

“Biblical Faith Trusts Divine Discipline”

Hebrews 12:5-11

May 26, 2019

INTRO: Let me ask you a question as we begin...

- What comes to mind when I say “discipline?”
- What do you think about “discipline?”
- How do love, trust, & discipline go together???

VIDEO 1: *What Does Discipline Look Like?*

CONTEXT:

- > Context of 1:1-3
 - > Context of 5 warnings
 - > Context of 10:24-12:1
 - > Context of 12:1-2
 - > Context of 12:3-4

BIG IDEA: **Biblical faith trusts divine discipline!**

PREVIEW: See biblical discipline’s...

1. **PERSPECTIVE**
2. **PROMISE**
3. **PURPOSE**
4. **PEACE**
5. **PEOPLE**

I. Parental PERSPECTIVE

Hebrews 12:3-5a (ESV)

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

^{5a} **And...**

> **“And”** = continues the concept of **“Consider”**

~ v.3 = Consider Him

~ v.4 = Consider YOU

~ v.5-11 = Consider how He DISCIPLINES you!

^{5a} **And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?**

➤ **3 Perspectives here:**

○ Forgetfulness (*have you forgotten*)

When God's Word is neglected it is forgotten.

○ Faithfulness (*exhortation*)

○ Family (*sons*)

➤ **Biblical discipline DEFINED:** Holman Bible Dictionary

God has three specific purposes for His discipline:

- A. Prevention
- B. Correction
- C. Education.

God's discipline may hurt, but it will not harm.

*When God chastises,
He's not rejecting but correcting.*

Holman Bible Dictionary: "DISCIPLINE"

*The process by which God's people learned obedience was the
"discipline of the Lord" (Deut. 11:2).*

Discipline refers to the process by which one learns a way of life. A disciple was like an apprentice who was learning a trade or craft from a master. Such learning required a relationship between the master who knew the way of life (discipline) and a learner (a disciple). Within this relationship, the master led a learner through a process (the discipline) until the learner could... live like the master.

Successful discipline resulted in a life pleasing to God. The earliest setting for discipline was the family (Deut. 6:20-25).

Jesus called twelve men to be His disciples. Through His call, He established a master-learner relationship with them. As they lived and worked with Him, Jesus disciplined them...

**Such discipline involved both praise and criticism,
affirmation and rebuke.**

The Great Commission places the responsibility for (disciplining) discipling disciples in the hands of the church. The believers are to teach them *“to obey all things that I have commanded you”* (Matt. 28:20).

Becoming like Christ is the result of the discipline of the Lord Jesus Christ, exercised in and through His church.

The writer of Hebrews pictures God treating the faithful as sons (Heb. 12:7). As a loving Father, God disciplines the believing community. Such discipline is evidence of His love because the end result of such action is blessing (Heb. 12:10).

Discipline, biblically understood, results in blessing.

Through praise and correction, lives are shaped into a pattern of consistent obedience & love. Within *the discipline of the Lord*, expressed in & through the Lord Jesus Christ, one can live the kind of life which is pleasing to God & of benefit to others.

- Holman Bible Dictionary

“Biblical discipline is not concerned with what you ‘desire,’ but rather, what you ‘require’ – to BE refined... & grow in holiness.” - JDP

II. Personal PROMISE

Hebrews 12:5b-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.”*

➤ Hebrews 12:5-6 quotes Proverbs 3...

"Remind yourself of... the corruption of your own heart and marvel that God has not smitten you more severely..." - A.W. Pink

➤ **Biblical discipline DESCRIBED:**

- Compassionately confronts
- Warns & Encourages
- Is an expression of relational LOVE!

III. Purifying PURPOSE

Biblical discipline is directly & definitively related to biblical bullseyes. - JDP

Hebrews 12:7-10 (ESV)

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. 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, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

- ***We endure discipline... He endured the cross!***
- ***He both endured & disciplines for our joy!***

Biblical discipline serves as BOTH... God's divine chisel, AND His cement blocks. He uses biblical discipline for both deconstruction AND development... aka... sanctifying discipleship! - JDP

VIDEO 2: *God's Chisel*

God's discipline humbles, helps, & heals us; by holding us accountable! - JDP

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" ([John 1:12](#)).

More than any earthly father, the heavenly Father wants his children to be righteous, mature, obedient, competent, responsible, capable, and trusting. We benefit in all these ways, and many more, when we accept His discipline.

All men are subject to God's punishment, but only His children receive His discipline.

When our disobedience is great or our apathy is great, His discipline will be great.

"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently" ([Prov. 13:24](#); cf. [23:13-14](#)).

Jerome said - ***"The greatest anger of all is when God is no longer angry with us."***

There is only one kind of holiness, God's holiness.

*Positionally we already are holy, because we are justified. But practically our holiness is just beginning, which is **the work of sanctification**—making us holy.*

IV. Produces PEACE

Hebrews 12:11a (ESV)

11a For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness...

Don't miss the parallel to from the 23rd Psalm...

"Your rod & your staff, they comfort me..."

- > Rod - drives the sheep?
- > Staff - draws the sheep?

The object, then, of this admonition is, that chastisements cannot be estimated aright if judged according to what the flesh feels under them, and that therefore we must fix our eyes on the end: we shall thus receive the peaceable fruit of righteousness. And by the fruit of righteousness he means the fear of the Lord and a godly and holy life, of which the cross is the teacher... He calls it peaceable, because in adversities we are alarmed and disquieted, being tempted by impatience, which is always noisy and restless; but being chastened, we acknowledge with a resigned mind how profitable did that become to us which before seemed bitter and grievous. - Calvin

Because God is perfect, His discipline is always perfect.

We should consider our troubles as spiritual treatment, which builds our character and our faith, our love and our righteousness.

Someone has written, *"And so what do I say? I say let the rains of disappointment come, if they water the plants of spiritual grace. Let the winds of adversity blow, if they serve to root more securely the trees that God has planted. I say, let the sun of prosperity be eclipsed, if that brings me closer to the true light of life. Welcome, sweet discipline, discipline designed for my joy, discipline designed to make me what God wants me to be."*

To obtain the greater good, we should be willing to part with the less; to secure the everlasting friendship and favor of God, we should be willing, if necessary, to surrender the last bit of our property; the last friend that is left us; the last feeble and fluttering pulsation of life in our veins. - Barnes

V. Power-filled PEOPLE

Hebrews 12:11b (ESV)

^{11b} *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.***

No one lives so well as the believer who loves God's law and will, who receives everything from his Father's hand willingly and joyously.

*Biblical discipline is the application of God's Word,
God's will, & God's ways to imperfect people in
various stages of rebellion & sin. - JDP*

He/Jesus depended completely on His Father (**15X** in O.T. & **245X** in N.T.) for daily direction, power, and provision and obediently carried out every instruction.

Do you long for that kind of intimacy with God?

VIDEO 3: *Trust God!*

See Romans 8:28 in and as discipline!

CLOSE:

"Providence is a soft pillow." - Puritans

"It's a paradox really... When I had everything (except Christ), I felt like I had nothing. And now that I have nothing (except Christ), I feel like I have everything!" - Fred Gonzales

If ever we doubt God's love because of our circumstances, we can look to the cross and remind ourselves that God gave us his own Son so that we might in turn become sons of God. - Mohler

PRAYER!

VIDEO 4: *How He Loves Us?*

The Discipline of God

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 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; for those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.'" 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? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 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? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. 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 perfect fruit of righteousness. ([12:4-11](#))

All the Jews to whom the book of Hebrews was written were undergoing persecution because of their break with Judaism. It was coming from their Jewish friends and relatives, who resented their turning their backs on the religious customs and traditions in which they had been born and raised. **The readers had been reminded about "the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated ([10:32-33](#)).** Even the unbelieving Jews who were involved with the church must have suffered because of their association with Christians.

The affliction had largely been in the form of social and economic pressure, though some of them had been imprisoned ([10:34](#)). We can **imagine the arguments** they heard for rejecting the new faith. **"Look at what you have gotten yourselves into. You have become Christians and all you have had are problems, criticism, hardship, and suffering. You have lost your friends, your families, your synagogues, your traditions, your heritage—everything."**

As we have seen, those who had made mere professions of faith were, under this pressure, in danger of reverting to Judaism, of apostatizing. The true believers were in danger

of having their faith seriously weakened by adopting again the rituals and ceremonies of the Old Covenant.

Some believers perhaps were wondering why, if their God was a God of power and of peace, they were suffering so much. "Why are we not winning out over our enemies, instead of our enemies seeming always to have the upper hand? **Where is the God who is supposed to supply all our needs and give us the answers to our questions, and fulfillment to our lives? Why, when we turned to a God of love, did everyone start hating us?"**

The last section of chapter 11 begins to answer questions like these and also provides a foundation for the exhortations of [12:4-11](#).

Suffering for God's sake was nothing new. The saints of the Old Covenant had known what it was to suffer for their faith. They faced warfare, weakness, torture, beatings, imprisonment, stonings, destitution, and every sort of affliction—all because of their trust in the Lord ([11:34-38](#)).

And despite all this, they did not receive the fullness of blessing promised to believers under the New Covenant, such as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the knowledge of sins completely forgiven, and peaceful consciences. These heroes of the past "did not receive what was promised," yet they endured valiantly and "gained approval through their faith" ([v. 39](#)).

They faced afflictions in the right attitude, which is what the readers of Hebrews are counseled to do—to run the race of faith as their forefathers had done (12:1).

More importantly than this, they were to fix their eyes on Jesus, who had given up more and suffered far more than any other.

One of the reasons He "endured such hostility by sinners against Himself," was that His followers might "not grow weary and lose heart" (12:3). *They could look to His example for strength.*

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.
(12:4)

None of the suffering Hebrews to whom this letter was written had endured what Jesus had endured. None had given his life for the gospel. Nor had any of them lived an absolutely sinless life as Jesus had done, living in perfect obedience to the Father, and thus deserving no punishment at all.

On the contrary, some of their suffering was deserved and was intended for their spiritual discipline and growth.

*The key word of 12:4-11 is discipline,
used both as a noun and a verb.*

It is from the Greek *paideia*, which, in turn, comes from *pais* ("child") and denotes the training of a child. The word is a broad term, signifying whatever parents and teachers do to train, correct, cultivate, and educate children in order to help them develop and mature as they ought.

It's used (9X) in these (8) verses.

*The figure/metaphor changes from that of
a race to that of a family.*

*Christian living involves running,
working, fighting, and enduring. It also
involves relationships, especially our
relationship to God and to other*

believers. The emphasis of this passage is on the heavenly Father's use of discipline in the lives of His children.

Purposes of Discipline

God uses hardship and affliction as a means of discipline, a means of training His children, of helping them mature in their spiritual lives.

