

Hebrews

Hebrews 12:3-11 – God’s Discipline

February 28, 2010

- I. The Necessity of God’s Discipline for Living A Life of Faith
 - A. **Hebrews 12:3-11** . . . For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you **will not grow weary and lose heart**. [4] You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; [5] 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 reproved by Him; [6] for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." [7] 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? [8] But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [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? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness**. [11] 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.
 - B. In these last two chapters of Hebrews we see the theme of discipline – **self-discipline** and **God’s discipline**. And if it is important enough to God to make discipline a theme in these two chapters, it should be important enough for us to learn the lessons about discipline He is wanting us to learn.
 - C. As a reminder, Hebrews 12 and 13 are about living a life of faith – modeled after the people of faith spoken of in chapter 11, and after the author and perfecter of faith, Jesus Christ. The first requirements God places on us for living this life of faith are putting off every unnecessary weight (encumbrance), putting off every sin that we are aware of, running with endurance, and keeping a fixed focus on Jesus.
 - D. Today, we will begin looking at God’s discipline and why it is necessary for living a life of faith.
 - E. Prayer

II. God's Discipline

A. **Hebrews 12:3** . . . For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

1. Defining and explaining words:
 - a. **Consider** – consider Jesus by way of comparing his life to your life. Take courage and encouragement from the fact that he had to endure so much more than you.
 - b. **Grow weary; lose heart** (faint inwardly) – we rarely grow weary or lose heart from a single situation or a momentary affliction. Rather, we grow weary and finally lose heart when hardship and suffering goes on and on with seemingly no relief in sight. Therefore, remaining steadfast over the long-haul is what is being talked about here.
2. To gain the benefits God intends from considering Jesus' life in light of our life, we must maintain the right perspective on life, the people in our life, and the circumstances we experience in relation to their effect on us.
 - a. If we regard hardship as something that is against us – as if it were an enemy that drives away our happiness and puts frustration, disappointment, hurt, loss, sorrow, and even misery in its place – then considering what Jesus endured in comparison to what we are enduring won't produce its God-intended results.
 - b. To look at Jesus' experience with sinners and circumstances, and in our looking find the motivation and encouragement to endure hardship and suffering as he did, requires a mindset that sees hardship and suffering as our friend rather than our enemy.
 - c. Now you may be thinking, how could hardship and suffering ever be a friend? The answer is one that has been understood by godly people down through the ages. Hardship and suffering are our friends in that they are used by God to change us and train us in ways that conform us more and more to the image of Christ – which in turn brings us more and more into that condition where we are holy as God is holy.
3. My point here is that the Christian mindset toward hardship, trials, tribulation, sickness, accident, disaster, suffering, and loss **is that**, whether planned by God or allowed by God, He uses all

such circumstances to strengthen our faith, improve our endurance, and further train us in righteousness.

- a. In other words, the Christian embraces hardship and suffering as his friend, because
 - (1) it is the path to greater purity of heart and holiness of life;
 - (2) it is the doorway to service that glorifies God;
 - (3) and it provides an opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ for the purpose of furthering God's purposes and kingdom in this world.
 - b. If this is our mindset, if this is what we value, then in spite of the people or circumstances in our life, we will find needed encouragement to remain on the narrow path by considering what Jesus suffered in comparison to how we are suffering.
4. Once more, what can motivate us to find encouragement in Christ's sufferings to endure our own hardships and suffering? Having a heart set on holiness!

B. **Hebrews 12:4-5** . . . You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; [5] 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;

1. Defining and explaining words:
 - a. **Resist** – to stand against, to oppose
 - b. **Strive** – to fight agonizingly against
 - c. **Forgotten** – we've allowed an essential truth to slip from our minds, probably because it is such a ferocious foe of our old nature
 - d. **Discipline** – not punishment, but corrective education
 - e. **Hebrews 12:5** is a quote from: **Proverbs 3:11-12** . . . My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, [12] For whom the LORD loves He reprov's, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.
2. God points out two important truths in these two verses concerning times of hardship and suffering:
 - a. **First**, none of us have had to fight off the temptation to please ourselves, or the temptation to seek relief in fleshly or worldly ways, or the temptation to remove our problems with sinful solutions to the point of being beaten until we bleed or to the point of suffering death on a cross.

