God's Loving Discipline, Part 2
Hebrews 12:5-11
90-201

Hebrews 12, verses 5-11; we have been attempting to answer a very important question and that question is why do bad things happen to God's people? The atmosphere in today's Evangelicalism, the atmosphere in today's church, which is I think in the media, basically dominated by the modern charismatic movement is a view of Christianity that frankly is quite foreign to Scripture.

If you watch Christian television and draw your conclusions about Christian theology from that you might be able to conclude from all that you have seen that Christianity is a path of life that leads to wealth, that leads to outrageous hairdos and amazing wardrobes, it leads to garish sets, and strange looking chairs and gold on everything, etc., etc., etc. It leads to wealth and prosperity and happiness, and comfort, and feeling really good about yourself.

You will hear preached in the Christian media the prosperity gospel that Jesus wants you rich and Jesus wants you comfortable and Jesus wants you successful, and if you suffer it is because you're weak in faith. If you suffer it's because somehow you're not claiming what is rightfully yours.

There is also in contemporary Evangelicalism the notion that somehow Jesus will fix all of the troubles of your life and so we are told today in that part of Evangelicalism which is different then the charismatic movement, that the real issue is that we have to approach people on the basis of their felt needs. In other words, what are the anxieties, the troubles, the pains, the sorrows, the sufferings, the discomforts, the issues of life that people feel badly about? We need to address those and we need to bring Jesus to them as the one who fixes all the troubles of life. The one who solves all your problems, the one who makes you comfortable, the one who brings peace to your troubled life; Jesus will eliminate every uncomfortable event, every uncomfortable and unfilling relationship, somehow Jesus will bring peace to every difficult circumstance. That's the felt need gospel; so you have on the one hand the prosperity gospel which promises you that you can be rich in Jesus and solve all your own problems, then you have the felt need gospel, which says that well God really wants to fix your life and make it absolutely placid and peaceful, and comfortable, and fulfilling and satisfying in every way imaginable.

In fact, both of those viewpoints would probably conclude that if difficulty comes into your life it is probably the devil, it's probably the devil. What you may want to do is figure out how to chase the devil away because it's the devil who's bringing all these bad things into your life. They don't come from God, they come from the devil, and so that leads to some kind of training that you need to get involved as to how to bind the devil, and you get into that foolish notion of pronouncing some kind of doom, at least on a temporary level, or at least as far as your life is concerned in Satan himself, attempting to bind him, and than bind demands who are the cause of all your problems. If you can successfully engage in binding Satan and binding demons, then you can eliminate the discomfort and the suffering and the lack of tranquility in your life.

Now all of this is unbiblical, all of this is a misconception. In fact, this misconception that Christians should be above suffering is a sad dishonor to all those faithful and noble believers through the ages, through the history of God's Kingdom who have suffered, who have suffered severely, who have suffered persecution, who have suffered martyrdom, all of those heroes. For example, listed in Hebrews chapter 11, Abel and Enoch and Noah, and Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Rahab, and Gedeon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthae, and David, and Samuel, and the Prophets, all of those who quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword in the midst of weakness were made strong, had to fight wars, who had their own beloved killed and received back their dead by resurrection were tortured, not willing to accept a release because they wouldn't recant their faith.

Those who experienced mockings and scourgings, and chains, and imprisonment, or stoned, and sawn in half, and put to death with a sword, and went about in sheepskin and goat skins as bait for wild animals were destitute, afflicted, ill treated, wandering in deserts and mountains, and caves, and holes in the ground, and none of these, it says, was the world worthy of. What about those people? Were they people of weak faith? Were they people who just didn't cash in on their options? Were they people who didn't take advantage of what was theirs? Couldn't they find God able to meet all their discomforts? Was it because they just didn't trust God? Was it because they didn't know that they were supposed to be prosperous? Maybe it was because they didn't know how to bind Satan; maybe they didn't know how to bind those demons. What folly, what heretical thinking all of that is.