He has three specific purposes for His discipline:

- D. Retribution
- E. Prevention
- F. Education.

We must realize that there is a great difference between God's discipline and His judgmental punishment.

As Christians we often have to suffer painful consequences for our sins, but we will never experience God's judgment for them. This punishment Christ took completely on Himself in the crucifixion, and **God does not exact double payment for any sin. Though we deserve God's wrathful punishment because of our sin, we will never have to face it, because Jesus endured it for us.** Neither

God's love nor His justice would allow Him to require payment for what His Son has already paid in full. In discipline, God is not a judge but a Father (**cf. [Rom 8:1](#)**).

Punishment:

We experience some of God's discipline as the direct result of our sin, but the punishment is corrective, not judgmental. It is punishment, to be sure, but not of the sort that unbelievers receive.

Because of his lust for Bathsheba and the resulting adultery and murder, God severely punished David. Most other kings of that day did this sort of thing, and worse, as a matter of course. It was considered to be a king's prerogative. But, **no matter what any culture tolerates, none of God's people has a prerogative to sin**, not even His own anointed king who was a "man after God's own heart." In fact, **those who are especially blessed and enlightened by God have less justification for sinning**. Consequently, **God disciplined David, not out of wrath but out of love.**

David's sin did not cost him his salvation, but it cost him dearly in the loss of an infant son by Bathsheba

and in countless heartaches from several of his other sons. He went through years of anguish that otherwise he never would have experienced. Through the prophet Nathan, God told David that because of this sin (really a series of sins), "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife" ([2 Sam. 12:10](#)). It may be that even his being forbidden to build the Temple was at least an indirect result of this sin, since it was because of his warfare that God denied him the privilege ([1 Chron. 22:8](#)).

Yet David was a better man because of God's discipline. God had a purpose in the discipline—to draw His servant closer to Himself, to convince him not to sin again, and to help him grow and mature.

The church at Corinth was particularly immature and carnal. Among other things, many believers were abusing the Lord's Table. They were using it as an excuse for partying, with some even getting drunk ([1 Cor. 11:20-22](#)). Paul rebuked them strongly and told them plainly that they were suffering weakness, sickness, and even death because of this sinfulness ([v. 30](#)). They were being "disciplined by the Lord in order that [they would] not be condemned along with the world" ([v. 32](#)).

When we discipline our children, even for something serious, we do not put them out of the family. We discipline them to correct their behavior, not to disown them. Neither does God put us out of His family when He disciplines us, His

children. He wants to draw us deeper into the fellowship of His family.

It is often as hard for us to see the good in God's chastening us as it is for our children to see the good in our chastening them. But we know that, because He is our loving heavenly Father, He will not do anything to harm us.

His discipline may hurt, but it will not harm.

It is the best thing the Lord can do for us when we sin. It restrains us from repeating the sin.

God says that when His children "forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" ([Ps. 89:30-32](#)). But the other side of the promise of punishment is the promise of faithfulness to His covenant. "But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips" ([v. 33-34](#)).

*When God chastises, He is not rejecting
but correcting.*

Prevention:

Sometimes God disciplines in order to prevent sin.

Just as we put restrictions and limits, and sometimes literal fences, around our children to protect them from harm, so God does with us. We do not allow our small children to play in busy streets, or play with matches, or splash in the swimming pool without someone to watch them. God also puts fences around His children to protect them.

What seems to us a terrible inconvenience or hardship may be God's loving hand of protection.

If the apostle Paul was anything he was self-disciplined. He was also genuinely humble, always careful to give the Lord credit for anything good or miraculous that he did. Yet Paul tells us that God gave him a "*thorn in the flesh*" for the specific purpose of keeping him from exalting himself (2 Cor. 12:7).

God allowed this "messenger of Satan" to "buffet" Paul not because His beloved and faithful apostle *was* proud but to keep him from *becoming* proud.

The thorn in the flesh was sent to protect his spiritual well-being. Paul did not enjoy the thorn, and pleaded earnestly with the Lord on three occasions to remove it. But when God assured him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness," Paul gladly accepted the thorn, in fact boasted in it (vv. 8-9). He learned that not only this thorn but also many other hardships and afflictions were

being used by God to make him better. *"Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong"* ([v. 10](#)).

Because the Lord's discipline made him better, Paul thanked the Lord for it. It is one of God's blessings, though not as attractive as some of the others.

Our sickness, lack of business success, or other problems may be God's way of keeping us from something much worse. **If God's children accepted His preventive discipline more willingly and gratefully, He would have much less need for administering His corrective discipline.**

Education:

Besides punishing and preventing, *God's discipline also educates us for better service and better living.* It will teach us, if we will listen to what He is saying through it.

First of all, discipline can help us better know God's power and sufficiency. **Sometimes God can get our**

attention better through affliction than through blessing.

Prosperity has a way of making us feel self-satisfied and independent, while problems often make us more aware of our need for the Lord. We need Him every bit as much when things are going well as when they are not, but often we do not feel our need for Him until we face our own helplessness.

By God's own declaration, Job was "blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil" ([Job 1:1](#)). Yet God allowed him to suffer pain, loss, grief, sickness, and ridicule that make Paul's thorn in the flesh, whatever it was, seem insignificant by comparison. Just as Paul's thorn, Job's afflictions were messengers of Satan and came upon him with God's approval ([1:12](#); [2:6](#)). Job went through his horrible sufferings and "did not sin with his lips" ([2:10](#)).

Job's discipline was clearly not punishment; nor was it prevention. It was sent to educate Job further in the ways and character of the Lord. It was a slow process. Job did not sin through all his suffering, but he was hard put to explain it. He kept trying to figure out on his own why he was having such a hard time. He knew it was not because of sin, and he knew that God was not wicked or capricious. But he was not willing to accept his suffering. Job endured it, but he did not accept it, until, after two long lectures directly by God, he acknowledged he did not need to know the reason behind everything that happened to him. God is sovereign and

omniscient and omnipotent. What Job learned through his trials was not the reason for them but that God is supremely great and marvelous. He learned "things too wonderful for me, which I did not know," and confessed to his Lord, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes" ([42:3](#), [5-6](#)).

Through his great and seemingly unending suffering Job had been given a magnificent view of God. He experienced His holy majesty, His deliverance, His care, His power, His counsel, His defense—all through His discipline. Job also learned a great lesson about himself: that his wisdom was not God's wisdom. He learned to trust God for who He is, not for what he himself could see and comprehend.

When we see God better, we see ourselves better.

Discipline can also teach sympathy for others. Again Job's experience is a perfect illustration. "And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends" ([42:10](#)). Through his troubles, Job saw God more clearly, himself more clearly, and others more clearly. He became more sensitive and understanding. He learned a great deal in God's school of suffering.

When we have troubles, problems, heartaches, we should ask ourselves—better still, ask God to show us—if He is disciplining us as punishment, as prevention, or as education. When we ask, however, we should remember Job and realize that God may not show us the reason as quickly or as clearly as we would like Him to. We can always be sure that His discipline will correct us, protect us, or instruct us.

Whatever the reason, it will be for our good, and we should be thankful.

Only faith can bring us to appreciate

discipline, whatever the kind. We are able to see behind the scenes in Job's ordeal because Scripture gives a vivid picture of the workings of both Satan and God. But Job had no knowledge of this. **As far as we can tell from the Bible, Job went to his grave not knowing exactly why he had to suffer as he did.** When he finally acknowledged God's sovereign omnipotence and goodness in it all, it was by faith. He came to see *God* more clearly ([42:5](#)) but he was not shown the whys and wherefores of his problems more clearly. **When we understand and trust God more deeply, we are content with whatever limited knowledge He gives.**

Forgetting God's Word

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." ([12:5](#))

Forgetfulness causes a lot of unnecessary problems and heartaches. ***Our greatest need is not for new light from God, but for paying attention to light we already have.***

When God's Word is neglected it is forgotten.

Sometimes the answer or the help we need is in a truth we learned a long time ago but have let slip away.

Jews in New Testament times had forgotten many things about the Old Testament. They had forgotten that God had never been pleased by anything apart from faith, and they had forgotten that many of His choicest saints had suffered greatly for their faith. Now they are reminded that they had also forgotten the teaching from [Proverbs 3:11-12](#) about God's discipline.

Suffering for God's sake was nothing new. Being disciplined by Him was not new. These believers were upset about their afflictions partly because they had forgotten God's Word. In the Old Testament God not only had spoken to them about suffering and discipline, but He had spoken to them **as sons**. They had forgotten more than simply divine truths, they had **forgotten the exhortation** of their heavenly Father.

Turning to Scripture is listening to God, for Scripture is His Word. For believers, it is the Word of their Father.

This forgotten exhortation tells us of two perils of discipline:

1. Regarding it lightly
2. Fainting because of it.

Perils in Discipline

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD.
([12:5b](#))

A. Regarding It Lightly

The first thing that can keep God from accomplishing what He wants in our lives is to **regard lightly** His **discipline**. If we do not understand our problems as being discipline that the Lord sends for our good, we cannot profit from them as He intends. Our reactions cannot be right if our view of what is happening is not right. **The spiritual weakness mentioned in this verse is not that of taking our problems lightly but of taking the Lord's discipline through them lightly.** It is usually because we take our problems too seriously that we take the Lord's discipline too lightly. **Our focus is on the experience rather than on our**

heavenly Father and on what He wants to do for us through the experience.

We can take God's discipline lightly in many ways.

- **We can become callous to God and His Word,** so that when He is doing something in us or for us, we do not recognize His hand in it. **When we are calloused, God's discipline will harden us instead of soften us.**
- **We may also treat God's discipline lightly by complaining.** In this case, we do not forget God; in fact our attention is on Him, but in the wrong way. **Instead of showing patient endurance, like the hero saints, we gripe and grumble.** We do not accuse God of anything wrong, at least not in so many words. But **complaining to God amounts to just that—believing He is doing something not quite right.** Fretting comes from nothing but disbelief, lack of trust in God to do everything right, especially for His children.

Arthur Pink comments, *"Remind yourself of how much dross there is yet among the gold and view the corruption of your own heart and marvel that God has not smitten you more severely. Form the habit of*

heeding His taps, and you will be less likely to receive His raps."

We can prevent God from accomplishing His desired result through discipline by *questioning*.

- **Like complaining, questioning shows a clear lack of faith.** When a child asks his parents, "Why?" he usually is not looking for a reason but is challenging them to justify what they want him to do or not do. In exactly the same way, our **questioning God implies that He is not justified in doing what He is doing to us.**

Even when we recognize His discipline *as* discipline, we may question whether it is of the right kind, of the right severity, of the right length, or has come at the right time. If we spank our child, he may think that going without supper would have been a better punishment. Or if we ground him for two days, he may think that withholding his allowance for a week would have been more appropriate. A parent's discipline, of course, is never perfect, but it is much more likely to be appropriate than what the child deems right.

