

The Father's Discipline

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the book of Hebrews. It will be in Hebrews chapter 12.

And we'll read verses 1 through 13. Talk about God's discipline for his children. Amen.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood, and you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons.

[1 : 21] My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined, and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the father of our spirits and live?

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.

Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

[2 : 35] Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Nobody needs to be admonished or encouraged to eat the last spoonful of their ice cream.

No. Nobody says, Come on now, don't quit, finish. The temptation to give up is only when significant difficulties are in the way.

And so it is with this book of Hebrews. When we see the writer constantly encouraging them to persevere, persevere, we can know that there were great hindrances, hardships in the way, that would have turned them out of the way.

What were they? Well, these Jewish Christians were facing opposition from their own families, being written off. You leave the Jewish religion and follow Jesus Christ, and I'm dead to you, or you're dead to me.

They faced trouble from the whole Jewish society. Maybe they no longer bought things from your store, and so on. It might have been economic pressures from your own Jewish brethren, but then from the government as well.

[3 : 59] And we read of this up in chapter 10, verses 32 to 34. There was insult and persecution and prison and confiscation of their property.

Their houses and lands were just taken from them by the government. So life became harder for these Hebrews when they became Christians than it was before they were Christians.

And temptation was strong to turn back from following Christ and thereby to unload and get rid of all of these difficulties in the way.

Hence this theme of encouragement that just pervades the book of Hebrews, this letter that's written to encourage them to persevere. So Hebrews 10, 32 to 34, he tells them, you've made a good start.

You stood fast at the very beginning in the face of suffering. Oh, but now you're slowing down, and you need fresh encouragements to keep going.

[5 : 04] He says in verse 36, you need to persevere so that when you've done the will of God, you will receive what he's promised. But if you shrink back, you'll be destroyed. The crown only goes to overcomers, Jesus says.

So keep going. Chapter 11 shows the critical role of faith in perseverance. And it encourages them with many examples of faith that persevered.

Throughout chapter 11, you get to see these folks who had great hindrances in their way, but they persevered, and how? By faith. By faith. By faith, Abel.

By faith, Noah. By faith, Moses. And so on. If you're going to persevere, you're going to need faith. And then chapter 12 opens up, having seen how others persevered to the end with faith, now it's your turn, he says.

Let us run with perseverance, the race marked out for us. They ran their race well. Now let us do the same, and in the same way, with an eye of faith.

[6 : 11] And then he says in verses 2 and 3, with our eyes fixed on the ultimate example and object of our faith, even the Lord Jesus, who himself is the author and perfecter of our faith, and who for the joy set before him endured the cross.

There's faith, looking ever at the joy that was future, coming to him. And therefore, he persevered, enduring the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down.

The work finished. Sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now you need to consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Because growing weary and losing heart always comes before quitting. No one quits until they've lost heart and grown weary.

And so that's a serious sign of declension of health, that we shouldn't just brush over. Are we losing heart?

[7 : 15] Are we growing weary? Take it seriously. And that's what the writer is doing. And so in verse 4, he says, In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Oh, but Jesus did, as he's just rehearsed. And there's grace in him to help you to do what he did. Indeed, the whole idea of union with Christ is that the branches are attached to the vine, and therefore the same power and grace that is in the vine is what flows to his people.

So did Jesus have persevering grace? It is in Christ for you to be strong in the Lord and to persevere to the end.

So get your eyes of faith laser-focused on Christ so that you don't become another statistic of those who believe for a while and then fell away altogether from Christ.

And he would say the very fact that all this hardship is slowing you down and that the temptation to grow weary is gaining traction with you is because of something you are forgetting.

[8 : 26] Something you're forgetting. And I think this is one of the biggest problems in the Christian life, that we forget what we already know. We let important truths sink to the bottom and get lost in those dark files of the mind where we are no longer living upon those truths.