These are the men and women of the noblest kind. These are the heroes of the faith. These are the best of God's people. These are the great believers of the ages and they suffered immensely. You could add to that list and probably would if Hebrews were being written today. The Apostles who were systematically executed and finally the last of them John, died in exile on the isle of Pathmus.

What about all those early Christians? What about all those early Christians who died under Rome in persecution who were torched in Neroes garden parties to light up the darkness. What about all those who died under the terrible persecutions prior to the fourth century? What about all those who died during the time of the reformation? What about those who died for the faith in the Catholic inquisition and were martyred there? What about all of those pre-reformational believers who were slaughtered and martyred? The Huguenots and others.

What about those who suffered martyrdom since the time of the reformation? What about all the missionaries that were killed by the people they went to reach with the Gospel? It might be shocking to you to know this, but according to David Barrett, editor of World Christian Encyclopedia, 300,000 Christians are martyred each year right now, 833 a day. Somewhere in the world are being martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ in hostile countries that hate the truth. What about all those people? Were they people of weak faith? Were they less then noble believers? Shouldn't they have known that this whole deal is about comfort and prosperity? About having all your felt needs met, isn't this all about that? Isn't this all about feeling good? Isn't this all about having a perfect environment in which to live?

Faithful believers through the ages have suffered, and the more faithful, the more they've suffered. Not the more faithful, the less they've suffered. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation," John 16:33. The Apostle Paul said, "All who live Godly in this present age will suffer persecution," 2 Timothy 3:12. Paul the Apostle, certainly if anybody did understood that bad things happen to God's

people. He says in 2 Corinthians 4:8, "We were afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but now destroyed, always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus." He understood that bad things happen to God's people, bad things have always happened to God's people. Those bad things include persecution, those bad things include martyrdom, they actually can include execution. As I say it's a shocking statistic and it's one that the government of the United States doesn't want to deal with. We've been writing letters, there's an organization attempting to deal with this, it's shocking to realize that around the world 300,000 Christians are being martyred every year.

Nothing has changed. There is tremendous suffering for those who name the name of Christ. In the end, it's really the most faithful who suffer the most because they will not deny the faith under pressure and under the threat of death. Now, underlying everything that occurs in this world, even allowing for Satan to be active in doing certain things, to thwart the cause of Christ, underlying everything that occurs is the sovereign rule of God. I'll say something that you may not have thought of, but it is true, Satan is God's servant. He's only allowed to do that which God permits. He is the servant of God and the servant of God's sovereign purposes, everything occurs under the sovereign rule of God.

Isaiah 45:7 says that, "God is the one forming light and creating darkness causing well being and creating calamity. I am the Lord who does all these things." Suffering, trials, persecution, all kinds of adversity are under God's sovereignty and fit His purpose and especially His purpose for His own beloved children. The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 demonstrated extraordinary obedience in the face of severe trial and they demonstrated at the same time unwavering trust in the purposes of God, unwavering confidence in the sovereignty of God.

God's purpose in suffering is the issue that must be understood. God has a purpose for our suffering. With that in mind let's read the text, Hebrews 12 verse 5, "Have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons? My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord." That is the phrase that I want you to get a hold of, this is the discipline of the Lord we're talking about here. "Do not regard it lightly nor faint when you are reproved by Him, for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons, for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline of which all of have become partakers then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them, shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seen best to them, but He disciplines us for our good that we share His Holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, yet to those who have been trained by it afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

Now what that passage identifies for us is the discipline of the Lord. That is to say, God brings into our lives difficult trials for His own purposes. This is all part of Him conforming us through the image of His Son, perfecting us calls for discipline. Now as we saw last time in introducing this passage to you, God has four purposes in the discipline, four purposes in the discipline.

Purpose number one retribution, some discipline that comes into your life, some negative circumstances, some on the surface bad things, trials that come into your life are because you have sinned and need to be punished because God is Holy and wants his children holy. In other words, it is retribution to create an aversion to sin because of its painful consequences. We saw that last time,

we saw David as an illustration. David suffered immensely in his life as God was punishing him or chastening him for his sin that he might learn to be holy so that he could honor God and be blessed.

Secondly, God brings suffering into our lives for prevention. We saw that in the case of Paul, God actually thrust a spear as it were through the very heart of Paul, a thorn in the flesh he called it to keep him from being proud. God brings things into our lives to humble us. Some of His discipline is because we would sin and we would harm ourselves and dishonor God if He didn't cause certain things to happen in our lives that restrain us.

Thirdly, God brings suffering into our lives for the purpose of education so that we may in that trial learn something about ourselves and something about the greatness of our God. The illustration of that we use was Job, Job came to a truer understanding of himself through his terrible suffering and a greater understanding of God then he had ever had before. It is in the trials, it is in the pain and sorrow, and the suffering that we discern who our God is more clearly.

Then fourthly, God brings suffering into our life for the purpose of anticipation. Because we need to long for heaven, we need to have a more heavenly perspective, we need to be loosened up from earthly attachments, and we saw John the Apostle as the classic illustration of that. John suffering greatly as an exile suffering broken hearted over the demise of five of the seven churches in Asia Minor. John, in sorrow upon sorrow, because of what he was seeing was given a glimpse of the future, a glimpse of eternal glory and said, "Even so come Lord Jesus." He'd had enough of earth's sorrows.

Paul had the same thing. He longed to be in the presence of Christ and be released from the suffering of this world. So for purposes of retribution, prevention, education, and anticipation it is God who disciplines His children.

Now look at verse 5, just the beginning of the verse, and I'll remind you of where we ended last time. "Have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as Sons?" He goes on in verse 5 to say, "My Son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor faint when you are reproved by Him." He is reminding them of Old Testament Scripture, he quotes from Proverbs 3:11 and following. He is quoting an Old Testament passage because the question that comes up here, natural question you've had all of that wonderful chapter 11, all those great heroes, and they all suffered a profound suffering for the cause of Christ.

I told you last week about my continual reading of the story of William Kerry and it's just the suffering in that man's life is just more then one would imagine a person could bear. Just in reading yesterday for several hours, further in the story he had a son named Felix and Felix was 37 years old when he died; 37 he died and he was a great linguist and a great missionary, been through a number of struggles, but just recounting the life of his son and the pain of that life. His first wife died when she gave birth to a child, he was left with two little children, his wife dying at childbirth. He married another lovely Christian girl and after many years of preparation he had done translation of the Scriptures into a language of another Asian country. He got on a boat with his wife and now five children, two from a prior marriage and I think three with her, and they had five children and they were going together. He had a little printing press, he had all of his life's work of this translation work and they were headed to the mission field and a storm hit the boat in a wide place in the river, sunk the boat, his wife died, and three of his five children died and he struggled in the water to save them and couldn't. He sat on the shore, having lost his family, his life's work, his printing press and

everything.

Then William Kerry hears that this his son, in whom he poured so much of his life, who was being launched into a mission, he had lost everything precious to him, including all of his life work. The question comes up, does God do that or did the devil do that? Nothing happened in the life of Felix, it didn't happen in the life of Job, nothing happened in the life of William Kerry that didn't happen in the life of Job. The spiritual strength; admittedly Felix went through a dark, dark and sorrowful time having lost two wives and now most of his family and all of his work, he went through a terrible, dark time but in the end was restored to his father and restored to the ministry there, and restored to the work of the mission until at the age of 37 he died in his youth, another great grief to his father because of his tremendous skill and talent for ministry.

This sorrow upon sorrow shaped William Kerry into the man that he was. The Old Testament reminds us that the discipline of the Lord is just that, "It is from God, do not regard it lightly and don't faint when you're reproved by Him." It speaks to you, look at the first part of verse 5, "If you've forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you his Sons, don't regard lightly the discipline of the Lord." This is a message to believers, you understand that? He's talking to believers, this is addressed to sons he says, that passage isn't addressed to unbelievers; it's addressed to you, to sons. It speaks to you.

Now we've already seen the purposes of God and I want to take you now into the text, and I want to show you three different things that appear in this text that help us understand the discipline of the Lord. Two perils in discipline, two proofs in discipline, and two products in discipline; perils, proofs and product.

Let's look first of all at the perils in discipline. We're all going to be disciplined and coming with that discipline are some perils. Two things that are dangers to the purposes of God in discipline; God wants to accomplish something in disciplining us. He wants to conform us to the image of Christ; He wants to reveal more of Himself to us, that's education. He wants to prevent us from sinning; He wants to humble us so that we're more useful. He wants to chasten us for sins committed so that we don't do it again. He wants to fill our hearts with the anticipation of glory, all those things that we saw, but that only works if you avoid the two perils.

Peril number one, do not regard lightly, literally the Greek language here says, despise not, that's the first peril in discipline. The Lord brings a purposeful discipline into your life, the Lord brings training into your life through difficulty and you despise it instead of embracing it. It means to misjudge, but to treat as lightly rather then as profoundly as it ought to be treated. Do not fail, it means to consider the real purpose of this discipline. The real scope of it, the real end of it, see discipline not as a momentary affliction but as an accomplishment that God is in process of bringing the past for your good and his glory.

Frankly, there are many people who never see past the pain because they're self absorbed, they're self centered, they're caught up in their own comfort and let me tell you in Evangelicalism today, I mean if it has to be true that these people who claim to have this great faith to believe Jesus can make them rich and these people who come and want Jesus to fix all of their problems and demonstrate a kind of faith that believes in, at that level, I believe those people are serious casualties to life's real issues, because it just literally devastates them as if it were a surprise that it should happen because they have been expecting nothing but prosperity and comfort.

There are many people who can't get past the pain because they think Christianity is somehow a blank check and when you become a Christian God's going to deliver to you everything you want, and when you don't get it you are angry, you despise, you treat lightly, or you misjudge, you fail to consider the real purpose and scope of what is happening.

This can happen a number of ways. You can get yourself in a position where you can't see past the pain by callousness, that's hardening against God. You just become hard, you become resistant rather then melting it as discipline. Rather then doing a hard examination as we saw last time in saying, look is this because of retribution? Is this part of God's prevention in my life? Is this part of my education? Is this part of God wanting to build in me anticipation for glory? Instead of saying that you get angry at God, you get hostile, your heart gets hard, you become callous, and this is the peril. You then cut off the purpose of God from being achieved and no doubt will guarantee to yourself greater chastening.

Not only by callousness can you treat this lightly but by complaining. Like Israel in the wilderness, griping, complaining, people get cross with God, they become sour with God, they become angry with God, they fret and fume at God as if He didn't know what He was doing.

Arthur Pink said, "God always chastises twice if we're not humbled by the first one. Remind yourself of how much dross there yet is among the gold, view the corruptions of your own heart and marvel that God has not smitten you more severely." That's wisdom isn't it? Count your blessings that your trials weren't what you really deserved.

You can treat lightly the discipline of the Lord then by callousness by complaining, and even by questioning. Why is this happening? What are You doing this? Why me? Why me? All of that kind of attitude thwarts the purpose of God in the chastening and leads to greater chastening. But I think perhaps most importantly, I mean while it's important to mention callousness and complaining, and questioning, the most common way that you will despise, that you will treat lightly the chastening of God is by carelessness, a failure to change, a failure to change. You just let it come and let it go and it doesn't make any difference in your life. You go on in your own sin, you go on in your own selfishness, in any or all of those ways you can treat God's discipline lightly, you can look down on it, you can think little of it, that's really what the term means. It means to think little of it, not to see it for what it is.