- **We need to recognize that God's discipline is always the right discipline,** the perfect discipline—exactly what we need.

- **Perhaps the greatest danger in regarding God's discipline lightly is *carelessness*.** When we do not care about what purpose God has in the discipline or about how we can profit from it, His discipline cannot be effective. It becomes like a blessing that we misuse. He gives it for our benefit and His glory, but we do not use it for either. We thwart its purpose by spiritual indifference.

Fainting

Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him.

([12:5c](#))

Some people become so overcome by their problems that they give up; they become despondent, depressed, *faint*. They become spiritually inert, unresponsive to what God is doing or why. They are not callous, complaining, questioning, or careless. They are simply immobilized. **They give up and collapse.** The psalmist had this experience, and cries out to himself, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?" He knew his problem, and he also knew the cure, for he continues, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God" ([Ps. 42:11](#)). ***The cure for hopelessness is hope in God. The child of God has no need to faint because of God's discipline.***

God gives it to strengthen us, not to weaken us, to encourage us, not to discourage us, to build us up, not to tear us down.

When, by our taking it lightly or by our becoming despondent, God's discipline is not allowed to accomplish His purpose in us, Satan is the victor. God's purpose is lost, and our blessing is lost.

Proofs in Discipline

"For those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." 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? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ([12:6-8](#))

To the Christian who is responsive to the Lord's discipline, it proves two things:

- A. His love
- B. Our sonship.

Proves God's Love

The first thing we should think of when we are suffering is our Father's love, **for those whom the LORD loves He disciplines**. We cannot prove this to anyone, or even to ourselves, except by faith. Even less can we prove, by reason or human understanding, that we are being disciplined *because of God's love*. But faith proves it. *Faith's logic is simple: "We are God's children. God loves His children and is bound by His own nature and His own covenant to do them only good. Therefore, whatever we receive from God's hand, including discipline, is from God's love."*

More than any earthly father, the heavenly Father wants his children to be righteous, mature, obedient, competent, responsible, capable, and trusting. We benefit in all these ways, and many more, when we accept His discipline.

Paul tells us to be "rooted and grounded in love" ([Eph. 3:17](#)), that is, to have a settled assurance that God cannot do anything apart from or contrary to His love for us. God continually loves, whether we are aware of His love or not. When we *are* aware of it, however, it can accomplish immeasurably more good in us and for us. Instead of looking at our troubles, we look at our Father's love, and thank Him that even the troubles are proof of His love.

A man who was asked why he was looking over a wall replied, "Because I can't see through it." When Christians cannot see through the wall of pain, confusion, hardship, or despair, they need only look over the wall into the face of their loving heavenly Father.

Just as God's love has predestined us ([Eph. 1:4-5](#)) and redeemed us ([John 3:16](#)), it also disciplines us.

Children have long wondered why parents insist on saying, **"This spanking hurts me more than it does you." The idea is hard for a child to accept, until he himself becomes a parent.** A loving parent *does* hurt when he has to discipline his child. The parent gets no joy or satisfaction out of the discipline itself, but out of the eventual benefit it will be to the child.

God is more loving than any human parent, and He suffers when He has to discipline His children. "For the Lord will not reject forever, for if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness. For He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the sons of men" ([Lam. 3:31-33](#)). The Lord is tender and careful in His discipline. Nothing is more sensitive than love. Because God loves with infinite love, He is infinitely sensitive to the needs and feelings of His children. He hurts when we hurt. **He takes no more pleasure in the painful discipline of His children than in the death of unbelievers (Ezek. 18:32).** ***Nor will He discipline us beyond what we need or can bear, any more than He***

will allow us to be tempted beyond what we can endure (1 Cor. 10:13).

He does not discipline to grieve us but to improve us.

God suffers whenever we suffer, whatever the reason for it. "In all their affliction He was afflicted" ([Isa. 63:9](#)). Everything Israel went through, the Lord went through with her. Everything she suffered, including punishment for her sins, He suffered with her. God does not understand us simply because He made us, but also because He identifies with us as our Father. We can be sure that our discipline hurts Him more than it hurts us. If He Himself is willing to endure suffering for our good, how can we not be willing to endure it gladly and thankfully?

Proves Our Sonship

And He scourges every son whom He receives. 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? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ([12:6b-8](#))

The second thing that discipline proves is closely related to the first. It proves our sonship. **All men are subject to**

God's punishment, but only His children receive His discipline.

At times we have all wanted to discipline someone else's children when they disturb or irritate us. When we see an unruly child throwing a tantrum in a store, we think to ourselves, "If I could have him for just about a week." But *we have no continuing desire to discipline children that are not our own, because we do not love them as we love our own. The relationship is not the same and therefore the concern is not the same.*

Besides the motivation of love, discipline is given because of obligation. Since our children are our special responsibility, and since discipline is for their good, we are obligated to discipline them as we are not obligated to discipline other peoples' children. **God has a covenant relationship with His people, and has obligated Himself to redeem, protect, and bless them. "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the LORD who has compassion on you" (Isa. 54:10).**

We can know we are God's children by His leading us ([Rom. 8:14](#)) and by the witness of His Spirit to our spirits ([8:15-](#)

16). We know from the fact that we have trusted in Jesus Christ that we are God's children. "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name*" ([John 1:12](#)). We also know from our discipline that we are His children, because **He scourges every son whom He receives.**

An undisciplined child is an unloved child and a miserable child.

God's love will not allow Him not to discipline us, and His punishment is another of the many proofs of His love and of our sonship.

The other side, *the tragic side, of this truth is that those who are not disciplined by God are not His children.*

He scourges every son is inclusive. Not a single one of His children will miss out on His loving discipline.

Whom He receives, however, is exclusive. Only those He receives through their faith in His Son are His children.

Scourges (mastigoō) refers to flogging with a whip, and was a common Jewish practice ([Matt. 10:17](#); [23:34](#)).

It was a severe and extremely painful beating. The point of [Hebrews 12:6b](#), and of [Proverbs 3:12](#) (from which it is quoted), is that God's discipline can sometimes be severe.

When our disobedience is great or our apathy is great, His punishment will be great.

Parents often become discouraged when discipline seems to have no effect. Sometimes we just do not want to go through the trouble for ourselves, even though we know our child needs discipline for his own good. But *if we love our children, we will discipline and continue to discipline them as long as they are under our care.*

"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently"
([Prov. 13:24](#); cf. [23:13-14](#)).

Our juvenile courts are constant testimonies to the truth that "a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother" ([Prov. 29:15](#))—as well as to his whole family and community. We can be certain that because God will always love us, He will always discipline us while we are in this life.

So...

discipline in the Christian life is not in spite of sonship, but because of sonship.

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? A truly loving father is absolutely committed to helping his child conform to the highest standards. How much more is our heavenly Father committed to our conforming to His standards, and to inflicting the pain to make such conformity a reality.

When we look at how well many unbelievers are doing and then at how much trouble we are having, we should take this as evidence that we belong to God and they do not. If **they are without discipline, they are illegitimate children and not sons.** We should pity, not envy, the prosperous, healthy, popular, and attractive person who does not know God. We should not wish on them our trials or suffering, but we should want to say to them, as did Paul to Agrippa, "I would to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains" ([Acts 26:29](#)).

Jerome said a paradoxical thing that fits the point of this passage of Hebrews. ***"The greatest anger of all is when God is no longer angry with us."***

The supreme affliction is to be unteachable and unreachable by God.

When the Lord disciplines us, we should say, "Thank you, Lord. You have just proved again that You love me and that I am Your child."

Products of Discipline

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? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. 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.

([12:9-11](#))

The two products of discipline mentioned in these verses are closely related to the three purposes of discipline suggested above.

- 1. God's discipline produces life**
- 2. God's discipline produces holiness**

It is the disciplined child who respects his parents.

The surest way for a parent to lose, or never gain, his child's respect is never to correct or punish him, no matter how terrible the child's behavior. Even while they are growing up, **children instinctively know that a parent who disciplines fairly is a parent who loves and cares.**

They also realize that a parent who always lets them have their own way is a parent who does not care. **We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them,** because of what that discipline proved and produced.

Life

Since we respected our earthly fathers even while they were disciplining us, **shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?**

Our response to God's discipline should not be resentful resignation; but willing and grateful submission.

We should want to benefit as much from our heavenly Father's discipline as we possibly can.

Under the Old Covenant, a son who was totally rebellious to his parents, who would not be corrected or disciplined, was to be stoned to death (Deut. 21:18-21).

This punishment was severe in the extreme, but shows us how seriously God takes a child's obedience to his parents.

I believe that Hebrews 12:9 suggests the same severity.

A Christian's persistent rebellion against God's discipline can cost him his life. Paul speaks of believers' "sleeping," that is dying, because of partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily ([1 Cor. 11:30](#)). John tells us of sin "leading to death" ([1 John 5:16](#)). James implies the same sort of death resulting directly from sin: ***"Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21)***. A Christian who continually rejects God's discipline, who refuses to profit from divine correction, can lose his life because of his stubbornness.

More than this, however...

I believe the teaching here may include the idea that when we are ***subject to the Father of spirits***, we will have a richer, more abundant life. You do not know what victory is until you have fought a battle. You do not know the meaning of freedom until you have been imprisoned. You do not know the joy of relief until you have suffered, or of healing until you have been sick. You do not know what living is all about until you have experienced some problems and hardships.

I once asked a missionary to Indochina how he liked living there. The gist of his reply was, "I don't think I could ever come back to the boring existence of the United States. We have

seen God work so many wonderful miracles over there. Why would we want to come back here to this humdrum routine?" He had been through war, famine, disease, political and military upheavals, and countless other experiences that most of us would do almost anything to avoid. Yet he knew he was really living in the fullness of God's presence.

"Those who love Thy law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble"

([Ps. 119:165](#)).

No one lives so well as the believer who loves God's law and will, who receives everything from his Father's hand willingly and joyously.

Holiness

For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.

([12:10](#))

To live for the Lord is to live in holiness. God's primary desire for us is that we be holy as He is holy ([1 Pet. 1:16](#)), *that we may share in His holiness.*

Because God is perfect, His discipline is always perfect.