And that's why Jesus says of the Lord's Supper, do this in remembrance of me. It's not that we forget that Jesus died on the cross. Nobody forgets that. But we forget it in the sense that it's no longer front and center and affecting the way I'm living today.

So do this in remembrance of me. It's why Isaiah and the Apostle Paul often say, do you not know? Have you not known? Have you not heard?

Of course you have. But you're acting as if you haven't. So let me remind you. It's the same reason why Peter, in his letters, says more than once, I will always remind you of these things even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

I think it right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body because I know that I will soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me and I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

[9 : 53] So our greatest need in the preaching of God's word is not a steady diet of new things though we hanker after that. And I say we, meaning me, too.

But rather, more often than not, our need is to be reminded of things that we already know but are letting slip from our consciousness. Well, what exactly had these Hebrew Christians forgotten?

Notice verse 5. You have forgotten the word of encouragement that addresses you as sons. Now the Bible's full of words of encouragement.

We saw that this morning. And we forget them. Now the Lord Jesus didn't forget. That was the joy that was set before him. His father's encouraging words.

Son, you go and die for all these that I've given you and they will be saved and you will bring many sons to glory with you. And he kept that before him.

[10:55] He didn't forget and that's why he persevered to the end on the cross and didn't quit. Now it's interesting that the word of encouragement that they found or that they forgot is found in Proverbs 3, 11 and 12.

It's about discipline and it addresses you as sons. Never forget that the scriptures written thousands of years ago are still addressing you.

We heard it in the Sunday school this morning. So that word in Proverbs 3. Notice he doesn't say that was written for you.

No, it addresses right now present tense. It is addressing you. That passage is speaking God's word to you. Are you hearing the voice of the living God speaking?

That word of encouragement is now addressing you as sons and it's to our great loss to forget what he is saying to us.

[12:02] And in that we notice that difficult times, disciplining times are tempting times. We're warned here against two wrong responses to the Lord's discipline.

We can take it too lightly or we can take it too heavily. Notice he said, he warns against both. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline and don't lose heart when he rebukes you.

So, the making light of God's discipline is a son who, after his father takes him over his knee and gives him a good spanking, looks up at his dad and says, is that all you got?

He's defying his authority. He's belittling the discipline, making fun of it, treating it lightly.

And that's one wrong response to the Lord's discipline of us. It's just to brush it aside, to not let it sink in, to not learn the lesson for which it was sent, to seek mercy and forgiveness and restored relationship with our father.

[13:13] And, of course, this response tempts God to choose a heavier discipline, which, in faithfulness, he is known to do and use in order to bring correction to his dearly beloved children.

So, that's the first wrong response, just to treat it lightly and to march right on as if he'd never disciplined us. But the other wrong response is on the complete opposite side, and it takes it too heavily.

It's to be crushed by the fact of the father's discipline, not to harden your heart against it, but now to lose heart, to have your spirit completely taken out of you, to start doubting that God loves you and cares for you, and maybe even to start doubting your sonship.

Am I even really a Christian? Oh, no. Could I not be a true son? And it was this second response in particular that I believe these Hebrew Christians were tending toward with two wheels already in the ditch.

They were reasoning that all these problems, all these hardships in my life can mean only one thing. I must not be a true son of God. How many today have this idea of the Christian life that it promises to put an end to our sufferings and troubles, but to think that means you have bought into the lie about the Christian life.

[14:42] We've forgotten the word of encouragement that addresses you as sons, and it's just this, that it's none other than sons that the father disciplines, and not sons that he merely puts up with, but sons that he loves.

You've forgotten that. Indeed, he disciplines everyone without exception. He disciplines everyone that he accepts as a son.

This is not a sign of his rejection of you as a son. This is a sign that he accepts you and loves you as his son. So the very hardships they were undergoing that caused them to lose heart and even doubt their sonship should have actually had the exact opposite effect upon them of encouraging them.

