

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
July 17, 2022

Title: Discipline or Punishment?

Subject: Training, Disciple, Discipline, Visit, Son, Believer, Justification, Submission, Value, Father, Wrath, Payment, Divine family, Jesus Christ, Imputation, Sin, Forgiveness, Condemnation, Salvation, Adoption

Theme Text: Hebrews 12:5-6 (ESV) 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.”

Theme Illustration: This is the lens through which the Lord views His elect, **Song of Songs 4:7 (ESV) ⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.** Yet, the Lord loving us as His children as any responsible parent would do is constantly examining us for those things in us that He finds objectionable. The Lord, as the Potter, is constantly looking for those imperfections that would mar the finished product while He lovingly with tender hands finds those imperfections that would cast any cloud upon His glory. Remember, our Lord is perfecting us so that He might present us to the Father spotless, **Jude 1:24 (ESV) ²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy...** this great truth finds expression where else but the psalms, **Psalms 34:19-21 (ESV) ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. ²⁰ He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. ²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.** The afflictions which the Lord sends the righteous have a purpose to shape and prepare us for glory, while these same afflictions will destroy the wicked. These things will separate the ones with false faith from those who have supernatural saving faith. If we belong to God, He will send us chastisement in the form of trials,

afflictions, and persecution, as expressions of His Fatherly love and training. This is a matter of faith for those who believe. We are to embrace discipline and the Lord's deliverance as proof that we belong to Him as His beloved sons.

Read: Hebrews 12:5-6

Introduction: This exhortation is an important lifejacket for those afflicted Hebrew Christians who are experiencing great afflictions. This exhortation is also an important lifejacket for those believers of today who find themselves in the storms of life and the waves are washing over the decks. These were the righteous remnant who had believed during Jesus's public ministry and those who were saved through the preaching of the apostles. They were hated by the Gentiles and ostracized by their unbelieving ethnic brothers. It was hard for them to even earn a living. To them, God had a frowning face. Many had even interpreted their afflictions as God's punishment for converting to Christianity.

One of the most important truths to believe is that Christians confuse discipline or divine chastisement with punishment for our sins. That is an accusation against the character of God. The debt we owed God was paid on Calvary completely. We wear the righteousness of Christ. God sees nothing in us to condemn us, **Romans 8:1 (ESV) ¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

But God does. Sin is a blight upon our character and is marked for removal through discipline. Remember, we are being perfected through sanctification. The foregoing must be cemented into our hearts by faith. If we falter in faith through our chastisement, we will begin to falter spiritually.

Transition: We have in our text. These exhortations to embrace. The first exhortation is that we need to:

1. Remember: Hebrews 12:5 (ESV) 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.

They and we are encouraged to remember exhortations from the Old Testament that covers this issue, **Proverbs 3:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, ¹² for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.** It should not surprise us that this very topic is dealt with in detail in the Psalms, **Psalm 89:29-33 (ESV) ²⁹ I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens ³⁰ If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, ³¹ if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³² then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ³³ but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.**

The word translated punishment in verse 32 is the Hebrew word to visit. It carries the message that divine chastisement is a visitation from God. It is God visiting His children to accomplish in them, His purpose. Every chastisement is a visitation from God to discipline us.

Verse five begins with the conjunction and. To remember is to connect this exhortation with the previous two. Consider Jesus in faith. Without faith, we might interpret chastisement as punishment for sins. Again, that is an accusation against the character of God. Neither justice nor the love of God will permit Him to again exact payment for what Christ discharged to the full. The difference between punishment and discipline is not found in the nature or type of the particular suffering. So the question that would be asked is how are we to tell the difference? We know immediately as a believer it cannot be punishment. Are we a child of God or an unbeliever? In punishment, God is acting as Judge. In discipline, God is our loving Father. Judicial punishment can never fall upon the true child of God. We are family members and not strangers. We must admit, according to the Scriptures that the hearts of all God’s children contain folly, **Psalm 69:5 (ESV) ⁵ O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.**

And in **Proverbs 5:23 (ESV)** ²³ **He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.**

Divine punishment is never sent for the good of the unbelieving, but only for the honoring of God's law and the maintenance of His government over the world. Divine chastisement or discipline is always sent for the well-being of His children. God is being a good Father.