Human parents discipline as seems **best to them**, but our best is often mistaken and is always imperfect. Sometimes we punish more out of anger than love, and sometimes we punish more severely than the offense calls for. Sometimes we even mistakenly punish a child for something he did not do. I will never forget spanking one of my boys strongly for something I was sure he had done. When he kept crying longer than usual, I ask what the matter was. He said, "Dad, I didn't do it." I was crushed, and tears came to my own eyes. But the Lord never makes such mistakes with His children. His discipline is always proper, always at the right time, of the right sort, and in the right degree. It is always perfectly **for our good, that we may share His holiness.**

There is only one kind of holiness, God's holiness. He is both the source and the measure of holiness—which is separation from sin. His greatest desire for His children is to share His holiness with us, that we "may be filled up to all the fullness of God" ([Eph. 3:19](#)).

The only way we can be separated from sin, and thereby partake of His holiness and be filled up with His fullness, is "to become conformed to the image of His Son" ([Rom. 8:29](#))—which requires that we accept His discipline as a son.

*Positionally we already are holy, because we are justified. But practically our holiness is just beginning, which is **the work of sanctification**—making us holy.*

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. ([12:11](#))

Discipline itself is not meant to be pleasant.

If it were pleasant, it would have little corrective power. By its very nature, discipline is unpleasant to administer and to endure. Medicine, surgery, physical therapy, and other such treatments that we willingly endure are very often painful, uncomfortable, and inconvenient. We endure them for the sake of the end result—better health.... How much more should we be willing to endure the Lord's treatment of our spiritual needs, which **afterwards... yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness?**

We should consider our troubles as spiritual treatment, which builds our character and our faith, our love and our righteousness.

It will never look like it from the natural perspective, but from the perspective of faith, we see that discipline is one of God's richest and most rewarding blessings on His children.

Someone has written, "And so what do I say? I say let the rains of disappointment come, if they water the plants of spiritual grace. Let the winds of adversity blow, if they serve to root more securely the trees that God has planted. I say, let the sun of prosperity be eclipsed, if that brings me closer to the true light of life. Welcome, sweet discipline, discipline designed for my joy, discipline designed to make me what God wants me to be."

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

The Father's Discipline

[Hebrews 12:4-11](#)

The struggle is not just against persecution. It's also a struggle against sin. In other words, the author is saying that resisting the temptation to fall away can also be described in terms of resisting the temptation to fall into sin. ***The temptation to avoid***

persecution or to abandon the faith is ultimately the temptation to submit to sin.

The “not yet” in verse 4 is critical. Although some Christians might not yet have experienced physical persecution, it remains a real possibility for all of us. We must always remember that the comfort we know now is not guaranteed to last forever. Things can change quickly, and in many parts of the world they do. Almost instantly, countries change regimes, constitutions, or law enforcement approaches. Persecution of Christians can happen anywhere at any time, and it can quickly lead to the shedding of blood.

The Place of the Lord’s Discipline

Recall that the author is writing to a Jewish congregation. His readers are Jewish converts. They are familiar with *torah* and with the Old Testament. They know the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, including Proverbs, which is **cited in verse 5. In Proverbs 3:11-12, Solomon was warning his son not to make light of the Lord’s discipline.**

He does not want him to scorn God’s discipline because discipline is a sign of sonship.

The very presence of the Lord’s discipline in a person’s life is evidence that the person is loved by God.

This concept is something that the readers are intended to understand instinctively. The concept actually works backward to

a confused and generally undisciplined generation such as our own, but this is exactly the truth Solomon was trying to communicate to his son.

Administering discipline is a parent's job. No one disciplines someone else's children. The one who disciplines is treating the recipient like a son or daughter. When Solomon writes to his own son, whom he disciplined, he essentially says, "You should take the Lord's discipline as the sign of how much he loves you, in the same way that I discipline you because I love you." The writer of *Hebrews* *assumes that discipline is an act of love by the righteous parent who understands his child's need.*

The Purpose of the Lord's Discipline

Discipline is by nature unpleasant. It is painful, but it has a purpose. Parents know what they're doing. **Children don't always know why they're being disciplined or how the discipline is an act of love, but it's not necessary that children understand these things at every point.**

If children understood all this in advance, they would not have done whatever it was that required the discipline.

Certain lessons can only be learned by discipline.

The author continues his discussion and reveals the purpose of discipline. It is to bring ***"the peaceful fruit of righteousness"*** into the child's life.

Because the parent loves the child, he always disciplines in a reasonable, firm, authoritative, and yet loving and righteous way. A father shows his son that he loves him through his discipline. If he did not love him, he would let him run wild. But **he wants this son to know the peaceful fruits of righteousness. To show him this, the father's love must sometimes take the form of discipline.**

People tend to think that things happen to them by chance. The truth is that things come into our lives by the sovereign intentions and purposes of the Lord. Not all things are good, but all things are for the good and edification of those who love God. Sometimes Christians have to keep faith when things do not seem to be for our good.

In [Romans 8](#) Paul describes that God is working in all things for the good of believers. This doesn't mean we need to be thankful for the development of tumors or other tragic things that happen. These aren't things for which we would ask or pray. Yet even in difficult situations, God is working for our good. It's this truth that the author has in mind as he writes this passage of Hebrews. God, as a loving Father, may be disciplining us, sharpening and maturing our faith.

When people think of discipline, they often think only of corrective discipline or punishment. But discipline is far more. It is teaching.

God is making disciples

thru His discipline.

It is tempting to complain about discipline and to think it is a sign that God does not love us.

Christians question how God can work for good through horrifying loss. Yet God was working for our good in the gruesome death of his Son.

If ever we doubt God's love because of our circumstances, we can look to the cross and remind ourselves that God gave us his own Son so that we might in turn become sons of God.

- Christ-Centered Exposition

Verse 4. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* The general sense of this passage is, "You have not yet been called, in your Christian struggles, to the highest kind of sufferings and sacrifices. Great as your trials may seem to have been, yet your faith has not yet been put to the severest test. And since this is so, you ought not to yield in the conflict with evil, but manfully resist it." In the *language* here used, there is undoubtedly a continuance of the allusion to the *agonistic* games-the strugglings and wrestlings for mastery there. In those games, the boxers were accustomed to arm themselves for the fight with the caestus. This, at first, consisted of strong leathern thongs wound around the hands, and extending only to the wrist, to give greater solidity to the *fist*. Afterwards these were made to extend to the elbow, and then to the shoulder; and, finally, they sowed pieces of lead or iron in them, that they might strike a heavier and more destructive blow. The consequence was, that those who were engaged in the fight were often covered with blood, and that resistance "unto blood" showed a determined courage, and a purpose not to yield. But though the *language* here may be taken from this custom, the *fact* to which the apostle alludes, it seems to me, is the struggling of the Saviour in

the garden of Gethsemane, when his conflict was so severe, that great drops of blood fell down to the ground. [Matthew 26:42](#), seq. It is, indeed, commonly understood to mean that they had not yet been called to shed their blood as martyrs in the cause of religion. See Stuart, Bloomfield, Doddridge, Clarke, Whitby, Kuinoel, etc. Indeed, I find in none of the commentators what seems to me to be the true sense of this passage, and what gives an exquisite beauty to it, the allusion to the sufferings of the Saviour in the garden. The reasons which lead me to believe that there is such an allusion are briefly these.

(1.) The connexion. The apostle is appealing to the example of the Saviour, and urging Christians to persevere amidst their trials by looking to him. Nothing would be more natural, in this connexion, than to refer to that dark night when, in the severest conflict with temptation which he ever encountered, he so signally showed his own firmness of purpose, and the effects of resistance on his own bleeding body, and his signal victory, in the garden of Gethsemane.

(2.) The expression, "striving against sin," seems to demand the same interpretation. On the common interpretation, the allusion would be merely to their resisting *persecution*; but here the allusion is to some struggle in their minds against *committing sin*. The apostle exhorts them to strive manfully and perseveringly against sin in every form, and especially against the sin of apostasy. To encourage them, he refers them to the highest instance on record where there was a "striving against sin"-the struggle of the Redeemer in the garden with the great enemy, who there made his most violent assault, and where the resistance of the Redeemer was so great as to force the blood through his pores. What was the exact *form* of the temptation there, we are not informed. It *may* have been to induce him to abandon his work even then, and to yield, in view of the severe sufferings of his approaching death on the cross. If there ever was a point where temptation would be powerful, it would be there. When a man is about to be put to death, how strong is the inducement to abandon his purpose, his plans, or his principles, if he may save his life! How many, of feeble virtue, have yielded just there! If to this consideration we add the thought that the Redeemer was engaged in a work never before undertaken; that he designed to make an atonement never before made; that he was about to endure sorrows never before endured; and that on the decision of that moment depended the ascendancy of sin or holiness on the earth, the triumph or the fall of Satan's kingdom, the success or the defeat of all the plans of the great adversary of God and man; and that, on such an occasion as this, the tempter would use all his power to crush the lonely and unprotected Man of sorrows in the garden of Gethsemane, it is easy to imagine what may have been the terror of that fearful conflict, and what virtue it would require in him to resist the concentrated energy of Satan's might, to induce him even then to abandon his work. The apostle says of those to whom he wrote, that they had not *yet* reached that point. Comp. [Hebrews 5:7](#).

(3.) This view furnishes a proper climax to the argument of the apostle for perseverance. It presents the Redeemer before the mind as the great Example; directs the mind to him in various

scenes of his life—as looking to the joy before him—disregarding the ignominy of his sufferings—enduring the opposition of sinners—and then in the garden as engaged in a conflict with his great foe, and so resisting sin that, rather than yield, he endured that fearful mental struggle which was attended with such remarkable consequences. This is the highest consideration which could be presented to the mind of a believer to keep him from yielding in the conflict with evil; and if we could keep him in the eye, resisting even unto blood, rather than yield in the least degree, it would do more than all other things to restrain us from sin. How different his case from ours? How readily we yield to sin! We offer a faint and feeble resistance, and then surrender. We think it will be unknown; or that others do it; or that we may repent of it; or that we have no power to resist it; or that it is of little consequence, and our resolution gives way. Not so the Redeemer. Rather than yield in any form to sin, he measured strength with the great adversary when alone with him in the darkness of the night, and gloriously triumphed! And so would we always triumph if we had the same settled purpose to resist sin in every form, *even unto blood*.

Verse 5. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation.* **This exhortation is found in Proverbs 3:11,12. The object of the apostle in introducing it here is, to show that afflictions were designed, on the part of God, to produce some happy effects in the lives of his people, and that they ought, therefore, to bear them patiently. In the previous verses, he directs them to the example of the Saviour.** In this verse and the following, for the same object, he directs their attention to the design of trials, showing that they are necessary to our welfare, and that they are, in fact, proof of the paternal care of God. This verse might be rendered as a question, "And have ye forgotten?" etc. This mode of rendering it will agree somewhat better with the design of the apostle.