I am a true son. Father's treating me like he treats all of his loved children that he accepts. Isn't it something how easy it is to incorrectly interpret the providence of God?

So something happens, and then we try to interpret what is, what's God's heart toward me? Why did this happen? And when we start asking these questions, it's very easy for us to come up with the wrong answer.

[16:02] They go, he must be angry at me. He must not love me. Maybe I'm not even his child. Why is this happening? We easily come to a wrong conclusion about the providence of God.

We can be far off base. We sang it this morning about behind a frowning providence he hides a what? A smiling face.

But what do we see? We see the frowning providence. We think, oh, it must be an angry face. No, there behind it is the smiling, loving face of the Father.

But frowning providences are easy to misinterpret. Now, I think some of the confusion in this passage is over this term discipline. Verse 7 says, endure hardship as discipline.

God is treating you as sons. Now, what I want us to see this evening is that there's more than one kind of discipline. There is corrective discipline and there is character building discipline.

[17:08] I think we're most familiar with the corrective discipline and maybe that's where our minds immediately go. It is definitely seen in the proverb that is quoted by the words rebuke and punish.

That he rebukes those he loves and he punishes every son he accepts. Those are a father's response to wrongdoings. When his son is acting up or disobeying, he rebukes him for it.

He, and if necessary, punishes him for it. And what we're being taught is that God uses corrective punishment on his erring children too.

It's a clear teaching of the word of God. It is God's loving way of turning his child from the evil way that's going to lead him down a bad path.

And it's his way of bringing him back on the pathway of blessing. It's his loving act. Corrective discipline. But not all of God's discipline is corrective discipline.

[18:08] There is character building discipline. Now this is what dad is doing when he gives you chores to do before you go out and play. I don't see any, there's a couple children back here.

Okay. Does dad ever do that? Give you chores to do? That's what we're talking about. You didn't do something wrong and so dad says, I want you to mow the yard, to sweep the house, to help mom fold laundry and gives you all these tasks to do.

Some of them can be very distasteful and things you don't like to do. But this is not corrective discipline. This isn't, well, because you disobeyed, this is your punishment or this is what you need to do to be corrected for it.

No, this is what dad is doing to keep you from ruining your own life. This is what dad is doing to prepare you for life where you're going to have to learn to do things that you don't feel like doing. You're going to have to learn to do the hard right when it's a lot easier to do the easy wrong. And so he's preparing you for life in the real world. He's character building.

[19:18] He's building discipline into your life. This is also what the army does in basic training for those who didn't learn it well at home. The drill sergeant has you running 10 miles in combat boots with a full backpack in the heat of the day.

And you say, Sir, it'd be a whole lot easier and we could go faster in tennis shoes and without these heavy packs and in the cool of the evening. Well, I'm sure he would kindly tell you that easy is not in his vocabulary and it's not the goal.

The goal is discipline. He's disciplining these troops, some that have never known discipline in the home, and he's whipping them into shape for their own good that when they're in the battle, they'll be proven, tested, character building discipline.

You see the difference? The one is corrective for wrongdoing, the other is preparing you for life. And there are those two disciplines. Endure hardship as discipline.

God is treating you as sons. Now, which kind of discipline does this refer to? Well, I believe both. He does quote Proverbs 3 that is talking about corrective discipline.

[20:45] But I believe here it is primarily character building discipline. And let me tell you why. I'm not denying that God disciplines his children with corrective discipline.

Not at all. But if that's all we think of here, I think we miss a lot of the encouragement of this word that is meant to be a word of encouragement that addresses you as sons.

So, notice the form that this discipline takes.

What is the form of it? It's hardship. Endure hardship as discipline. And let's remember the nature of their hardship.

What is this hardship? It wasn't that they had sinned against God and that he's rebuking or punishing them for it. It's rather their faithfulness to God in following the Lord Jesus Christ that has brought the enmity of their families and Jewish society and the government down, crashing upon

their heads so that they're being insulted for the sake of Christ.

