

## MOVING ON TO MATURITY

*When God Disciplines Us*

Hebrews 12: 3–6

### Introduction

I heard about a young man that went off to one of those expensive universities. The bills were coming in monthly to his parents, and they were struggling to keep their head above water. One day his mother received an e-mail from her son that read: “Dear Mom: I’m writing to inform you that I have flunked all of my courses. I had an accident and totally wrecked my car. I owe my Nordstrom’s credit card \$2,000. I have been suspended for the next semester because of misconduct. I am coming home. Prepare Dad!”

The next day his mother wrote a one line e-mail back to him that just said this: “Dear son: Dad is prepared, prepare yourself.”

The correction of God through discipline is the subject of our sermon Bible study today from Hebrews 12:3-11. As we move through these verses, we are given four encouragements to recall **When God Disciplines Us...**

*3 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.*

### **A. Perspective is required, 3-4.**

*3 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.*

Not all troubles are God’s response to our waywardness. Some troubles come our way without our bringing them on ourselves. Certainly, Jesus is a prime example of this truth. Jesus was without sin, yet Hebrews 2:10 says “It was fitting...to make (Jesus) the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Similarly, Hebrews 5:8-9 says, “Though He were a son, yet learned he obedience through the things which he suffered.”

And Jesus did suffer. In these verses under our consideration, it says he “endured hostility by sinners against himself.” The word “hostility” (*antilogian*) means literally “back talk.” Have you ever noticed in the Gospels how many times Jesus was argued with, even viciously, with insincerity, with questions not for information but for laying a trap? Implications and insinuations were raised by his foes, “We were not born of fornication,” implying aspersion against his mother and the nature of his birth.

And, of course, the opposition against Jesus did not stop with words, but ended at the Cross. Not all suffering is God’s response to our waywardness.

Another perspective to keep in mind pointed out by verses 3-4 is that most of our troubles are not as severe as our Lord’s. Don’t become weary and lose heart because most of your troubles have not actually involved resisting sin to the point of the shedding blood?

This verse was a great encouragement to me some time ago, when I was suffering great pain from a vicious slander from someone I had thought was my friend. This verse reminded me Jesus, my Lord, endured much more betrayal from his friend, leading to his martyrdom. My pain from betrayal was great, and I took comfort the Lord knew what it felt like. But he suffered so much more than I.

Verses 3-4 relate to suffering in general. But as we turn the corner to verses 5-11, the author focuses on suffering derived from God’s discipline of his wandering child.

### **When God disciplines...**

#### **B. God is showing his love and fatherly relationship, 5-8.**

Look at verses 5-6.

*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."*

Here Job 5:17 and Proverbs 3:11-12 are quoted and the word “Discipline” (*paideia*) is introduced. That word is used nine times in verses 5-11. The word “discipline” includes the idea of instruction as well as correction. We have tended to narrow the word to God’s action when we are disobedient. But the word covers a broad waterfront of what God is doing in the lives of Christians.

There comes a time in each of our lives as God’s kids, that we mess up and deserve his discipline. As we prepare ourselves to grow through God’s discipline we affirm this truth: **God does not CONDEMN us, and He cannot CONDONE us, but what He does is CORRECT us.**

If we are believers, God does not **condemn** us. I know many today see the Lord’s discipline as punishment they are receiving for what they have done. Many people go through a season of discipline and they pull away from God, concluding the Lord is paying them back for what they

have done. They believe what they are going through serves no purpose other than God wants to get them back for what they have done. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is not getting you back. He instead, wants to get you back.

God has lain upon His Son, our Savior Jesus, the punishment rightly due you and me. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5 NIV).”

The Father’s wrath against sin was placed on the shoulders of Jesus as He endured the scourging, mockery, and crucifixion as punishment for the sins of the world. When God disciplines you and me He is not getting us back, but He is drawing us back—drawing us back into His will, drawing us back from that which will destroy us, and drawing us back towards His holiness. The great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon delivered a sermon on our text in which he wrote, “God’s people can never by any possibility be punished for their sins. God has punished them already in the person of Christ. Christ, their substitute, has endured the full penalty for all their guilt, and neither the justice nor the love of God can ever exact again that which Christ has paid.” Romans 8:1 concurs and shouts out, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Now you may think that the difference between discipline and punishment is splitting hairs, or that I am playing semantic games with you, but I am not. There is a difference. Punishment inflicts pain for past offenses; discipline brings suffering for future benefit.