- (1) In other words, whatever price we have had to pay for remaining faithful to God in the face of our severest temptations to be unfaithful is less than Christ payed.
 - (2) What this means is that we have not endured suffering for righteousness sake like Christ suffered – and this should give us reason enough to endure our times of suffering. Remember, we are fixing our eyes on him because he is our example of what we can and ought to be.
 - b. **Second**, if we lack the Christian attitude toward hardship and suffering it is because we have forgotten a particular truth that God has set before us to give us the right mind set. And what is that truth?
 - (1) Treasure God’s discipline instead of resisting it or treating it as a nuisance or burden to bear.
 - (2) Or we can say it this way – embrace God’s discipline so that you willingly and humbly remain under it until you have gotten the most from it.
- C. **Hebrews 12:6** . . . for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."
1. Some of us have difficulty associating love and discipline – but that is our weak way of thinking, not reality.
 - a. Love and discipline are inseparable in that love seeks the good of everyone who in any way is affected by its choices and behavior. And what is more, love only disciplines for the good of the one disciplined – and the good of the community in which the one disciplined lives.
 - b. It is selfishness that appeases or spoils or is lenient or permissive in the face of wrong-doing.
 2. But what about the word “scourge?” Doesn’t that mean to flog or whip and so cause a person to suffer great bodily pain, even to the point of shedding blood?
 - a. Yes, it includes that. We see this part of God’s discipline in the stories of the faith retold in Hebrews 11.
 - b. How can that be love?
 - (1) First, let me make it clear that we are not the creators of love, nor are we in a place of authority to tell God what love is and what love isn’t.
 - (2) Second, God’s ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth. In other words, our deepest

most thoughtful thinking is shallow in comparison to His. And I believe it is safe to say that it is hard for us to understand God's mind on this issue.

(3) In my opinion, here is the point of the scourging part of **verse 6**. God has children that are advanced in the Christian life – such as Job, Jesus, Paul, Peter, John and many others who have suffered in these more extreme ways. This is God's love accomplishing the very same thing He has set Himself to accomplish through lessor or easier lessons in our lives

3. Let me sum up verse 6 by saying the Lord loves all who belong to Him. This means that if you are His child, He loves you! And He disciplines every one of His children.

D. **Hebrews 12:7-8**. . . 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? [8] But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

1. Why do we endure hardship and suffering? To get the most from God's discipline as possible. And why do we want the most from it that we can possibly get? Because we want to be holy as He is holy.
2. And should you think a loving God would not make or even allow His children to suffer anything, then remember how a good earthly father acts. He disciplines his own children for their good.
3. **A warning!** If we have not experienced the discipline of the Lord, or are not experiencing it, it means we are not His true children but illegitimate children born of another father even though we are living in the church as if we were born of God.

E. **Hebrews 12:9-10** . . . 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? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.**

1. If we can look back and value the discipline of our earthly parents and respect them for having disciplined us, we ought to treasure God's discipline, and respect Him and submit to Him all the more when He disciplines us.
2. **Note** that God's discipline is **ALWAYS** for our good – and this good that He is working in us is the good of bringing us to that condition

were we “**share His holiness,**” or are perfect as He is perfect, or are conformed to the likeness of Christ.

3. Consider Adam and Eve. The ultimate punishment for disobedience was death. This may seem like a harsh response from God for what might seem to us as a small failure to do what was right. And yet this response from God was far more a kindness than a cause for suffering because it sets His people free from the presence, power, and destructive consequences of evil and sin, and brings them into perfect and eternal holiness.
4. And so I want to say this again – Christians welcome and embrace hardship and suffering.
 - a. Why? Because their heart is set upon holiness – and because they know the right response to God’s discipline will bring them into greater holiness than they had known before.
 - b. **Believe this** – if your heart is not set upon holiness, if you don’t treasure holiness, you will not willingly accept, you will not embrace, and you will not patiently endure hardship and suffering – which means their lessons will be wasted on you.
5. Therefore, embrace every time and kind of hardship and suffering as an opportunity of dying to self, growing in holiness, and drawing into deeper and more meaningful fellowship with God.

- F. **Hebrews 12:11** . . . 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.
1. I believe everyone here today agrees that discipline is not an amusement park or a cruise ship experience.
 2. Discipline is hard – it requires work on our part, it includes some level of pain or exhaustion, it takes time from other things we might rather be doing, it takes self-discipline to gain the intended lesson, and for sure, it demands perseverance.
 3. However, those who have passed through a time of God’s discipline and have experienced the fruit that comes from being disciplined look back on the training with grateful eyes and thankful hearts.
 4. What is the peaceful fruit of righteousness? It is inner and outer meekness, peace with God, and a life that makes for peace with those around you. **Isaiah 32:17** . . . And the work of righteousness will be peace, And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.

III. Conclusion

- A. The greatest loss any of us can experience in this life is God leaving us alone because we are unteachable. Therefore, run from self-pity, resentment, and ungrateful complaint against God. Nurture the right attitude toward hardship and suffering – toward God’s discipline – and use God’s gracious, loving, work of training you as the very best means of learning and growing and becoming holy like God is holy.
- B. May we, as God’s children, fully believe that the fruit of discipline makes the hardship and sufferings of discipline worth it all!