Which speaketh unto you. Which may be regarded as addressed to you; or which invokes a principle as applicable to you as to others. He does not mean that when Solomon used the words he had reference to them particularly, but that he Used them with reference to the children of God, and they might therefore be applied to them. In this way we may regard the language of the Scriptures as addressed *to us*.

As unto children. As if he were addressing children. The language is such as a father uses.

My son. It is *possible* that in these words Solomon may have intended to address a son literally, giving him paternal counsel; or he may have spoken as the head of the Jewish people, designing to address all the pious, to whom he sustained, as it were, the relation of a father. Or it is possible, also, that it may be regarded as the language of God himself addressing his children. Whichever supposition is adopted, the sense is substantially the same.

Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. **Literally, "Do not regard it as a small matter, or as a trivial thing"**—ὀλιγώρει.

The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The word here rendered chastening—παιδεία—and also in [Hebrews 12:6-8](#), and [Hebrews 12:9](#), "corrected"—παιδευτὰς—does not refer to affliction in general, but that kind of affliction which is designed to correct us for our faults, or which is of the nature of discipline.

The verb properly relates to the training up of a child—including instruction, counsel, discipline, and correction, (see this use of the verb in [Acts 7:22](#), [2 Timothy 2:25](#), [Titus 2:12](#),) and then especially discipline, or correction for faults—to correct, chastise, chasten, [1 Corinthians 11:32](#), [2 Corinthians 6:9](#), [Revelation 3:19](#). This is the meaning here; and **the idea is, not that God will afflict his people in general, but that if they wander away he will correct them for their faults.**

He will bring calamity upon them as a punishment for their offences, and in order to bring them back to himself, he will not suffer them to wander away unrebuked and unchecked, but will mercifully reclaim them, though by great sufferings. Afflictions have many objects, or produce many happy effects. That referred to here is, that they are means of reclaiming the wandering and erring children of God, and are proofs of his paternal care and love. Comp. [2 Samuel 7:14](#), [12:13,14](#), [Psalms 89:31-34](#); [Proverbs 3:11,12](#). Afflictions, which are always sent by God, should not be regarded as small matters, for these reasons:

(1.) The fact that they are sent by God. Whatever he does is of importance, and is worthy the profound attention of men.

(2.) They are sent for some important purpose, and they should be regarded, therefore, with attentive concern. Men *despise* them when

(1.) they treat them with affected or real unconcern;

(2.) when they fail to receive them as Divine admonitions, and regard them as without any intelligent design; and

(3.) when they receive them with *expressions* of contempt, and speak of them and of the government of God with scorn. It should be a matter of deep concern, when we are afflicted in any manner, not to treat the matter lightly, but to derive from our trials all the lessons which they are adapted to produce on the mind.

Nor faint, etc. Bear up patiently under them. This is the second duty. We are first to study their character and design; and, secondly, to bear up under them, however severe they may be, and however long they may be continued. "Avoid the extremes of proud insensibility and entire dejection." *Doddridge*.

(*) "exhortation" [Proverbs 3:11,12](#)

(*) "of him" "by him"

Verse 6. *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.* This is also a quotation from [Prov. 3](#).

It means that it is a universal rule that God sends trials on those whom he truly loves. It does not, of course, mean that he sends chastisement which is not deserved; or that he sends it *for the mere purpose of inflicting*

pain. That cannot be. But it means that, by his chastisements, he shows that he has a paternal care for us. He does not treat us with neglect and unconcern, as a father often does his illegitimate child. The very fact that he corrects us shows that he has towards us a father's feelings, and exercises towards us a paternal care. If he did not, he would let us go on without any attention, and leave us to pursue a course of sin that would involve us in ruin. To restrain and govern a child; to correct him when he errs, shows that there is a parental solicitude for him, and that he is not an outcast. And as there is in the life of every child of God something that deserves correction, it happens that it is universally true that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Whom he receives or acknowledges as his child. This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint. The Hebrew is, "even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." The general sense of the passage is retained, as is often the case in the quotations from the Old Testament. The meaning is the same as in the former part of the verse, that every one who becomes a child of God is treated by him with that watchful care which shows that he sustains towards him the paternal relation.

(*) "whom" [Revelation 3:19](#)

Verse 7. *If ye endure chastening.* That is, if you undergo, or are called to experience correction. It does not mean here, "if you endure it patiently, or if you bear up under it," but if you are chastised or corrected by God."

The affirmation does not relate to the manner of bearing it, but to the fact that we are disciplined.

God dealeth with you as with sons. He does not cast you off, and regard you as if you were in no way related to him.

For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? That is, he evinces towards his son the care which shows that he sustains the relation of a father. If he deserves correction, he corrects

him; and he aims, by all proper means, to exhibit the appropriate care and character of a father. And as we receive such attention from an earthly parent, we ought to expect to receive similar notice from our Father in heaven.

(*) "son" [Proverbs 13:24](#)

Verse 8. *But if ye be without chastisement.* If you never meet with anything that is adapted to correct your faults, to subdue your temper, to chide your wanderings, it would prove that you were in the condition of illegitimate children—cast off and disregarded by their father.

Whereof all are partakers. All who are the true children of God.

Then are ye bastards, and not sons. The reference here is to the neglect with which such children are treated, and to the general want of care and discipline over them:—

"Lost in the world's wide range; enjoined no aim, Prescribed no duty. and assigned no name."

Savage. In the English law, a bastard is termed *nullius filius*. Illegitimate children are usually abandoned by their father. The care of them is left to the mother, and the father endeavours to avoid all responsibility, and usually to be concealed and unknown. His own child he does not wish to recognize; he neither provides for him, nor instructs him, nor governs him, nor disciplines him. A *father* who is worthy of the name, will do all these things. So Paul says it is with Christians. God has not cast them off. In every way he evinces towards them the character of a father. And if it should be that they passed along through life without any occurrence that would indicate the paternal care and attention designed to correct their faults, it would show that they never had been his children, but were cast off and wholly disregarded. This is a beautiful argument; and we should receive every affliction as full proof that we are not forgotten by the High and Holy One who condescends to sustain the character, and to evince towards us, in our wanderings, the watchful care of a Father.

Verse 9. *Furthermore.* As an additional consideration to induce us to receive chastisement with submission. **The argument in this verse is derived from the difference in the spirit and design with which we are corrected by God and by an earthly parent.**

In God everything is without any intermingling of passion or any improper feeling. In an earthly parent there is often much that is the result of hasty emotion, of an irascible temper, perhaps of the mere love of power. There is much that is inflicted without due reflection, and that produces only pain in the bosom of the parent himself in the recollection. Yet, with all this imperfection of parental government, we were patient and unmurmuring. How much more should we submit to one whose paternal discipline is caused by no excited feeling; by no love of power; by no want of reflection, and which never furnishes occasion for regret!

Fathers of our flesh. Earthly fathers; those from whom we have derived our being here. They are contrasted here with God who is called "the Father of spirits," not because the father does not sustain the paternal relation to the soul as well as the body, but to designate the nature of the dominion over us. The dominion of God is that which pertains to a spiritual kingdom, having more direct reference to the discipline of the soul, and being designed to prepare us for the spiritual world; that of the earthly father pertains primarily to our condition here, and the discipline is designed to subdue our unruly passions, to teach us to restrain our appetites, to inculcate maxims of health and prosperity, and to prevent those things which would impede our happiness in the present world. See, however, many curious instances of the manner in which these phrases were used by the Jewish writers, collected by Wetstein.

We gave them reverence. We submitted to them; honoured them; loved them. Painful at the time as correction may have been, yet when we have fully understood the design of it, we have loved them the more. The effect of such discipline, properly administered, is to produce real veneration for a parent—for he who, in a timely and appropriate manner restrains his child is the only one who will secure ultimate reverence and respect.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection. Since God's government is so much more perfect; since he has so much better right to control us; and since his administration is free from all the defects which attend parental discipline on earth, there is a much higher reason for bowing with submission and reverence to him. **The Father of spirits. Thus in Numbers 16:22, God is called the God of the spirits of all flesh." So also Numbers 27:16; comp. Job 33:4. The idea seems to be,**

that as the soul is the most important part of man, this name is given to God by way of eminence, or he is eminently and supremely our Father.

It was his to create the immortal part, and to that spirit which is never to die he sustains the relation of Father. *The earthly father is parent to the man as mortal; God is the Father of man as immortal.*

God is himself a Spirit. Angels and human souls, therefore, may be represented as peculiarly his offspring. It is the highest designation which could be given to God to say that he is at the head of the universe of mind; not implying that he is not also at the head of the material universe, but designing to bring into view this high characteristic of the Almighty, that all created minds throughout the universe sustain to him the relation of children. To this Great Being we should, therefore, more cheerfully subject ourselves than to an earthly parent.

And live. Meaning that his fatherly chastisements are adapted to secure our spiritual life. He corrects us that he may promote our final happiness, and his inflictions are the means of saving us from eternal death.

(*) "Father of Spirits" [Numbers 16:22, 27:16](#)

Verse 10. *For they verily for a few days.* That is, with reference to a few days, ($\pi\rho\omicron\zeta$;) or it was a chastisement that had reference mainly to this short life. The apostle seems to bring in this circumstance to contrast the dealings of earthly parents with those of God. One of the circumstances is, that the corrections of earthly parents had a much less important object than those of God. They related to this life—a life so brief that it may be said to continue but a "few days." Yet, in order to secure the benefit to be derived for so short a period from fatherly correction, we submitted without murmuring. Much more cheerfully ought we to submit to that discipline from the hand of our heavenly Father which is designed to extend its benefits through eternity. This seems to me to afford a better sense than that adopted by Professor Stuart and others, that it means, "during our childhood or minority;" or than that proposed by Doddridge, that it refers both to our earthly parents and to our heavenly Father.

After their own pleasure. Marg. "as seemed good, or meet, to them." Meaning that it was sometimes done arbitrarily, or from caprice, or under the influence of passion. This is an additional reason why we should submit to God, We submitted to our earthly parents, though their correction was sometimes passionate, and was designed to gratify their own pleasure, rather than to promote our good. There is much of this kind of punishment in families; but there is none of it under the administration of God.

But he for our profit. Never from passion, from caprice, from the love of power or superiority, but always for our good. The exact benefit which he designs to produce we may not be able always to understand; but ***we may be assured that no other cause influences him than a desire to promote our real welfare; and as he can never be mistaken in regard to the proper means to secure that, we may be assured that our trials are always adapted to that end.***

That we might be partakers of his holiness. Become so holy that it may be said that we are partakers of the very holiness of God. Comp. [2 Peter 1:4](#). **This is the elevated object at which God aims by our trials.** It is not that he delights to produce pain; not that he envies us, and would rob us of our little comforts; not that he needs what We prize to increase his own enjoyment, and therefore rudely takes it away; and not that he acts from caprice—now conferring a blessing, and then withdrawing it without any reason: it is, that he may make us more pure and holy, and thus promote our own best interest.

To be holy as God is holy; to be so holy that it may be said that we "are partakers of his holiness," is a richer blessing than health, and property, and friends, without it; and when by the

exchange of the one we acquire the other, we have secured infinitely more than we have lost.

To obtain the greater good, we should be willing to part with the less; to secure the everlasting friendship and favour of God, we should be willing, if necessary, to surrender the last farthing of our property; the last friend that is left us; the last feeble and fluttering pulsation of life in our veins.

(*) "after their own pleasure" "as seemed good or meet to them"

Verse 11. *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.* It does not impart pleasure, nor is this its design.

All chastisement is intended to produce pain, and the Christian is as sensitive to pain as others.

His religion does not blunt his sensibilities, and make him a stoic, but it rather increases his susceptibility to suffering. **The Lord Jesus, probably, felt pain, reproach, and contempt, more keenly than any other human being ever did; and the Christian feels the loss of a child, or bodily suffering, as keenly as any one.**

But while religion does not render him insensible to suffering, it does two things:

(1.) it enables him to bear the pain without murmuring, and

(2.) it turns the affliction into a blessing on his soul.

Nevertheless afterward. In future life. The effect is seen in a pure life, and in a more entire devotedness to God. We are not to look for the proper fruits of affliction while we are suffering, but afterwards.

It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. **It is a tree that bears good fruit and we do not expect the fruit to form and ripen at once. It may be long maturing, but it will be rich and mellow when it is ripe.** It frequently requires a long time before all the results of affliction appear-as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden orange. When those fruits are ripened they are

(1.) fruits "*of righteousness.*" **They make us more holy, more dead to sin and the world, and more alive to God.** And they are

(2.) "peaceable." **They produce peace, calmness, submission in the soul.** They make the heart more tranquil in its confidence in God, and more disposed to promote the religion of peace. The apostle speaks of this as if it were a *universal* truth in regard to Christians who are afflicted. And it is so, There is no Christian who is not ultimately benefited by trials, and who is not able at some period subsequently to say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." When a Christian comes to die, he does not feel that he has had one trial too many, or one which he did not deserve. He can then look back and see the effect of some early trial, so severe that he once thought he could hardly endure it, spreading a hallowed influence over his future years, and scattering its golden fruit all along the pathway of life. I have never known a Christian who was not benefited by afflictions; I have seen none who was not able to say that his trials produced some happy effect on his religious character, and on his real happiness in life. If this be so, then **no matter how severe our trials, we should submit to them without a murmur. The more severe they are, the more we shall yet be blessed-on earth or in heaven.**

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2009

Jesus: Equal With God

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- Resource by
John Piper

- Scripture: [John 5:1-24](#) Topic: [The Deity of Christ](#)

I see at least three main things going on in [John 5:1-24](#). One of these three main things we saw the last time we looked at the text, namely, the healing of this man at the pool of Bethesda, and Jesus' statement that the point of the healing was not to gratify sign-seekers but to conquer sin.

1) A Healing to Conquer Sin

So in verses 8–9, “Jesus said to him, ‘Get up, take up your bed, and walk.’ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.” Jesus gets away so quickly to avoid excessive focus on the miracle that the man doesn't even know who healed him when the authorities question him about carrying his bed on the Sabbath. Verse 13: “Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.”

So we wonder: *Is this a random miracle that Jesus did and then escaped without anyone even knowing who he was or why he did it?* The answer comes in verse 14: “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.’” In other words: I have sought you out to tell you the point of what I did to you. I healed your body with the aim that it would lead to the healing of your soul. I conquered your sickness with a view to conquering your sin. I healed you for the sake of your holiness.

Jesus' Miracles: Not an End in Themselves

None of the physical miracles of Jesus was an end in itself. They all point to something more about him and about the kingdom of God and about the spiritual

and moral transformations that he is working. When he fed the five thousand from a few loaves and fish, the point was that he himself is the true bread from heaven. But in [John 6:26](#), he had to say to the crowd, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves” ([John 6:26](#)). You missed the spiritual sign-character of the miracle; you only saw the physical shell.

So he is saying to the healed man now in John 5, “Don’t miss what your healing was a sign of.” Your healing was about your holiness. I have come for that. So look to me and turn from sin.

That’s one of the three main things that are going on in this text. And we will come back to it at the end.

The other two main things have to do with the way the Father and the Son are related, and the fact that this miracle of healing was done on the Sabbath. So let’s take those one at a time and see how they are related to each other and how they relate to the healing and its aim in the man’s holiness.

2) Jesus’ Relationship to the Father

A dominant theme in this passage is the way Jesus relates to God the Father. Verse 16 says that the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he had healed this man on the Sabbath: “And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.”

So Jesus responded with an explanation in verse 17: “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’” Leave aside the question of the Sabbath for a moment and simply focus on the relationship of Jesus to God.

This is what the Jews did, and it elevated their persecution to plan to kill. Here is what they heard Jesus say about his relationship to God. Verse 18: “This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”

Jesus Let It Stand

Now what is crucial to see here is not why they would draw that conclusion, but that Jesus let it stand. They were there. We weren't. They could see and hear the way he spoke about God as his Father. And evidently there were sufficient indications in what he said and the way he said it that they thought, *This is over the top*. This man really is treating himself as equal with God in the way he talks about God.

Jesus lets it stand and begins to unpack its implications. He says that 1) the Son doesn't—indeed the Son can't—go his own way but stays in perfect step with the Father; and 2) the Father doesn't go his own way but acts in perfect step with the Son. 3) Then he gives two implications of this for us. Take these one at a time.

Jesus Does Only What the Father Does

First, the Son only does what the Father does. They act in perfect synchronization. Verses 19–20: “So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.”

The most important statement in those verses is the second half of verse 19: “Whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” This is different from saying: Jesus chooses *some* things to do that he sees the Father doing and so *only* does what the Father is doing. It says, “*Whatever* the Father does,” Jesus does. When the Father acts, Jesus acts. This is the sort of thing the Jews heard Jesus say. And they concluded rightly: You talk like you’re equal with him. You talk as if for him to act is for you to act—as if there is some kind of essential connection or union.

The Father Acts in Step with Jesus

Second, in verse 22 it seems to go the other direction, that the Father acts in step with the Son. Verse 22: “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.” Now when you read this, you can’t throw away everything you just read in verse 19 as though it suddenly stopped being true. Verse 19 says, “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.” So when verse 22 says, “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,” it can’t mean the Son doesn’t see the Father judging but goes ahead and judges anyway. And [John 3:36](#) says clearly that if you don’t believe in Jesus, “the wrath of God remains on him.” That is, God does judge.

So I take verse 22 to mean: “The Father judges no one [*on his own*].” The Father doesn’t go off on his own, without any reference to the Son, and judge the world. He judges no one *like that*. Another thing verse 22 seems to mean is that the Son, not the Father, is the frontline, historical criterion of who comes into judgment. That’s the point of verse 23: “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” In other words, whether God is dishonored with the effect that judgment falls is determined by the frontline, historical person of

Jesus. If people honor him for who he really is, then God the Father is honored for who he really is. So in that sense, all judgment is given to the Son. What people make of him decides their final judgment. But that's because what they make of him is what they make of God.

So it seems to me that the part of verse 22 ("The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son") means the Father is not the frontline, historical criterion of judgment, but is in perfect step with the Son's judgment because the one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father.

Two Implications

I said that there were two implications for us from the fact that the Son stays in perfect step with the Father, and the Father acts in perfect step with the Son. One of them we just saw. In the twenty-first century world of teeming pluralism, with religions and worldviews and cultures and lifestyles competing for our allegiance, verse 23 lands like a bombshell: "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."

In other words, if you want to know if someone in another religion, or no religion, honors God (has a true worshipful relationship with God), the test that you use to know this is: *Do they honor Jesus for who he really is—as the divine Son of God, the Messiah, the crucified and risen Savior of the world, the Lord of the universe and Judge of all human beings?* If they don't, then they don't honor God. That's the first implication.

The second is in verse 24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." If we hear the message of Jesus in the Gospel of

John taken in its totality—not just some distorted part of it—and, if through that message and that person, we come to trust God as the one who sent him for our salvation, two amazing things happen.

1) We not only *will* have eternal life, but we *already* have it, and 2) we not only *will* not come into the judgment of condemnation, but have *already* passed through judgment and are safe on the other side. Jesus has become that judgment for us. When we are united to him by faith, his death becomes our death, and his crucifixion our crucifixion, and his curse on the cross our curse on the cross, and his resurrection our resurrection. We have *already* “passed from death to life”! This is glorious news beyond all words. Exult in this. Know this about yourself as a believer. Be made radically courageous by this.

So the first main issue in this text is the man’s healing and its purpose to lead the man to holiness. And the second main issue in this text is the way the Father and the Son are equal so that when one is acting the other is acting—with the two implications that if we don’t honor the Son, we don’t honor the Father, and if we believe on the Father through the word of Jesus, we have already passed from death to life and are on the other side of condemnation.

3) The Issue of the Sabbath

That leaves one more main issue in the text to deal with—the issue of the Sabbath. Now, in what we have seen about Jesus’ relation to the Father, we have the foundation to make sense of Jesus’ answer to their criticism. Remember that verse 16 says, “And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things—namely, this healing—on the Sabbath.”

Now what is Jesus' explanation? He had given an explanation to the healed man for why he was healed—namely, this is about the pursuit of your holiness. *I conquer sickness to show you that I want to conquer sin.* And now he has an explanation for the Jewish leaders who are criticizing the fact that this happened on the Sabbath. He says in verse 17, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”

What Is Jesus Saying?

What's he saying? I think something like this. My Father and I created a perfect world, a paradise, and then we rested, not that we were tired, but stepped back as it were and enjoy the perfect display of our own glory revealed in our creative handiwork. That's what Sabbath is for—the restful, focused, enjoyment of God.

But then sin entered the world, and through sin came sickness and calamity and death. And from that moment, my Father and I have been working again. We have been working—in many ways that you don't understand—to restore a Sabbath paradise to the universe. We have been working to overcome sin and sickness and death.

Even your own law, which contains the Sabbath command, was part of our working to conquer sin and hold back the miseries of unrighteousness and point you forward to a Messiah, a Savior, who would come and perform the decisive acts of restoration and transformation toward the new heavens and the new earth.

When I heal a man, and intentionally do it on the Sabbath, I am showing you something about myself. What was happening at the pool of Bethesda was that

my Father and I were revealing the world that is coming. It is a world in which there will be no sickness and a world in which there will be no sin. “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”

Repent and Rejoice

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” ([Romans 11:33](#)).