**God does not condemn us, and He cannot CONDONE us, but what He does is correct us.**

God cannot condone what we have been doing in sin! God cannot just stick his head in the sand and ignore our sin and overlook it. God cannot do that because He is a holy, a righteous, and a just God. In Revelation 3:19 Jesus says, “*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Be zealous therefore, and repent.*” He loves you too much to leave you undisciplined, with you thinking everything is hunky dory, when it is only hunky.

**God does not condemn us, and He cannot condone us, but what He does is CORRECT us.**

Verses 7 and 8 continues to encourage us that When God Disciplines Us... God is showing his love and fatherly relationship.

*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.*

Have you ever been in Fred Meyer or some other public place and seen a kid acting like a brat? A child for whom you would have liked to “take the board of education and apply it to the seat of knowledge?” Why didn’t you? Because they weren’t your child! They weren’t your responsibility! We only discipline our own.

Exactly. So when we feel the training, correcting hand of God squeezing the nape of our neck, remember the very fact God is disciplining us, encourages that we are loved and related.

### **When God disciplines...**

#### **C. God is looking out for our own good, 9-10.**

*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.*

Verse 10 delicately suggests sometimes our earthly fathers may not have made prudent decisions in how to train and correct us. We would all recognize we did not have perfect parents, just as our own children, if we have them, will not be raised by perfect parents. But the point is that our heavenly father, the “father of spirits” is perfect. He disciplines us for our own good.

Romans 8:28 gives this promise in different words. “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.*” All things do not work together for good for us physically, financially, or comfortably. But they do work together for good, ultimately for our training in righteousness. As Romans 8:29 goes on to explain: “*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son.*”

### **When God disciplines...**

#### **D. A harvest grows, if we allow the discipline to train us, 11.**

*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.*

Discipline—whether coming to correct us or to train us—is terribly difficult when we are going through it. “For the moment it seems sorrowful.” Yet, for those who do not get bitter, but better. For those who press into God’s chest, instead of pushing him away. For those who “have been trained by it” there is a harvest, or as the verse calls it, “the fruit of righteousness.”

From other Scriptures we learn there are actually five distinct benefits from trials, sorrows, pains, and discipline if we respond correctly, to be trained by them.

#### **1. We come increasingly to hate what God hates and to love what God loves (1 Peter 4:1-2).**

*“...He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”*

#### **2. We become able to empathize with others (2 Cor. 1:3-6).**

*“Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”*

#### **3. We grow in patience and hope (Rom. 5:3-5).**

*“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope.”*

**4. We discover we have readjusted our priorities (Phil. 3:7-11).**

*“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...”*

**5. We find God’s power in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10).**

*“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”*

Those are five of the reasons God brings discipline or training into your life through suffering.

And what advice do I give you today if you realize you are being disciplined by the Lord?

1. **Repent** of any waywardness that may have brought about God’s correction. As a parent, I know my heart was never to hurt my dear children, but to correct them, to teach them by negative reinforcement to avoid acts and attitudes that will be destructive in the future. As soon as my child turned back to repent, mercy and justice shook hands and the discipline ended. How much more shall we be subject to the father of spirits and live. Repent so God can relent.

2. **Press** into God’s shoulder for comfort. One time I had disciplined my oldest daughter and sent her to her bedroom. Long after the tears had ended and I thought she was asleep, I heard the door from the basement open. Little feet padded across the kitchen floor into the living room where I sat in an easy chair, reading a book. Without a word, my daughter climbed up into my lap and snuggled into my shoulder. There, resting against the one who had disciplined her earlier in the evening, she fell asleep.

If you are going through suffering—whether from the disciplinary hand of God or from the general providence of God that has allowed pain into your life—climb up into God’s lap. By faith, trust the mysteries of his work in your life. Trust there is a point to it all, even in your suffering. Trust enough to press into his shoulder for comfort.

**Prayer, Pastor Charles Spurgeon, October 28, 1855**

Let us bend meekly down before God’s superior wisdom, and pray, "O God I believe that in the darkness you are brewing light, that in the storm-clouds you are gathering sunshine, that in the deep mines you are fashioning diamonds, and in the beds of the sea you are making pearls. I believe that however unfathomable may be your designs, yet they have a bottom. Though it is in the whirlwind and in the storm, you have a way, and that way is good and righteous. I would not have you alter one atom of your will concerning your discipline. I bow before you, and I give my ignorance the instruction to hold its tongue, and to be silenced while your wisdom speaks words that are right, "My son, despise not the discipline of the Lord.”