[21 : 59] They're being persecuted. They're being imprisoned. They're having their property confiscated. That's the context of this whole section. Indeed, of the whole letter in which they find themselves undergoing hardships, not for wrongdoing, but for rightdoing.

And it's such hardships suffered for Christ that they are to endure as discipline, as child training is another way it could be translated.

These things are allowed into your life as God's instruments to build character worthy of the very sons of God. So that's the very discipline the Heavenly Father used with his own sinless son, wasn't it?

If you just turn back to chapter 5, what did God the Father put his perfect son through?

Speaking of Christ in Hebrews 5, verses 9 and 10, although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

[23 : 10] And once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Once perfected, not that he went from sin to purity.

He was never anything less than the sinless, pure son of God. But he needed to be perfected with testing, just like the private that's gone into basic training.

He needs to be put through the paces to come out with a character that has been tested and proven, so he's ready for war. And Jesus was preparing, was being prepared by the Father for his one greatest work of going to the cross and there bearing our sins and enduring the full punishment without quitting.

How did God the Father prepare? With hardship as discipline. Hardship. Hard things he put him through. Temptations he put him through.

Trials he put him through. His own brothers not believing him. His own people rejecting him. The Pharisees, the leaders, ever trying to catch him. The devil hounding his heels all the way through life.

[24 : 25] The Father, though he was a son, was teaching him this character building as he grew up as a young man into manhood and headed toward the cross and he learned obedience from what he suffered.

The Heavenly Father uses hardship to build character into his sons and daughters. One old Puritan said, God had one son without sin but none without suffering.

I remember Dennis Hoskins quoting that to us often. God had one son without sin but no sons without suffering. Even his perfect son had to go through the child training of suffering to be prepared for his work.

So why should we sons and daughters of that father think to be exempt from the same and yet this is precisely what the Hebrew Christians were losing heart over.

This is what they were doubting God's love and their own sonship. maybe you've been stuck in some long and painful hardship and are doubting the same.

[25 : 38] You know Satan is the father of lies and he loves to whisper in our ears during hard times ill thoughts of the father. we need to hear the encouraging word of God instead of that voice that other voice of the devil.

What is that encouraging word that addresses you as sons and daughters? Well it's endure hardship. All that present stuff you're going through endure it as child training as discipline building character building discipline.

God is treating you as sons. The hardships are proof of his love and of your acceptance as a legitimate son. And he just builds on that and proves it in verses 7b and 8 for what son is not disciplined by his father?

If you're not disciplined and everyone undergoes discipline then you're illegitimate children. You're not true sons. So a lack of such discipline of hardship would rather be reason to doubt your true sonship.

Indeed Proverbs 13 says he who spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. So to not discipline is hatred because it's actually hurting the son not helping him.

[26 : 58] And God doesn't hate his sons. He loves them too much to leave them undisciplined and unprepared for life. So the discipline of hardships so far from disproving his love and acceptance actually proves it.

And next he speaks of our response to discipline both to our human fathers and then to our heavenly father. Verse 9 Moreover we've all had human fathers who disciplined us. I don't know that the writer to the Hebrews could say that to us in our day.

We all have had human fathers who disciplined us. No. There's a lot of children who are growing up without discipline. But I remind you this is written to a Jewish Hebrew congregation who grew up with the fifth commandment drilled into them to honor their father and mother.

It was a it was a society in which discipline was meted out from the parents to the children. And so he says we all have had these human fathers who disciplined us.

It wasn't the culture of absent fathers like today. And he says what was our response to our fathers our human fathers we respected them for it. Maybe if not at the time we came to appreciate it as we grew older and wiser and as we witnessed the end of our undisciplined classmates that we once envied whose parents never disciplined them.

[28 : 24] Oh we've come to to respect our parents. And many of you are doing that today on this day honoring your father for having disciplined you and not just let you go your own way.

It was good for us. It drove some of the folly from us. It taught us valuable lessons that we need for life about authority and obedience and it has served us well.

We respect them for it and we honor them today for that. Well now comes the the twist. How much more? How much more then should we submit to the father of our spirits and live?

To rebel against the discipline of the father of our spirits is to die but to submit to put ourselves under the father's discipline.

Ah that is life. That's the abundant life. That's that flourishing life we've been hearing about in Sunday school. That's where it comes from as we submit to our heavenly father's discipline we enjoy that true life.

[29 : 31] the emphatic how much more is due to how much more wise and good and exalted our heavenly father is than our earthly fathers.

One example is given of the father's superior of God the father's superior fathering. Verse 10 our fathers well they disciplined us for a little while as they thought best.

You see something of the reservation of saying it was always best. they disciplined us as they thought best. But their knowledge and wisdom were sometimes lacking.

Sometimes they were too severe other times they were too lenient sometimes even punishing the wrong child. I don't know if you had that in your family. I'm sure that I've done the same.

But it was always and only as they thought best. but God the father of our spirits he disciplines us only and always for our good that we may share in his holiness.

[30 : 38] He knows exactly what is for our good and how to bring it about. We saw something of that this morning in Romans 8 28 that God is working all things together for our good.

Well what exactly is our good? Do you see it here? What is it? That we might share in his holiness. Because as verse 14 says without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Oh pretty good that he's disciplining us to share in his holiness. I don't want to be left without holiness. And what we're seeing tonight is that even by his discipline of us even the hardships that he ordains in our lives yes in all things many of which are bad he's working them together for our good.

And here he is our loving heavenly father working hardships for what good? Not my ease but his holiness. Not what I want but what he wants.

Conformity to his likeness. And that's what we were made for to reflect his holy image and when we do we're the most happy that we could ever be. He knows we will be the happiest when we're the holiest.

[31 : 54] And his fatherly discipline and training is personally designed to bring us just to that. That happiness of holiness. That's why every holy Christian is a disciplined Christian.

So we mustn't chafe under the hard times he's sending us nor grow discouraged and try to opt out of our father's school of discipline and hardship but rather to sweetly submit to put our necks under the yoke and accept it as from our good and loving father he knows better than we how to make us happy.

Seek happiness someone said or seek happiness sorry seek holiness and you'll find happiness. seek happiness and you'll miss holiness and happiness too.

You miss them both. So seek holiness and that is our happiness. Makes sense doesn't it as we're learning if God made us to be holy to be a reflection of his image then we are most happy when we're fulfilling the very way that God made us and I'm sure you know that that when you're walking in fellowship with the Lord you find that sweet happiness.

So will you wholeheartedly submit to God's higher wisdom in knowing how to make you holy and actually find encouragement to do so? Well no discipline seems pleasant at the time but painful verse 11 that's the nature of discipline that's why the soldiers run in their combat boots with a heavy pack and in the heat of the day.

[33 : 43] It can't be pleasant or it's not discipline. It has to be something that pushes us and and and is something that is trying us and and we're having to learn to do the hard right that that's why it can't be anything but painful it can't be pleasant if it's true discipline.