Whether you see it or not, here is my response to your accusations about my Sabbath-breaking:

I and the Father are one. We created the world and the Sabbath. Since sin and sickness entered the world, my Father has been working, and I have been working, to restore Sabbath joy and wholeness and rest to the world. That is what I am doing here and now in the months that remain to me on the earth. I will deliver the decisive victory at the cross. And I will come again to complete my redeeming work. And in that kingdom, there will be no sickness, and there will be no sin. Therefore, repent, and rejoice that a man has been saved from both on the Sabbath. Amen.

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The Ultimate Father-Son Relationship?

Charles Stanley

God is called by a variety of names in the **Bible**, and each one sheds light on an aspect of His nature. Jesus' favorite title for Him was *Father*.

Surprisingly, this name for God is used only 15 times in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, it's recorded 245 times!

Many of God's names speak of His majestic and lofty attributes that separate Him from mankind, but **Father conveys intimacy**. Jesus used this name not only because He was God's Son, but also to help people realize that Jehovah isn't some unapproachable Deity gazing down on them from a distance. Rather, He is their loving heavenly Father, who cares about them and wants to be involved in their everyday lives.

Throughout His time on earth, **Christ** revealed by example what this kind of love relationship was like. **He depended completely on His Father for daily direction, power, and provision and obediently carried out every instruction**. He often left the demands of ministry just to find a secluded place to be alone with Jehovah. We know Jesus successfully conveyed the riches of this relationship to His disciples, because in John 14:8, Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father"—he wanted to know Him the way Christ did.

Do you long for that kind of intimacy with God? He wants to relate to you as a Father to His child, and He's given you the privilege of drawing near to Him. In fact, He chose you before the foundation of the world and waits with open arms for you to enter His loving embrace.

10 Attributes Of Jesus' Relationship With His Father (And what we can learn from them)

Posted on [May 14, 2016](#)

The passage we're about to look at is amazing. It's amazing because it's a revelation of the most important relationship to ever exist: the relationship between Jesus and his Father. We see here, plainly stated by Jesus himself, ten attributes of the perfect relationship between Father and Son.

We'll look at those ten attributes of Jesus' relationship with his Father from [John 5:17-37](#) (I encourage you to read the passage first), then we'll look at Jesus' relationship with his disciples, and, finally, we'll take a look at Jesus' relationship with you.

10 Attributes of Jesus' relationship with his Father

1) Jesus is a reflection of his Father

Jesus works as his Father works. Jesus imitates his Father, he does what he sees his Father do. Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." And he also said, "The Son can do... only what he sees the Father doing." ([John 5:17,19](#)) (We looked at the power of imitation in detail in the [first chapter of the new book Love Like Jesus: How Jesus Loved People \(And how you can love like Jesus\)](#)).

2) Jesus is dependent on his Father

He "can do nothing of his own accord." ([John 5:19](#)) Jesus is equal in deity, as a part of the trinity, yet submissive in role as a human being, as the Son of Man, walking planet earth. Jesus walks in humility before his Father. ([Keener](#), p. 276-277)

3) Jesus has faith in His Father's love for him

"For the Father loves the Son," Jesus says. ([John 5:20](#)) This is where Jesus' security comes from. He doesn't put his faith in human beings' love for him. In fact, where his own self worth is concerned, he doesn't care about anyone's opinion, other than his Father's. Jesus didn't "entrust himself" to people. ([John 2:24](#)) His security came from his faith in His Father's love for him.

4) The Father allows Jesus to see himself at work

The Father "shows him all that He Himself is doing." ([John 5:20](#)) And that's what Jesus did in his relationship with his disciples when they lived together for three years during his ministry. We'll learn a little more about that later in this post.

5) Jesus trusts and has confidence in his Father

"And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel." ([John 5:20](#)) Jesus was sure, he knew, he trusted that the works his Father told him were to come, would come. His raising Lazarus from the dead. His own resurrection. And the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. These were all yet to come but Jesus trusted and had confidence in his Father, that He would come through.

6) Jesus and his Father work together in the same business, the business of giving life, of bringing the dead to life

"For as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will." ([John 5:21](#) and [John 5:24-29](#))

7) The Father gives great responsibility to Jesus

The Son of Man, who is God's own Son, has lived life inside human skin. He's walked where we walk, experienced what we experience, and suffered beyond what we suffer. He's been misunderstood and mistreated in a way no one else has in all of human history. This makes him perfectly qualified to judge, so the Father "has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." ([John 5:22, 27](#))

8) There's no competitive spirit between Jesus and his Father

There is perfect harmony. Each recognized the other was to be honored equally. Jesus says, he, Jesus, is to be honored “just as they honor the Father who sent him.” ([John 5:23](#)) They saw each other as equal and took pleasure in seeing the other honored. (Also, this claim to equality with his Father by Jesus is another claim of deity. Because no one is to be honored in the same way as God. ([Isaiah 42:8, 48:11](#)))

9) Jesus lives for his Father’s will

“...I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” ([John 5:30](#)) He is equal in Deity as a part of the trinity, but submissive in his role. Jesus never performed a miracle on his own behalf. He only became angry in defence of others, never on his own behalf. He didn’t own a house, or a horse, or a giant screen TV—his money from his ministry went to the poor. Jesus didn’t live for himself, he lived for his Father. Everything he did was according to the will of his Father, and his Father’s will was for Jesus to communicate his Father’s love for us. ([Keener](#), p. 276-277) (see point number 2)

10) Jesus’ validation comes from his Father

John the Baptist bore witness to Jesus but Jesus says that the testimony Jesus cares about isn’t from man. (He said, he only brought up John’s testimony so those listening might be saved.) But the testimony Jesus cares about “is greater than that of John’s.” The testimony that matters to Jesus is God’s testimony. And God spoke audibly, affirming and validating his Son in [Matthew 3:13-17](#), [Matthew 17:1-8](#), and [John 12:27-30](#). God spoke these words in the first, middle, and last parts of Jesus’ public ministry, in the first, second, and third year. ([John 5:31-37](#))

Jesus’ Relationship With His Disciples

At this point, you may have already recognized the similarities between Jesus’ relationship with his Father and the disciples relationship with Jesus.

- 1) As Jesus reflected his Father, the disciples desired to reflect Jesus.
- 2) As Jesus depended on his Father, they depended on Jesus, for the words of eternal life. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,” the disciples said in [John 6:68](#).
- 3) As Jesus has faith in his Father’s love for him, the disciples had faith in Jesus’ love for them. They had such faith in Jesus’ love that, according to Church tradition, all but John gave their lives for the cause of Christ.
- 4) As his Father allowed Jesus to see Himself at work, we see Jesus, as he disciples the twelve, allowed them to see himself at work. For the three years they lived together Jesus showed them everything he did. They heard his prayers, they saw him minister, they watched him respond to adversity. Jesus showed them all he himself was doing.

You can go down the rest of the list yourself and see, Jesus’ relationship with his disciples was very similar to the Father’s relationship with Jesus.

The implications for evangelism are major. Because what we see in the scriptures is Jesus' foundational relationship, with his Father, described by Christ himself. And then we see Jesus duplicating that relationship with a small group of disciples.

Billy Graham was once asked, "If you were a pastor of a large church in a principal city, what would be your plan of action?"

And Mr. Graham replied,

"I think one of the first things I would do would be to get a small group of eight or ten or twelve people around me that would meet a few hours a week and pay the price! It would cost them something in time and effort. I would share with them everything I have, over a period of years. Then I would actually have twelve ministers among the laypeople who in turn could take eight or ten or twelve more and teach them. I know one or two churches that are doing that, and it is revolutionizing the church. Christ, I think, set the pattern. He spent most of his time with twelve men. He didn't spend it with a great crowd. In fact, every time he had a great crowd it seems to me that there weren't too many results. The great results, it seems to me, came in this personal interview and in the time he spent with his twelve." (Billy Graham, as quoted by Robert E. Coleman in his excellent book [The Master Plan of Evangelism](#))

Although Jesus didn't neglect the masses, he gave the great majority of himself to his disciples. And we see in scripture what Graham pointed out, that most of the growth of Christianity came from Jesus' investment in the small and intimate group of followers who were his disciples. Jesus' invested in his relationship with his disciples as Jesus' Father invested in him.

Jesus' Relationship With You And With Me

Of course there are implications for you and for me as well. What we have in John chapter five is a rich resource to draw from in our own relationship with Jesus. I encourage you to go through the ten attributes above and pray, "Lord, show me what I must change, show me what I must do, to make my relationship with Jesus as much like Jesus' relationship with You as possible.

1) "Help me to reflect Jesus in every way possible. Fill me with Jesus. Bless me with the attitude and countenance of Jesus. Send your Holy Spirit to help me love like Jesus."

2) "Help me to depend on Jesus, in the same way Jesus depended on you."

3) "Help me to have faith in Jesus' love for me. Make me secure in his love. Let my security come from Jesus' love and not the acceptance or rejection of people."

4) "Help me to learn how Jesus worked. Show me all that Jesus did. So I can be more conformed to his likeness."

5) "Give me confidence in Christ's plan for my life. Bless me with your peace and deliver me from anxiety. Fill me with faith and trust in you."

6) "Help me to be a help to you. Bless me with the great privilege of serving with Jesus in the work of bringing people into your kingdom."

7) "Use me Lord!"

8) "Help me to honor Jesus. Help me not to compete with him. Help me to resist the temptation to move forward with my own plans and desires in a way that competes against Jesus' plans and desires for me."

9) "Send your Holy Spirit to me, to do His work in me, to fill me with love for Jesus with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my mind. Help me to love you so much that I live to do your will."

10) "Help me not to concern myself with what others say about me, but help me to care only for *your* testimony about me."

Ten attributes of Jesus' relationship with his Father. I'm not saying these are the only attributes. But Jesus gives us these ten in the Gospel of John.

Jesus shares them with us for a reason.

He gives them to us to learn from.

And Jesus gives them to us to emulate, in our own relationship with Christ.

Key WORD search of the selected text:

Hebrews 12:5-11 (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.” 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. 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, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 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.