Transition: Therefore, knowing that we belong to Him, His discipline, we:

2. Value: Hebrews 12:5 (ESV) 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.**

In all our experiences of divine discipline. It is always an occasion to learn our lessons. We should not regard the chastening of the Lord as a necessary evil to which we must bow submissively. No, divine discipline proceeds from God's goodness and faithfulness and is one of our greatest blessings. That is part of the new covenant. Part of this covenant, which we affirm, is an acceptance of divine discipline as further evidence that we belong to Him. In other words, it is part of the deal.

As a wise and loving parent is both wise and loving for God not to overlook sin and folly in us. If God does not chastise me, I am not a believer. All of the sufferings of believers in the world are not a review for a violation of God's law, **Psalm 34:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ **Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.** When in doubt, I suggest we follow Job's example, **Job 10:2 (ESV)** ² **I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me.** Pray and wait patiently.

To our physical senses, we tend to perceive no more than the fact of our trials. This is where faith comes in. We must look beyond the trial to God who brings it. It is our faith that perceives God's hand directing while

perceiving it proceeds from His endless love. It is our faith that will readily apply ourselves to seeking to learn God's lessons for us.

Transition: That third exhortation is found in verse six.

3. Rejoice: Hebrews 12:6 (ESV) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Why do we rejoice? I want you to focus on the words, "son, whom He receives." God accepts His children by faith and receives them into a most intimate fellowship. Those who have been justified by faith, Romans 5:1, are complete in Christ, **Colossians 2:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. Thus, we are accepted in the beloved, Ephesians 1:6 (ESV) ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.** The Lord's discipline also sustains us in our faith so that we do not fall away, **1 Corinthians 11:32 (ESV) ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.**

We should avoid several fleshly responses. First, we should respond humbly. This is not a stoic acceptance of fatalism. No, that is what unbelievers do. The attitude of the carnal person is to grit one's teeth and gut it out. This person is relying upon their own resources. They have no divine comforter or teacher.

Secondly, we should avoid grumbling. This is what Israel did in the wilderness. Grumbling tends to harden the heart rather than soften it. Quit grumbling about the weather. Grumbling is taking offense to God's love. Many a child would be. Spare the rod if they would heed the parents' warnings. When an unexpected providential blessing comes our way, we have no difficulty giving credit to God. But when our plans are thwarted, we refuse to accept this is God's hand. This text is true, we should accept it and live by it, **Isaiah 45:7 (ESV) ⁷ I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.** Quit kicking against the goads and believe.

Lastly, we should beware of carelessness. Carelessness is to fail to heed discipline. To despise the rod is to fail to profit from it. If God is chastening, we are to respond according to the Scriptures, **Haggai 1:5 (ESV)** ⁵ **Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.** We are to ponder this, **Proverbs 4:26 (ESV)** ²⁶ **Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.** There is always a reason for the chastening, **Job 6:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ **“Teach me, and I will be silent; make me understand how I have gone astray.**

As a person of faith, discipline should affirm that we are His and not conclude that we are not sons of God. We must gird ourselves against unbelief. We do seek God's support under trials, **Psalm 42:5 (ESV)** ⁵ **Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation.**

The devil seeks to foment in us the doubting of God's love. Earnest prayer is needed. Beware of just keeping your chin up! Seek the Lord. Do not wallow in self-pity. To do that is to take sides with ourselves against God. It is saying, God, is treating me unfairly. Refuse self-vindication.

Conclusion: the way to victory is to keep sorrow from filling our souls, **John 14:1 (ESV)** ¹ **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. A ship at sea is safe as long as the waves wash over the deck. The ship is in danger when the sea begins to fill the whole. Keep the hatches of your soul latched by faith. Refused to open the hatches to your soul,** **Proverbs 4:27 (ESV)** ²⁷ **Do not swerve to the right or the left; turn your foot away from evil. Allow no doubting of God's goodness, faithfulness, or the truth of God's word.**

We are to ground ourselves in God's love, **Ephesians 3:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love...** Faith must ever be in operation. Faith discerns divine love and wisdom in the worst of troubles. Faith can solve the mysteries of God's providence. Suffering is a test and a challenge to our

faith. Behold the Father's smiling face beyond the dark providence. From William Cowper's poem, God moves in Mysterious ways:

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
But trust Him for His grace
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face
His purposes will ripen fast
Unfolding every hour
The bud may have a bitter taste
But sweet will be the flower
And ye fearful saints, fresh courage take

The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings, yeah, and in blessings, yeah
And In blessings on your head
And on your head
On your head
On your head

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain
For God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain