

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God's Faithful Discipline

Scripture: Hebrews 12:4-11

Code: 90-391

Now as we continue in our look at the book of Hebrews and particularly the life of faith as we have seen it laid out in chapter 11, and then reemphasized at the beginning of chapter 12, we come to the final section that I want to deal with in this series, and that is Hebrews chapter 12 verses 4 through 11...Hebrews chapter 12 verses 4 through 11.

I'm going to read that passage. It is, for most of you, a familiar text of Scripture. What we want to take it not in its pieces as it is sometimes quoted, but in its whole. Starting in verse 4, the writer of Hebrews says, "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd 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 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 seem best to them. But He disciplines us for our good so that we may 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."

You will remember that Matthew chapter 18 where we have our Lord Himself giving us the pattern for church discipline, after having told us how important it is to confront each other in the church and to confront sin and sometimes to tell the congregation and sometimes even to put the person out of the church because of the influence that they're having for evil, there's sort of a difficulty in the mind of the reader to do that, a reluctance to take on the responsibility of confronting people to that degree and so our Lord says, "Remember that where two or three of you are gathered together, there am I in the midst." And that refers to the two or three witnesses engaged in a discipline situation.

So when we do discipline in the church, we're reflecting what our Lord desires for His church and here is a passage that lays that out. We do on a one-to-one basis, we do in the life of the church on an open basis what our Lord is doing in a secret way in the lives of all who are His children.

This is a very important and a very informative passage, one, I think, every Christian should thoroughly understand. If you get a grip on the truths in this text, make them your own, you will view

your life in a very, very different way. And we need to back up a little bit and get kind of a running start.

The Hebrew community is at least in name Christian. There are true believers who make up the majority, apparently, and there are some interested Jews on the fringe who haven't yet come all the way to Christ. What is raising the stakes for even those who have named the name of Christ and certainly for those who are thinking about it is that having any association with Jesus Christ and with the church of Christ produces persecution from the surrounding Jews. And if you go back to chapter 10 verse 32, we read, "Remember the former days when after being enlightened you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one."

When they became believers or even when they associated with the believers, persecution was immediate, it was severe. Some of them literally lost their property. Their property was seized and taken from them. They were pressured by that to go back in to Judaism, to let go of the things of Christ which they had legitimately embraced or superficially embraced, being seriously mistreated raised the price. This is reminiscent of our Lord's parable of the soils where the seed goes down, takes a little root, begins to shoot up but the persecution, the *thlipsis*, the pressure, the tribulation causes the seed to die before it ever bears any fruit. Persecution is very difficult for new believers to bear and it's very threatening to those who are only considering whether or not to identify with Christ.

Now in response to that, if you're still in chapter 10 and verse 35, he says, "Therefore do not throw away your confidence." You've had confidence in Christ. You've put your trust in Christ. Don't throw that away because at the end of that is a great reward, a great reward.

Then down in verse 38 he says, "My righteous one shall live by faith and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul."

So here you have an illustration of people who have made some kind of an external commitment to Christ, they have come together to assemble with a believing group of Christians, some genuine and some only in consideration of Christ, the threat is then likely to drive some of those who are considering Christ away from Christ because the price is too high. And even some of those who have genuinely come to Christ are in danger of not making a clean break from apostate Judaism and perhaps even questioning their suffering, asking why it is now that I've come to Christ that I am so suffering.

Well they need to understand that they have to live by faith. And you remember that I just pointed out the words of verse 35, "If you will hold on to your confidence in Christ, if you will continue to live by faith, there is a great reward." The implications of that tie in with the words of our Lord, "In this world you will have tribulation. Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." There is to be expected difficulty and tribulation in this life, and we live by faith.

We live our lives, as we've been learning in Hebrews chapter 11, we live our lives in anticipation of something we do not have. None of us has ever seen heaven. None of us has ever experienced righteousness in its full perfection. None of us has ever seen the goodness of God in its full massive reality. We all believe in that but we believe in something we have not experienced. We will not experience it until we're in His presence. We make the sacrifice that is necessary to come to Christ, it's a sacrifice of self, we deny ourselves, take up our cross, follow Him. We make the sacrifices that are called for in a life of repentance and a life of holiness and a life of sanctification by saying no to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We resist the devil. We fight against him and the onslaught that comes from his enterprises in the world.

And we do all of this not because we hold in our hand the end of our faith, but because we believe it is to come. There is for us a great reward. We have enough evidence of the promises of God as we go along in this Christian life, we see Him answer prayer, we see Him providentially order our lives. We see Him pour out blessing upon us. And we see it enough to anchor our faith. It is critical for us to hang on in difficult times.

Now we come in to chapter 11 and, of course, what you have in chapter 11 are all these great people who really illustrate faith. And they illustrate faith in the sense that they lived and died for something they didn't receive, whether you're talking about Abel or Enoch or whether you're talking about Noah or whether you're talking about Abraham, or Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, flowing on down, Moses all the way down through all the rest of the prophets and holy saints of the Old Testament who suffered all the things that are indicated at the end of chapter 11...these were people who did not receive what they hoped for in life. The promises that were promised to them were not fulfilled. All the promises to the patriarchs were not fulfilled in this life. All the promises to Moses were not fulfilled in this life. All the promises to and through the prophets were not fulfilled in this life. They didn't even see the great promise of all promises, the coming of the Messiah as the one to provide salvation. And that is why verse 39 ends that eleventh chapter by saying, "All these having gained approval through their faith did not receive what was promised." They all lived and died before Christ came, before the New Covenant was ratified, before the gospel was fully understood because God had provided something better for us so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. We're on the other side of the cross. What they only saw by faith, we know by biblical sight, if you will, all of the truths concerning Christ. So they were not made perfect. They died...all of them died in hope for the fulfillment of the promises.

Now we have the promised fulfilled in Christ but we too live by faith and we live for a future hope in the glory that is to come. Now having said that and illustrated the courage of all these people, for their lives were all very challenging, they exhibited great courage which is sort of the crescendo at the end of the chapter, as you see that they conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, verse 33, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, etc., etc. This is the kind of faith that can take anything that comes and it endures.

Now in chapter 12 then, the writer turns to this community of believers and says, "Now I have showed you that salvation has always been by faith and it is always a matter of believing what you have not yet received and I call on you to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race that is set before us. Your call to run a faith race, your call to live your life in anticipation of something you do not have. Then he says, "Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith who is the model of faith. He did what He did, lived the life He lived, suffered what He suffered for something to come in the future. He endured the shame of the cross for the joy that would come after that. He acted in faith. He went to the cross in faith. He expressed a possibility, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It seemed as if He had. But He had, of course, not forsaken Him in the end. He saw His faith vindicated when God raised Him from the dead. He was a perfect illustration of faith because He was perfectly obedient, perfectly trusting and His faith was vindicated.

So look to Jesus as the perfect model of faith. He despised the shame. He could see through to the end when He would be seated at the right hand of the throne of God. And when you think about your own life, verse 3 says, "Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself so that you will not grow weary and lose heart, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. You haven't had to go as far as He has, you haven't had to die for your faith."

So here he is calling them to a life of faith. Calling them to accept the fact that it's going to be a challenging life, it's going to be a threatening life. Nobody has died yet in this community of believers. Eventually many, of course, would die for their faith in Christ.

Having said all of that about the life of faith, living the life of faith, being courageous in the life of faith, he then comes to the question, "Why is it that if we have come into the Kingdom by faith, why is it if we have confessed Jesus as our Lord, if we acknowledged Him as the one who died and rose again on our behalf, why is it that life is still for us so hard? Why is it so hard?" Is it that somehow Satan has power over God? Is Satan doing all of this? Are demons doing all of this? Some people think so. Some people think if things go wrong in your life it's the devil. Why is it that we are going through this? Why is it that we are suffering? Why is it that it's so hard? Why is it that we lost our property? Lost our homes? Become alienated? Why does this have to happen to us?

And the answer comes in verses 5 to 11, "It is the discipline of God....It is the discipline of God." That's what it is and that's how you are to see it. When you have difficulties and challenges in your life, you don't look to Satan, Satan's not your lord, Satan's not your father, he used to be your father...Jesus said, "You're of your father, the devil," to unbelieving Jews. But the devil is not your father, not my father. We're not under his sovereignty. He has nothing on us. In a very real sense, he's been placed under our feet. We have been delivered from his power, delivered from the evil one.

The issues that come into our life that challenges us, that call for our courage and our faith to be strong, the struggles, the trials the suffering, the pain is not the work of Satan in the life of a believer, it is the discipline of God...it is the discipline of God.

Now it's pretty clear, having read that passage, that it's about discipline since the word is repeated throughout the entire text...all the way down to the last verse. This is about discipline. The word is *paideia* which is used of the training of children. We talk about pedagogy. A *paidagogos* was a child trainer, a child mentor, a child teacher. *Paideia*, or *paiea* is child training, it's part of our training, it's part of our Father's discipline for us. The word speaks of whatever occurs in the life of children brought upon them by their parents to cultivate their soul, including corrective issues, including curbing their passions, including hedging them against the things that are dangerous.

It is also not just protection but it is instruction with a view to producing virtue, aiming at the increase of character. The word doesn't have the idea of punishment is what I'm getting at. It has the idea of training. And that's consistent with verse 11 which ends, speaking of those who have been trained.

So you look at the issues of your life that are negatives from the human perspective that are challenges that are difficult and you have to view them as the training of God in your life. The discipline of parents in the training of their children we expect. And I'll tell you something, we enjoy it. Nobody enjoys an undisciplined child. We expect it. We enjoy it. A loving father who cares for his children disciplines his children, sometimes painfully.

The Scripture is pretty clear about this. The discipline is not done by giving your children "time outs." The discipline is not done by taking away activities. The discipline scripturally is done with a rod...with a rod. "Spare the rod, spoil the child." Corporeal punishment, inflicted pain is the way to train a child, the biblical way. And that's what God uses in our lives, to train us to get our attention.

God does not necessarily bring to bear serious and severe discipline on us throughout all our lives, but there are times when He does and always...always for His own purposes...for our good and His glory.

Mark it, there's a great difference between divine punishment and divine discipline. I think you can make the distinguishing idea in your mind with the English words, right? You know the difference between punishment and discipline. Discipline speaks of training for a good outcome. Punishment speaks of retribution, vengeance, wrath...that's not what we're talking about. The Lord doesn't do that with us, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ, right? Romans 8:1. So let's not use the word punishment as if God would punish us. The truth is, He punished Christ for us, right? So we're not talking about condemnation kind of punishment. This is something very different. It doesn't mean it's not painful. It may be very painful.

Punishment has one purpose, discipline another. The purpose of punishment is to inflict vengeance. And punishment from God is eternal. The purpose of discipline is to produce virtue and discipline is only for a temporal season. In punishment, God is the judge. In discipline, God is the father. In punishment, the objects are His enemies. In discipline, the objects are His children. In punishment, condemnation is the goal. In discipline, righteousness is the goal.

Now, having said that, let me take the word discipline, or the concept discipline, and break it into three parts, just to help you sort it out a little bit. I think there are three reasons for the Lord's discipline, three reasons that things in our lives come along that cause us to struggle, to suffer, that bring pain.

Reason number one we'll call correction. Reason number one we'll call correction. We all know that the Scripture is for correction, right?, 2 Timothy 2. God is in the business of correction. Every branch He prunes. That's a painful slicing away. We have sins in our lives that need the discipline of correction. Sometimes this correction takes very serious, serious extent. For example, in the letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, a correction reached the point where some people were sick because of the way they came to the Lord's table, and some of them the Lord actually took them to heaven because they were more trouble here than they were worth. But it is possible to be sick, according to 1 Corinthians 11, because of sin, the frivolous sin of coming to the table of the Lord.

You might want to start there when things go wrong in your life. That's a good place to start. That's a good inventory. That's what Job's friends did. That's kind of a standard approach. Job started having trouble and then he had trouble upon trouble and trouble after trouble until the trouble was incomprehensible. And what did his friends say? "Ah, you've got a lot of sin in your life, Job. You must have more sin than we can even comprehend and you've done a good job of hiding it," cause they hadn't seen it. And we think their counsel was foolish because Job wasn't a sinner, but that's the standard place to start and it's a good place to start.

But when you look at your own life and you begin to see that God is correcting you, you have to understand this is not punishment for your sin in the sense of final punishment. This is not condemnation in the sense of final condemnation. But rather that final punishment, having been

borne by Christ, this is correction. This is not smiting you in wrath. This is correcting you in love. And so, you consider the chastening of the Lord in your life as being related to the sins in your life, having a corrective purpose.

First Peter 5:10, Peter says, "After you have suffered a while, the Lord make you perfect." It's going to take some suffering. It's going to take some pain to knock off the carnal aspects of your life. Judgment begins at the house of God in this sense of correction. But it's a serious error to get stuck there. You don't want to get stuck there with Job's friends that made that the final analysis even though it was wrong.

There's a second reason for discipline and that's prevention...prevention. Sometimes God's discipline is to prevent sin. The Lord fences you in and tells you to put a guard on your mouth and a guard on your eyes, and a guard on your ears and be careful what you expose yourself to. The Lord demands that you stay away from evil company because evil company corrupts...what?...good morals. The scriptures are full of things that are the barriers that the Lord puts into our lives to shelter us, to separate us from the things that corrupt us.

I think any father knows that, any good parent understands that you put into the life of your child restrictions. And if you don't, if you allow your children to be overexposed to the things that corrupt them...guess what? They'll be corrupt...they'll be corrupt. It's preventative discipline.

For example, the Apostle Paul has a horrendous agonizing experience of demonic activity in the Corinthian church, coming through these false teachers. It is so severe that in 2 Corinthians 12 he says it's like a stake, like a sharp stake rammed through my flesh. This is the stake driven through his flesh. It's a messenger of Satan, the messenger is *angelos*, a satanic angel, demonic activity in the church that he loved in Corinth. And they're buying in to these false teachers and it's like running a spear right through him. And so he goes to the Lord and he says, "I prayed three times to have it removed...three times the Lord would get them out of that church, three times that the Lord would take away my agony and my pain. And the Lord didn't do it. The Lord said this, 'I'm allowing this to happen to keep you from exalting yourself, to protect you from pride, to protect you from self-glory, to protect you from feeling too confident about the greatness of your accomplishments.'"

The Lord will do some amazing things, even turn loose demons in a church to make life miserable for the pastor of that church in order to keep that man humble. So sometimes discipline comes from God for correction, and sometimes it comes for prevention. You who have suffered greatly in life know that it draws you to the Lord and away from the world, does it not?

There's a third reason for God's discipline, that's education. It's designed to teach you the experiences of life that lead to deeper fellowship with God. There are things that come that just educate you. They educate you toward God. I think of Peter...and toward others...I think of Peter in

Luke 22, this familiar passage, Jesus says, "Satan's desired to have you that he might sift you like wheat." But He says...Jesus says to Peter, "After it's over, and you're turned around, you will strengthen the brethren."

You can't become an educator to strengthen others unless you've been through the trials they've been through. Part of the discipline of God is to raise the level of your sympathy, and to raise the level of your comfort. You remember in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul says, "Look, I suffer, I suffer all the time." He lays it out in the very introduction of 2 Corinthians 1. And then he says this, "I have had all these sufferings that I might be comforted by God so that I might comfort you."

So, some suffering is corrective. Some suffering is designed to simply prevent us from going down paths into sin and some suffering is designed to educate us. On the surface, we might not know that. We might not know that, you have to search that in your own heart. Job's friends were totally wrong.