think hardship there's a reason it's called hardship it's it's hard and we're to endure hardship as child discipline training character building so though you're hurting now and under painful discipline notice he says later on however it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it so the child that whines and complains I don't like it it's it's too hard and and so they just don't do it and father doesn't discipline them and make them do it come around later on and see what does that produce and then see the one the father says no son I know it's hard I know you don't like this but it's good for you and it doesn't feel good doesn't seem good to you but you need to trust your dad I love you you know that and this is for your good and then go and see that guy later what does it produce later on well the two outcomes are completely different and that's what the father's doing he's he's saying we've got to look beyond immediate ease and pleasure and happiness we've got to look later on later on in life later on in eternity you see Christians have got to be the people of the future with our eyes looking ahead later on however it produces this harvest so what will that son do when he's out on his own at university will he study or be out partying down well if all he's ever done is just whatever pleases him he'll be partying ruining his his opportunity wasting his money hoping to see it all his debt erased someday what will he do when no one's around to see him on the job will he keep working hard or will he just loaf because he's never been trained and taught what will he do when he's a father with his own children what will he do in his responsibilities toward the church toward his wife toward his family you see the family of God does not live just for immediate ease and rest but for the later on the fruits the harvest that God through discipline produces in our lives righteousness that's his holiness that's sharing in his holiness that's what he's that's what he's after peace shalom that overall well-being flourishing blessed life some of us have tasted some new hardships in our lives of late how are you doing with them this passage reminds us that your heavenly father knows all about them and he loves you so much that he doesn't want you to interpret them wrong and so he says don't miss the encouragement in this word that I have for you so where is the encouragement in this word of encouragement that addresses you as sons well it's in your heavenly father's love for you that's where the encouragement is miss his love and you miss the encouragement miss his love and all you have is the hardship the painful hardship that's all you got and that's going to lead you to grow weary and lose heart and if

God doesn't revive your spirit it can lead you to quit and to walk out on him so here comes this encouraging word don't miss and I don't want you to miss it I can't miss it and so let me end on this note the Lord disciplines those he loves that's what we need to keep front and center in our hardships so endure hardship as discipline because God's treating you as sons he's loving you he's loving you as a no father on earth has ever loved you take the best of fathers some of us have had wonderful fathers but no father has ever loved a son the way that God the father loves you and you've got to taste that love in his discipline in his hardships or you'll be beat down and you'll lose heart he delights in you and your well-being do you see that in this text he takes pleasure in doing you the greatest good he takes pleasure in seeing your pleasure he takes delight in seeing you delighted he wants to see you enjoying that good flourishing life he loves you too much to have you settle for anything less than that life of righteousness and peace and sharing in his holiness which he knows is the only way to true happiness so if you'd not be broken down under the hardships then be reminded tonight don't forget don't forget don't let it sink down into some forgotten file in your heart and mind be reminded of the father's love for you in this hardship and what and the good that he is doing you in it and by it and so may you feel from this truth of god's love a surge of adrenaline in your soul encouragement to run on in the race that god has marked out for you in cross country

the the official of the race takes the cones and and marks out the path goes through the woods and goes up the hill and down and around wherever it goes it's it's marked out and that's the language here in verse one of

Hebrews 11 or Hebrews 12 we're to run with perseverance the race marked out for us and the lord's got your races all marked out they're all leading to the same place to heaven but some of you are going through dark valleys some of you are going uphill difficulties some of you are in the woods where you're in the thickets and all these hardships but it's the race marked out for you and therefore endure that hardship as the father's love resting in that bottomless love of the heavenly father we want to close with that in our hymn that we'll sing from the projector children of the heavenly father let's enjoy the father's love for us demonstrated at Calvary demonstrated in his child training of us let's stand and sing it to him let's pray heavenly father we acknowledge together as a congregation and as children individual children that there is no father like you perfect in wisdom perfect in love perfect in truth never lies to your children never does anything to harm us we'll not let the evil one harm us you will even turn the evil that he brings at us and work it for our good we thank you that we are in your family we thank you that we're under your care and under your child training we have more of the race yet to run and we we want to run it to your praise and glory and so would you please by your holy spirit shed abroad in our hearts this love that you have for us open our eyes to see this wonderful love that is ours through the lord jesus christ and so put strength in our our knees our sagging hands and arms and help us to see that yeah the way we run the race affects our brothers and sisters as the passage finishes that we we not hinder the lame but we rather encourage them so may we encourage each other to run on knowing what a glory awaits us later on so give us that fresh taste of your love thank you for the day together send us on our way rejoicing in this love in jesus name amen