I guess because of the years of studying Scripture, when a trial comes into my life I, by God's grace, I go immediately to the question of this is a profound thing. This is something God has wrought; this is something that God is doing in my life. In fact, I didn't mention my own recent experience, and my doctor who really saved my life was here last Sunday and he said, why didn't you mention what you just went through? I said, well I don't do that very often, it's kind of rare thing for me to do that, but he said, well you should mention that. So I said well maybe I will, and I said, well I don't know that I knew how serious I was. When I walked into your office, just trying to get some help for my pain and inability to breathe, because I had blood clots all through my lungs and I didn't know that, but when I walked into your office I didn't know how bad I was and I don't know that I've ever asked you. I said, how bad was I? He said, you had somewhere between two hours and 24 at max to live. Whoa! I said then I was fairly serious.

Well I knew it was serious and I thought that I might be able to die, but the only thought that entered my mind in the whole process, and I know this is the grace of God, and because of constant exposure to the Word of God, was the thought Lord what is this purpose in this? What is are you trying to accomplish? What do I need to know from You? This is a deep and profound experience; this is not a trivial experience. None of life's suffering is trivial and you don't want to treat it lightly, you want to treat it profoundly, but you want to look at it from God's perspective. Don't despise it.

That's the first peril in discipline. The second peril, look at verse 5 again, "Not only don't treat it lightly, don't faint when you're reproved by Him." Don't lash out, that's the external and don't break out against God, and don't break down inside. This is just as bad, there are some people who don't - they don't get hard against God, they don't question God, they don't get callous, they just collapse. Oh this is more then I can bear, oh... they just - you know they're ready to tell you the whole sad tale every time you see them, instead of saying, you know I'm going through some of the wonderful times God has refined in me. Oh I don't understand, I'm holding on brother.

They just - these people give up and become inert, they just - I don't know if I'm saved. They forget Psalm 34:19, I think its verse 19, Psalm 34 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, many are the afflictions of the righteous." We get more afflictions then the unrighteous, you know that? But they're over when we die, but we get more then the unrighteous; because we are afflicted by the unrighteous who hate what we stand for and we're afflicted by God who wants to make us more righteous.

These people sometimes find their faith begins to fail, they begin to doubt, doubt God's wisdom, doubt God's plan, doubt God's love, and than they wind up in Psalm 42, like the psalmist, and they have to do a double take and say, "Why are you troubled oh my soul, why are you troubled in me, hope in God I will yet praise Him." They have to pull themselves up, don't they? Despise not and faint not, don't break out and don't break down, those are the two perils in discipline that hinder what God wants to accomplish.

Secondly, there are two proofs in discipline here. Two proofs, two things that are proven by this discipline and we'll see that in verses 6 to 8, "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure God deals with you as with sons for what son is there for whom His father doesn't discipline. If you are without discipline of which all have become partakers then you are illegitimate children and not sons."

You know Satan is the victor often in our trials on the basis of how we respond. Many Christians take trials with despair and despondency, others despise them, some feel God is far off, instead of trust doubt comes, instead of quietness turmoil comes, instead of contentment resentment comes, instead of hope knowing God is perfecting us, that the testing of our patience has a perfect work, instead of hope and giving of thanks, thoughts of bitterness arise toward God, and we cry like the psalmist in Psalm 10:1 who says, "Why are You standing so far away oh Lord? Why are You hiding Yourself in my times of trouble?" Our Lord isn't hiding Himself, the same psalmist says, "The Lord is a very present help," isn't it? He's not hiding; don't despise and don't faint.

Well you say, how can I keep from doing that? By understanding two proofs that should really lift you up. The first thing that your chastening proves, the first thing your suffering proves is God's love for you. Verse 6, "For those whom the Lord," what? "Loves, he disciplines." That's no reason not to despise or think lightly of it. That's no reason not to become callous or questioning, or careless

because it is an evidence of love. It all proceeds from His love. When you came to Christ you were rooted and grounded in love, we love Him because He first loved us. We should have a rooting and a grounding of love.

What does Paul mean in Ephesians 3 when he says that? He means we should have a settled assurance of God's love for us; the foundation of my life is that God loves me, right? God so loved me that He gave His only begotten Son. God so loved me that He chose me before the foundation of the world. God so loved me that He set His love upon me and forgave my sin and granted me righteousness in Christ. God so loved me that He has Christ preparing a place for me in His own house in glory. God loves me, that's an assurance that nothing should ever be able to shake. Have the sweet assurance that love is behind all your chastenings.

A man asked a little boy, why are you looking over the wall? The little boy looked at him and said, because I can't see through it. Life can be like that, at some point discouraged Christian you've got to climb up and look over the wall and what you're going to see is a loving Father. You're going to see a loving Father, look above the dark clouds of discipline and see the sunshine of His never changing love. It's like flying in a plane through the dark clouds and hitting the brilliant sunlight. You're going to find behind the clouds is God's love, He loves you. All discipline flows from God's love. It was love that elected you before the foundation of the world.

I tell you the heart is warmed and thrilled when it goes back to God's sovereign love and eternity past. Ephesians says, "In love," chapter 1, "Having pre-destined us; in love having pre-destined us. It was love that chose us; it was love that redeemed us while we were yet sinners Christ died for us as an act of love. It was love that effectually calls us." Jeremiah 31:3 says, "With loving kindness have I drawn you." Ephesians 2 says, "He loved us with a great love and it was that great love that drew us out of our spiritual deadness. God being rich in mercy," verse 4, "Because of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved. Chosen by love, drawn by love, redeemed by love, and kept by love, it is love also that disciplines us. He loves us so much, He corrects us, and He withholds from us what would harm us."

I mean how many times have we said to our children, I'm doing this because I love you and than we take out the rod, and it's true, that is why we do it. Because we love them too much to let them follow a path of behavior that will lead to their own destruction; we love them too much to have them bear the weight of sin, the consequence of sin. We love them too much to bring upon themselves devastating judgment.

It says in Lamentations 3:32, "If He causes grief then He will have compassion according to His abundant, loving kindness. For He does not afflict willingly or grieve the Sons of men to crush under His feet all the prisoners of the land." In other words he says, God doesn't do this just because He gets some pleasure out of doing it, He doesn't do it because He enjoys our suffering. If He did enjoy our suffering and if He found pleasure in our severe pain then He wouldn't have to do anything and we would bring upon ourselves through our inequities pain enough.

God does, in a sense, what is painful to Him. He doesn't do it willingly, He doesn't grieve the Sons of men because it's His pleasure, He does it compassionately and He does it out of His loving kindness because He knows it's for their benefit; He loves us that's why He does it.

Remember, the great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the book of Hebrews is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, right? In all points tempted like as we are, He's touched with the feelings; what does that mean? That means He feels the actual pain of our weakness. He knows, He has compassion, tenderness, empathy, sympathy, but He still employs discipline just like a parent. I feel the pain when my children have pain, I hurt when my children hurt, I'm touched with the feelings of their infirmities, and yet I use the rod because love demands it.

So the first thing that discipline proves is that God loves you. God is love and nothing is so sensitive as love and yet He chastens. In fact, when He chastens you, in a very real sense He does feel that pain. Isaiah 63 says, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." It pains the Lord to chasten His children, just like it pains a father or a mother to chasten his or her children, but His love is unselfish. When you see a parent that says, oh I love my child too much to spank them, they don't love that child, they love themselves and are not willing to suffer the pain that inflicting pain on their child might bring, they'll suffer another kind of pain to be sure. Love is unselfish and love says even though it hurts me deeply to do this, I do it because I love you, and that's how God loves us.

First thing proven by discipline is love, secondly our sonship. Verse 6 again, "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives." Every son in the Kingdom will be scourged, that's a proof of sonship, that is a proof of sonship, every son, no exceptions, but only sons, it is both inclusive every son, and exclusive it doesn't involve people who aren't his children. He scourges mastigoy, that's the act of flogging with a whip, that's the act of hitting someone with a lash, every son he lashes. God here is pictured as a father using a corporal correction for faulty sinful, wicked behavior and God does it to every one of us and the fact that He does it is evidence that we're His children.

He says in verse 7, "God deals with you as with sons, for what son is there whom his father doesn't discipline?" I mean fathers do that. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He that spares his rod hates his son, but he that loves him, chastens him many times." You have, in all your children, fallen individuals, totally depraved, reprobate, sinful, and they must be dealt with firmly with the rod. Proverbs 19:18 says, "Chasten your son while there's hope and don't let your soul spare for his crying." Sure they're going to cry, don't stop. Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, with the rod of correction it will be driven far from him." Proverbs 23, "Withhold not correction from the child, for if you beat him with the rod he shall not die," even if he says you're killing me.

Furthermore, it says in Proverbs 23:14, "You shall beat him with a rod and deliver his soul from hell." It's all part of training. Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." Our society is filled with undisciplined children and we understand what they're like, it's tragic. The fact that God chasten us indicates we are His sons.

It is for discipline, verse 7 says, "That you endure." Discipline in the Christian life doesn't come in spite of sonship it comes because of it. It's not some aberration, oh why is this happening? It must be the devil, no this is God, it's because you're a son that you're being disciplined.

I just have to put this in here, I really do wonder whether these people who live these lives of outrageous, outlandish wealth and prosperity, and comfort even belong to God at all. I question that on the theological level often; I even question it on the level of this text. Where is the suffering?

Where is the discipline? The disobediences manifest where is the discipline? Are they at all His children? A child who is disobedient, who wanders away, will be disciplined by a loving father who really cares. He'll keep a firm hand on him because he cares what he becomes. The discipline of my children proves they're my children, it proves I love them, it proves they belong to me.

I saw a lady in a market just wailing on some little guy and I made an immediate conclusion, she's his mother because that's who does that. That's evidence of sonship, and it's the same with God, His discipline is for every son that we may know He loves us and cares what we become.

This is something to keep in mind now; the common reaction is to be envious of the person who escapes suffering. The common reaction is be envious of the person who escapes suffering when we really ought to be envious of the person who suffers. Don't envy unbelievers; don't envy the false teachers who show nothing but prosperity and comfort. Verse 8 says; "If you're without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons," don't envy that.

I used to tell my children, it's a privilege to be a MacArthur, it's a privilege to be in this family, it's a privilege to have me as your father and Patricia as your mother, that's a privilege, and we endeavored to show them the privilege of it and the joys and the blessings of it, but along with the privilege came the discipline. It's a privilege far beyond anything like that to be the child of God, isn't it? Indescribable privilege; it's equally a privilege to be disciplined to become the best child that I can be to the honor of God my Father.

Jerome said, the early church father, this is pretty profound; he said the greatest anger of all is when God is not angry with you. He meant that the Supreme punishment was for God to be indifferent to your discipline. That's true in parenting, the supreme act of disdain for a child is not to discipline, that's indifference. We're disciplined by God because He loves us and because we belong to Him and it proves His love and our sonship.

Lastly, there are two perils in discipline, there are two proofs in discipline, and there are two products in discipline. What is God exactly trying to do in the end? Well, God has something very definite in mind. Verse 9, "Furthermore we had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them, shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of Spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seen best to them, but He disciplines us for our good that we may share His Holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, yet to those who have trained by it afterward it yields a peaceful fruit of righteousness." He hears into the product, he says, let me contrast the natural Father and the supernatural father; our earthly fathers disciplined us for a limited period of years and received respect for it. I'm certainly thankful for my father's discipline, my mother's discipline; we accept it with gratitude knowing it was for our good. Father and mother, if you want true respect from your child discipline firmly in love with consistency and with justice.