What was the purpose in Job's suffering, as far as Job was concerned? I know God was trying to prove a point to Satan, but as far as Job was concerned, what was the purpose of his suffering?

Was it correction? No. Was it prevention? No, because he was not a man who was walking near the edge of the world. It was education. And he understands that. At the very end, this is what he says, chapter 42 verse 6, "I had heard of you with my ear, now my eye sees you." The end result of what happened to Job was a clearer vision of God and four verses later in verse 10 of chapter 42 he says, "And now I pray for others." He had been educated to the place where he saw God like he had never seen Him before, which made him a better man and a better teacher of others, more sympathetic.

Well, that's the background of discipline and why it happens. So verse 5 says, we do need to get to the text, "You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons." You should be expecting this. Why is this a shock to you?

You remember this morning we read 2 Corinthians where Paul says, "Let me prove I'm an Apostle," and he endeavors to give testimony to the legitimacy of his apostleship by the immensity of his pain and suffering. Try that on a prosperity gospel. Try that on the prosperity preacher. It's the opposite. Just as the Apostles legitimacy was manifest by his suffering, so our legitimacy as saints is manifest by our suffering. And it's not random suffering, it's not willy-nilly suffering, it's not Satan doing this, we aren't his, we have a loving heavenly father who is doing the discipline for his own purposes.

So have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons? Look, you're Jewish people. Did somehow you forget the book of Proverbs? Did you forget Proverbs chapter 3 verses 11 and 12, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him? For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges every son He receives." How important is it to quote to these Jewish people from the familiar Proverbs that say you should expect

it, my son, and not regard it lightly and not faint under it, but understand the Lord loves and therefore disciplines. The Lord receives and therefore scourges. It's the nature of being your loving Father."

So he wants his Jewish leaders to recall the words of Proverbs 3 so they will see that this is to be expected, this is to be anticipated, this discipline that comes from the Lord. So the scriptures that were written before for our learning that we might through endurance and comfort from the scriptures have hope, Romans 15 says, are where the writer turns. Have you forgotten that exhortation addressed to you as sons? Proverbs were not written for unbelievers but for believers and do we remember that the book of Proverbs was primarily a tool put in the hands of fathers for the instruction of sons and daughters as well? And be reminded that the exhortations there are just that, they are exhortations addressed to you. That is a very important thing that the Scripture in the Proverbs though written long before this group of Jewish believers ever came together was addressed to them. This is the timelessness of Scripture, it is equally addressed to us.

Now, I have a few minutes left so I'm just going to cover the rest of this rapidly. I want to show you two perils in discipline. I want to show you two proofs in discipline. And I want to show you two products in discipline. Two perils in discipline, what can go wrong?

Well there in verse 5, you could regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or you could faint when you're reprovved by Him. Those are the opposite extremes, right? You think it's a minor thing, or it literally knocks you flat. Either of those extremes is unacceptable. Do not regard the discipline of the Lord lightly. Don't misjudge its urgency, its important, be it for correction, make that heart examination, be it for protection, get in line and stay away from the edges of sin, be it for education, take your lessons and become a sympathetic teacher to others who suffer. But do not treat it lightly.

Whatever troubles come into your life, whatever trials come into your live, view them as the discipline of God. You can treat them lightly by being callous, by not thinking spiritually about them, or by complaining, becoming sour and bitter. Like Israel in the wilderness, you can complain all the time. Arthur Pink said, "God always chastens twice if we're not humbled by the first." Remind yourself of how much sin there is yet in you, view the corruptions of your own heart and marvel that God has not smitten you more severely and more often. Form the habit of heeding the disciplines that come.

You can also treat them lightly by simply seeing them as some kind of unjust act. You can treat them lightly by failing to change, being obstinate. You don't want to take a shallow look at the trials of life. Take a deep look, deep spiritual look.

