

DISCIPLINE – THE LORD’S WORK

Scripture: Hebrews 12:4-11

Context: Christian Jewish believers faced persecution because of their faith in Christ. The author’s chief purpose in writing this letter was to exhort Christians to be steadfast under trial and to hold fast to the faith.

1. WHAT IS DISCIPLINE? In Greek “παιδεία”

How many times do you find the term “discipline” in our passage? (12:5-11) 13 times, inc. interchangeable words and pronouns.

Note: In the New Testament, apart from Hebrews 12, παιδεία occurs two times in the following verses:

- ❖ **Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline (paideia) and instruction of the Lord.
- ❖ **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training (paideia) in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Discipline has two aspects: 1. Formative discipline (training, instruction, education).
2. Correction discipline (restoration from your fallen state).

Example of training – Deuteronomy 8:2 And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, **that he might humble you**, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. 3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, **that he might make you know** that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. **5 Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.**

Greek scholar Bill Mounce: Sometimes παιδεία is painful because we have done something wrong and our loving heavenly Father would not dream of allowing us to live in our sin, and so we are disciplined. At other times παιδεία is painful because we need to learn and grow, but not because we have done anything wrong.

2. THE GOAL OF DISCIPLINE

Man's goal: Personal comforts and personal security

God's goal: Holiness

- ❖ **Hebrews 12:11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but **later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.**

Goal: Peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- Peace cannot exist without righteousness. (cf. Ps. 85:10)
- **After you hit the finishing line, there comes great relief/peace.** Peaceful fruit of righteousness, godly character, holiness.
- ❖ **Hebrews 12:9** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them [LIMITED TIME, LIMITED KNOWLEDGE], **but he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.**

Goal: Our good, his holiness [OUR GOOD IS HIS HOLINESS]

- ❖ **Psalm 119:67**, Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.
- ❖ **Psalm 119:71**, It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

Learning about God? God is a God of holiness, and He shapes you to be holy.

3. THE PROCESS OF DISCIPLINE

Tom Landry, former head coach of the Dallas Cowboys, said, "The job of a coach is to make players do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be."

Man's goal: Personal comforts and personal security

God's goal: Holiness

God's process of training us in holiness is pain and afflictions (it hurts our personal comforts and security)

- ❖ **Hebrews 12:11** For the moment **all discipline seems painful** rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Process: Painful

Hebrews 5:8-9, Jesus who as the supreme Son “**learned obedience through what he suffered [training, not punishment]**. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.”

Hebrews 12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

- Christ faced such opposition from His opponents to the point of shedding His blood. It was excruciating. He endured suffering for our salvation.

Hebrews 12:4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

- **Against sin:** All that would tempt them to give away their faith, particularly the hostility from sinners. They did not yet go to their martyrdom.

[5] And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. **[6]** For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

Observation:

- Christ endured from sinners hostility...
- Believers faced hostility/persecution from sinners.
- This hardship was the Lord’s discipline [training] for believers.

John Piper: What hostile sinners mean for harm, God means for good. What they will as hurtful, God wills as helpful. What they plan as destruction, God plans as salvation. What they design as a deterrent to faith, God designs as discipline for faith.

James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Genesis 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

- **Man's motive:** Hurt
- **God's motive:** God-dependent

2 Corinthians 1:8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of **the affliction we experienced in Asia**. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **But that [persecution]** was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

- **Man's motive:** Hurt
- **God's motive:** God-dependent.

2 Corinthians 12:7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

- **Satan's motive:** Torment
- **God's motive:** Humble

Learning about God? God is sovereign, and He is in control of the afflictions you go through, even when they are caused by the devil or humans. No matter who causes suffering, God is in control of them and uses them for His glory and for our good.

J. C. Ryle comments: By affliction He teaches us many precious lessons, which, without it we should never learn. By affliction He shows us our emptiness and weakness, draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our affections, weans us from the world, makes us long for heaven. In the resurrection morning we shall all say, "It is good for me that I was afflicted." We shall thank God for every storm.

4. THE MOTIVE BEHIND DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:5, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 **For the Lord disciplines the one he loves**, and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. **God is treating you as sons**. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If

you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Rev. 3:19, Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

Misunderstanding: Discipline is seen as distinct from love.

Common accusation: If God is good but cannot stop evil, then he is not powerful and, hence, a weak God. If God is powerful and does not stop evil, then He is no good and is a sadist.

Biblical reason: God is good and powerful, and He uses evil to conform His people to holiness.

What is the evidence of God's love? Material blessings or earthly comforts? Or Discipline? Pain? Afflictions?

How does God treat us when he disciplines us? As His sons. (v.6-8). Ex. Kings.

Illegitimate: bastard, i.e. born, not in lawful wedlock, but of a concubine or female slave.

Raymond Brown (Bible Commentator): The person who has no experience of the Lord's discipline may well question whether he truly belongs to him. Our adoption into the family of God will bring not only privilege and security, but adversity also.

How many of us see God's love in pain?

Note: Pain has the power to make us more emotional and less rational.

Devil's and man's thoughts: Afflictions are God's wrath and hatred.

Note: Christ consumed God's wrath on the cross for our sins. We only experience God's love in Christ, not God's wrath. **[invitation to unbelievers]**

Psalms 119:75, I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that **in faithfulness you have afflicted me. [invitation to believers]**

Summary: What is discipline? What is the goal of discipline? What is the process of discipline? What is the motive behind discipline?

Next sermon: What should our response be to God's loving discipline?

Sing: God Moves In A Mysterious Way