Now, if we can accept that from our earthly father, He says in verse 9, "Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of Spirits? Shouldn't we be willingly subjected to whatever discipline God wants to bring? Why? That we may live," that's the first thing. The first product is life; life, what is He talking about here? Well He's not talking about physical life, we have that. He's not talking about spiritual life in the simple sense of salvation because we're already in the family, we already are a part of the Kingdom, we're already His children, what He is simply talking about here is living life in this world to the maximum benefit and blessing, really living, really having the fullness of life.

Psalm 119, "Great peace have they which love thy law." To enjoy that fullness, that great peace, that great joy, happiness, He just wants us to live to the fullest, that's the first thing; that we may enjoy the fullness of His blessing, the fullness of His goodness, the fullness of His power and usefulness.

Second thing is also mentioned, you see it at the end of verse 10, "The Father's disciplined us for a little time, He disciplines us for our good, what good that we may share His Holiness." He wants us to hate sin; He wants us to learn to stay away from sin. He wants to bring consequences into our lives when we sin that cause us to think twice about doing it again. Earthly father's short time, discipline us, and we learn to avoid certain things because they'll be pain associated with them, we don't do that because it's a painful experience and God is the same way. He disciplines us that we may stay from sin and become increasingly partakers of His Holiness. Be Holy for I Am Holy He says in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Hosea 5:15, "In their affliction will they seem Me early God said. When I start to punish they'll begin to seek My face."

It's the same thing He's referring to at the end of verse 11, the fruit of righteousness, righteousness and holiness being the same thing. God wants to bring us the positive blessing of full life, rich, joy, peace, satisfaction, blessing, usefulness, and Holiness. If then, trials and tribulations under God produce life and Holiness, then we should welcome them, right?

Let the rains of disappointment come if they water the plants of spiritual grace; let the winds of adversity blow if they serve to root more securely the trees that God has planted. Let the sun of prosperity be eclipsed if that brings me closer to the true light of life, so I welcome discipline. I counted all joy, James 1, "When I fall under various trials because it's God at work in me producing joy."

Carnal senses and natural reason object, verse 11, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful." We find no joy in the trial, we often can't see the profit at the moment, we can't experience the fullness of life, we can't know the Holiness at the time, even the sense of God's love and our sonship is not perceivable to the carnal mind and the natural reason. All the natural senses see the experience as painful and grievous and the reason is because we are locked in the present, yet to those who have been trained by it, here's the key word, afterwardit yields the peaceful fruit of righteous. You've got to get the future view, you can't get locked in the present, afterward, when it's over it will produce righteousness to those who have been trained by it, to those who have responded properly and avoided the perils of either breaking out or breaking down. To those who respond rightly to it, it produces righteousness. If you understand the discipline of God, if you understand His purposes in it, if you understand what He's doing, it will produce in you righteousness, Holiness, life.

As the bee sucks honey out of the bitter flower, so faith can extract blessing from trouble. It can turn water into wine and make bread out of rock. It hopes and says triumphantly with Job, "Though he slay me yet will I trust Him? And when he has tried me," he said, "I'll come forth like gold." In our pain and not our pleasure we learn the deliverance of God and are made to know life and Holiness.

Remember Mary? Martha's sister, she stood at the empty tomb and she wept at the very thing designed to bring her greatest joy, the resurrection. She had the present view, not the afterward, don't stand in the middle of your trouble and weep at the very thing God has designed to produce

ultimately your greatest joy.

One little footnote on this, I don't mention this very often but I wrote a book called, The Power of Suffering. If you want more help on this get that paperback book, The Power of Suffering, we'll learn all that God has to say about this wonderful discipline.

Father, we are again in debt as always when we come to the Word of God, in debt to You for this treasure, this incredible mine of divine truth, life changing truth, life giving truth, heavenly truth. Father, help us to count it all joy when we fall into these difficult trials, to treasure Your discipline, no matter how painful at the moment, may we know that afterwards, for those who are properly responding to it, it produces life and Holiness in which we will rejoice. Thank you Lord, thank you for all You're doing in our lives, to make us like Your Son who Himself was perfected through His sufferings. We thank you for the fellowship of His sufferings and we pray in His, Amen.

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