Secondly, and on the other extreme, it says from Proverbs 3:11, "Nor faint when you're reprovved by Him." This is just as bad. This is to sink down in some level of despondency. This is when you get so discouraged, so low you're going to the medicine cabinet all the time just to cope and you're coming around all the time with a "poor me" story thinking sympathy instead of being exercised by the

discipline, you give up, you become kind of inert. Psalm 34:19 says, "Many are the inflictions of the righteous." Expect them...expect them.

The Psalmist could be melancholy, couldn't he? He had a way of getting out of it did David. Psalm 42, he finally says to himself, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" right? Why are you in this depressed condition? Why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God, I will yet praise Him. Climb out of your despair.

You should never despair about the trouble that comes to your life, never. It is the discipline of God, you should rejoice in it. So those are the two perils. Treat it lightly, or be literally crushed under it. There are also two proofs in discipline. Discipline proves two things.

See if you can see them there, verses 6 through 8. "For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines and 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 have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."

Did you see them there? There are two things that are proven by discipline...one, God's love; two, your sonship. That's right, first God's love. Two great things become clear in His discipline, two wonderful realities are proven. First, whom the Lord loves He disciplines. That's why you don't faint. That's why you don't ignore or despise the discipline of God, it all proceeds from His love. Have that sweet assurance that everything that comes into your life comes from God's love. I can tell you, I've lived long enough to know, that it's the pains of life that drive you to Him. It's the pains of life that purge your soul. It's the pains of life that make you a better believer, a more sympathetic teacher.

A man one day was walking up to a stranger and he said, "Why are you looking over the wall?" And the man said, "Because I can't see through it." So I say to you, do what David did, look over the wall. You can't see through it, why are you troubled, you don't need to be. Get the upward look.

Revelation 3:19 and there are a lot of passages that I'm not going to give you tonight, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Therefore be zealous and repent. Those whom I love I reprove and discipline."

Was it love that elected us? Were we not chosen by sovereign love? In love, Ephesians 1, in love having predestined us." Was it love that redeemed us? Did not God love us when we were enemies? "It is love that effectually calls us, in loving kindness I have called you," Jeremiah 31:3. It's all about love. It's all motivated by love. Read Lamentations 3:31 to 33 for a good illustration of that. It is...love is understandable to us because we know that any father who really loves his child, disciplines that child. Because why? Because he wants the best from that child and he knows that in the heart of that child as in his own heart resides the worst. Every mass murderer, every serial killer, every pervert of

every kind was once somebody's little child with a heart of innocence that hadn't yet expressed itself. A loving father disciplines for correction, for protection, for education because he loves the child and he feels the pain. My Dad always used to say to me, "This hurts you more than it does me..(he said it backwards), and then he'd wallop me. And I didn't buy it. I...I just didn't buy it until I became a father.

Isaiah 63:9 says, "In...speaking of Israel...in all their affliction, He was afflicted." Sure He feels the pain but He understands the benefit. The discipline proves He loves you. Secondly, it proves you're sons.

Verse 6 says, "He scourges every son whom He receives." God...verse 7...deals with you as with sons. What son is there whom his father doesn't discipline?" If you're without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you're illegitimate children and not sons. All of our Father's sons are going to experience discipline. You have all these people running around preaching this silly notion that all God wants you to be is slap-happy all the time. Quite the contrary. Every son He scourges. Proper training must include corporeal correction of behavior. "He that spares the rod...as I said from Proverbs 13...spoils the child. But he that loves him, chastens him many times." Proverbs 19:18, "Chasten your son while there's hope and let not your soul spare for his crying." Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." Proverbs 23:13 and 14, "Withhold not correction from the child for if you beat him with a rod he shall not die. You'll beat him with a rod and deliver his soul from hell." What a promise. Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." Certainly our world is full of testimonies to that, huh?

It is for discipline that you endure. In other words, discipline is the essence of enduring spiritual development, spiritual life. God is dealing with us as sons.

So, we've seen the perils in discipline. We've seen the proofs of discipline, that He loves us and that we're true sons.

