numerous states of apostasy, God refused to give them up. He continuously sent prophets to call them to repentance, and even after judging them, He never wiped them out. It is a total miracle that the Jewish people maintained their ethnic identity after being expelled from their home land for almost two thousand years. It is even more amazing that they were able to reclaim their nation and re-establish it in such a way that it is actually flourishing. No matter how far the Jewish people strayed from God, God maintains faithfulness towards them and will eventually bring them back to Him. This same unwavering faithfulness that God has shown the Jews, is also demonstrated towards us as Christians.

“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

-Romans 8:33-39

While it is so important for us to remember the importance of our election and how seriously God takes it, it is equally important to remember the unbelievable faithfulness that God has towards His people. While it is crucial that we don't fall into complacency by abusing the grace of God, we must also not live in constant terror of the judgment of God. Though God gives us grace that we might overcome our sins, He also understands that we will continue to fall short of His perfection. When this happens, He does not want us to fall into despair and assume that we are beyond His love or forgiveness. He wants us to humbly receive His loving discipline, learn from our mistakes, and move forward in a way that honors Him.

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by

Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?"

Hebrews 12:5-7

For years of my life I struggled under shame due to numerous failures to various sins, especially in the area of my sexuality. As bad as my failures were though, what was worse was the distance that they put between me and God. I was too ashamed to ask for forgiveness and so I sought to cover over my failure and hide from Him. It wasn't until I began to understand this truth that I gained the boldness to seek repentance in Him. This doesn't mean that I grew haughty or indifferent towards my guilt though. Just like a child who is truly sorry when they receive discipline from their father, it is good that the child feels the weight of their mistake, without doubting the love of their father who is disciplining them. It is only through this amazing assurance that the Christian can pursue God out of love, and be freed from their shame and fear.

"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."

-1 John 4:17-19