There are two products in discipline, finally. Two things that God produces. They're obvious. 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?" We respect our earthly fathers, shouldn't we respect our spiritual Father, right? We give honor to our earthly father for the discipline that he gives to us out of love and because we're sons. Shouldn't we do the same with our heavenly father because this is what it produces, the first thing...life. Be subject to the spiritual Father and live...and live. This, by the way, is in contrast to Deuteronomy 21:18 to 21. Deuteronomy 21:18 to 21 describes a situation where you have a child that's disobedient, a child that's rebellious, a child that's dishonor to the parents. And you know what the prescription is for that child? Kill the child...kill the child. Capital punishment for a rebellious, disobedient child.

With that being the original standard, parents had an awful lot at stake because they had a legitimate, God-given reason to have their child executed if that child was not an obedient, responsive, respectful child. And that is why it says here in this verse that our spiritual Father wants to subject us to discipline that will give us life, not death; eternal life, abundant life. It's not just that we will live eternally, it's that we'll really live.

You know, the believer who is most obedient is living the Christian life at its max, right? The more rebellious you are, the more undisciplined you are, the more disobedient you are, the less you enjoy life.

Second thing is not only life in its fullness, but verse 10, "They disciplined us for a short time, our earthly fathers, that seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good so that we may share His...what?...His holiness." So that's the second product in discipline...holiness. So we get a full, rich, enjoyable life and holiness. Oh, we'll have eternal life and we'll have eternal holiness but this is talking about here and now. You received the promise of eternal holiness when you put your faith in Christ. Discipline does not contribute to that. You received eternal life when you were saved. Discipline doesn't contribute to that. Discipline contributes to how much you enjoy this life and all its riches in Christ and how you progress down the path of godliness and holiness and the two are inseparable, right? Because really living is connected to living a life of virtue. And the Lord keeps up the discipline throughout our lives to accomplish these ends.

One final word. You say, "Well, it seems a little counter-intuitive, this idea, you know, of becoming a Christian and now all of a sudden I'm coming under this discipline." And so, in verse 11 he kind of acknowledges that. "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful."

I mean, let's be honest, right? When you're going through the agony and the pain, whether it's an illness or a job loss or an economic stress, or trouble with your children, or trouble with your spouse, or who knows what it is, a myriad of things, it doesn't seem joyful at the time, it seems sorrowful. Yet to those who have been trained by it, if you'll see it for what it is, training, correction, protection, education, and you learn your lessons, it will yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Your life will be just filled with the products that righteousness produces.

Carnal senses react negatively...of course. Natural reason reacts negatively. We find no joy in the cancer diagnosis. We find no joy in the unresolved conflicts that come into our relationships. We go through a terrible time grieving over them and feeling the pain and the sorrow. But afterward...that's the big...that's the big word...afterward. For the moment it's not joyful but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Righteousness and peace go together, don't they? When you're righteous, you're at peace.

So, there's...there's the issue of discipline laid out for us. And this completes the picture of living by faith and understanding that the life of faith is a life of challenges, it's a life of trials and suffering as it was for all the people in chapter 11 and has been for all the people who have ever lived by faith. But we triumph over that faith by focusing on Jesus who also triumphed in the midst of the most horrendous suffering anyone would ever or could ever even conceive of. The discipline of God is building us up to righteousness so that we can live lives that are marked by peace.

Father, we thank You again tonight because Your Word is alive and powerful, refreshing, challenging, instructive. Thank You for teaching us. Help us now, Lord, to understand the implications of this in our own lives, to look at life perhaps differently, to see that we are not being victimized by Satan, we're not being victimized by Your enemies, we are being trained by You toward righteousness. This is all about sanctification. Thank You for loving us that much that You would make us sons, that You would love us by conforming us even in this life through our suffering to the very image of Christ, Your true and eternal Son who Himself was perfected through suffering. We love You as a faithful Father and desire to be the children that You would have us to be, sons that You would not be ashamed of. Work that work in us for Your glory, we pray. Amen.

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