- A. “discipline” = 14
- B. “son” = 21
- C. “F/father” = 14 (10F & 4f)
- D. **TOTAL:** = 49 (of 171 or) **29%**

DISCIPLINE

In the Bible, discipline has a positive and essential place in the lives of God’s people. God had prescribed a way of life for His people. They had to learn how to be obedient. *The process by which God’s people learned obedience was the “discipline of the Lord” (Deut. 11:2 NIV).*

Discipline comes from a Latin word “disco” which means to learn or get to know, a direct kind of acquaintance with something or someone. **Discipline refers to the process by which one learns a way of life. A disciple was like an apprentice who was learning a trade or craft from a master. Such learning required a relationship between the master who knew the way of life (discipline) and a learner (a disciple). Within this relationship, the master led a learner through a process (the discipline) until the learner could imitate or live like the master.**

In the Old Testament, the covenant relationship between God and His people made Yahweh the Master. Through praise and correction, God led His people. The goal was to bring His people to a kind of maturity where obedience was the rule rather than the exception. Parents, judges, kings, prophets, and wisemen worked with God in teaching His people. **Successful discipline resulted in a life pleasing to God. The earliest setting for discipline was the family ([Deut. 6:20-25](#)).**

The prophets established “schools of the prophet.” Elijah became a master to Elisha ([1 Kings 19:19-21](#)). Isaiah chose some Judeans who would learn his message through living with him ([Isa. 8:16](#)). This pattern was followed by Jewish rabbis. **The rabbi would discipline his disciples (*talmidim*) through a procedure of praise and correction.** This process enabled the disciples to learn the law. Correction was seldom physical in nature. **Reproof or rebuke was the usual form of correction. The goal was an obedient servant of God, who knew and did what God wanted.**

Jesus called twelve men to be His disciples. Through His call, He established a master-learner relation with them. **As they lived and worked with Him, Jesus disciplined them in His understanding of what God wanted. Such discipline involved both praise and criticism, affirmation and rebuke.** Compare [Mark 8](#); [John 21](#). The success of His mission depended on His training this small group of followers. They would carry on His work after His death and resurrection. The twelve were His apprentices in the work which God called Jesus to do.

The Great Commission places the responsibility for discipling disciples in the hands of the church. The believers are to teach them “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20).

“To observe” is much more than simple knowledge. Observance is to live in obedience to the commands of Jesus. Learning and doing what Jesus wants requires a process, a discipline.

Becoming like Christ is the result of the discipline of the Lord Jesus Christ, exercised in and through His church.

Hence, churches throughout their history have sought to teach their members the way of the Lord through **“church discipline.”**

Apart from the Gospels, the concept of discipline appears most prominently in the ethical teachings of Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews. Paul admonished the Ephesians to bring their children up “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” ([Eph. 6:4b](#) NAS). Such an education was to avoid the heavy-handed, physical brutality practiced by their pagan neighbors. Discipline was not to evoke anger from the children ([Eph. 6:4a](#)).

The writer of Hebrews pictures God treating the faithful as sons ([Heb. 12:7](#)). As a loving Father, God disciplines the believing community. Such discipline is evidence of His love because the end result of such action is blessing ([Heb. 12:10](#)).

Discipline, biblically understood, results in blessing.

Through praise and correction, lives are shaped into a pattern of consistent obedience and love. Within “the discipline of the Lord,” expressed in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, one can live the kind of life which is pleasing to God and of benefit to others.

James Berryman
Holman Bible Dictionary.

A courageous mind braces a feeble body, and hope makes it fresh for new conflicts.

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

A Call to Steadfastness

([Hebrews 12:12, 13](#))

The didactic (teaching) portions of Scripture are very much more than abstract statements of truth: they are designed not only for the instructing of the mind, but also for the influencing of the heart. This is far too little recognized in our day, when the craving for information is so often divorced from any serious concern as to the *use* to be made of the same. This, no doubt, is one of the evil fruits borne by the modern school-methods, where instead of seeking to *draw out* (the meaning of the word "educate") and develop the mind of the pupil, he is made to "cram" or fill his head with a mass of facts and figures, most of which are of no service to him in the later life. Not such is God's method. His method of instruction is to set before us moral and spiritual principles, and then show us how to *apply* them in a practical way; inculcate a motive, and thereby call into exercise our inward faculties. Hence, the test of Christian knowledge is not how much we understand, but how far our knowledge is affecting our lives.

It is one thing to possess a clear intellectual grasp of the doctrines of grace, it is quite another to experience the grace of the doctrines in a spiritual way. It is one thing to believe the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God, it is another for the soul to live under the awe of their Divine authority, realizing that one day we shall be judged by them. It is

one thing to be convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, it is another to surrender to His scepter and live in personal subjection to Him. What does it profit me to be convinced that God is omnipotent, unless I am learning to lean upon His mighty arm? What avail is it to me that I am assured of God's omniscience unless the knowledge that His eye is ever upon me acts as a salutary restraint to my actions? What does it advantage me to know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, unless I am making the acquirement of holiness my chief concern and aim!

That which has been pointed out above has to do with no obscure and intricate subject which lies far above the reach of the rank and file of the common people, but is plain, self-evident, simple. Alas, that our hearts are so little impressed by it and our consciences so rarely exercised over it. When we measure ourselves by *that* standard, have we not all of us much cause to hang our heads in shame? Our intellects are stored with Scripture truth, but how little are our lives moulded thereby. Our doctrinal views are sound and orthodox, but how little we know experimentally of "the truth which is after godliness" ([Titus 1:1](#)). Has not the Savior much ground for saying to both writer and reader, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not the* things which I say?" ([Luke 6:46](#)). O that we may be duly humbled over our sad failures.

The above reflections have been suggested by the *use* which the apostle makes in our text of the subject he had been discussing in the previous verses. His opening "Wherefore" denotes that he was now going to make a practical application unto those whom he was writing to of the exposition just given of the truth of

Divine chastisement. In this we may see him following out the course he pursued in all his epistles, and which the servants of God are required to emulate today. No matter what was the doctrine under consideration, the apostle always turned it to a practical end, as his oft-repeated "Therefore" and "Wherefore" intimate. Was he contending for the Christian's emancipation from the ceremonial law, then he adds, "Stand fast *therefore* in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" ([Gal. 5:1](#)). Was he opening up the glorious truth of resurrection, then he concludes with "*therefore...* be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" ([1 Cor. 15:58](#)). Was he setting forth the blessed hope of Christ's return, then he finishes with "*Wherefore* comfort one another with these words" ([1 Thess. 4:18](#)).

It is this which urgently needs to be laid to heart—*the use* we make of the precious truths which the Most High has so graciously revealed to us. That is (partly, at least) what the Savior had in mind when He said, "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear" ([Luke 8:18](#))—see to it that your hearts are duly affected, so that the truth will regulate all your conduct. It is not sufficient that I assume a reverent demeanor when attending the means of grace, that I pay close attention to what I hear: it is the assimilation of the same, so that I go forth and live under the power thereof, which is the all-important matter. The same is true of our reading; it is not the book which adds to my store of information, or which entertains and thrills, but the one which stirs me up to godly living, which proves the most helpful. So it is with our response to the Scriptures, it is not how many difficult passages do I have light upon, nor how many verses

have I memorized, but how many of its commands and precepts am I honestly endeavoring to obey.

This is the keynote struck by the apostle in the verses which are now to engage our attention. He had thrown not a little light on the distressing circumstances in which the Hebrews then found themselves, namely, the bitter persecution they were encountering at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen. He had pointed out that so far from their afflictions being exceptional, and a warrantable ground for consternation, they were, in some form or other, the common portion of *all* God's people, while they are left in this scene. He had set before them some most blessed truths, which were well calculated to strengthen their faith, comfort their hearts, and raise their drooping spirits. He had given an exposition of the subjection of Divine chastisement, such as must bring peace and consolation to all who mix faith therewith. He had silenced every objection which could well be made against the duty to which he had called them. And now he presses upon them the practical profit to which they must turn the doctrine inculcated.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" ([verses 12, 13](#)). Here we have, First, the conclusion drawn from the preceding premises. Second, the several duties enjoined. Third, the reason by which they are enforced. The duties are expressed in figurative language, yet in such terms as the meaning is not difficult to perceive. The enforcing reason or motive for compliance is taken from the evil effects which a non-compliance of one's duty would have upon others, which plainly

inculcates the importance and value of personal example, and the influence which it exerts upon our fellows.

"Wherefore" means, in view of what has been said: because of the preceding considerations a certain course of conduct ought to follow. There is, we believe, a double reference in this opening "wherefore," namely, an immediate and a remote one. Immediately, it connects with the preceding verse, the most important word of which is "exercised." The apostle was alluding again to the well-known Grecian "Games." In the gymnasium, the instructor would challenge the youth to combat. He was an experienced man, and knew how to strike, guard, wrestle. Many severe blows would the combatants receive from him, but it was part of their training, preparing them for their future appearance in the public contests. The youth whose athletic frame was prepared for the coming great venture, would boldly step forward, willing to be "exercised" by his trainer; but he who shirked the trial and refused to encounter the master, received no help at his hands; but the fault was entirely his own.

This, it seems to us, is the figure carried forward in our text; "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby. *Wherefore* lift up the hands which hang down." The Christian who gives way before trial, who sinks under affliction, who sulks or repines beneath persecution, will bring forth none of the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." If he "faints" under chastisement, if his hands become idle and his legs no longer capable of supporting him, a profitable use cannot be made of the tribulation through which he is called upon to pass. Then let

him pull himself together, gird up the loins of his mind and "*endure* hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" ([2 Tim. 2:3](#)). Let his attitude be, Now is the time of my training, so I will seek to play the man; I will seek grace from God to muster all my faith and courage and valiantly wrestle with whatever opposes and oppresses me.

More remotely, our opening "Wherefore" looks back unto *all* that has been said in the previous verses. [Hebrews 12](#) opens with a stirring call for God's people to persevere in the course of Christian duty, to go forward in the spiritual life, no matter what impediments might stand in their way; to "run with patience (or perseverance) the race which is set before us," drawing strength from the Christ for enablement ([verses 1, 2](#)). Then he anticipated an objection: We are being sorely oppressed, tempted to renounce our profession, hounded by our unbelieving brethren. To this he replies, Consider your Master, who went before you in the same path of suffering (verse 3). Bear in mind that your lot has not become extreme: ye have not yet been called upon to experience a martyr's death (verse 4). Furthermore, you are losing sight of that scriptural exhortation, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord" (verse 5). This led the apostle to open to them, in a most precious manner, the whole subject of Divine chastisement. Let us present a brief summary of the same.

The trials through which the children of God are called upon to pass are not Divine punishments, but gracious discipline designed for their good. We are expressly bidden "not to faint" beneath them (verse 5). The rod is wielded not in wrath, but in tender solicitude, and is a manifestation not of God's anger but

of His love (verse 6). Our duty then is to "endure" chastening as becometh the children of God (verse 7). To be without chastisement, so far from being an evidence of our spiritual sonship, would demonstrate we were not sons at all (verse 8). Inasmuch as we gave reverence to our earthly parents when they corrected us, how much more ought we to be in subjection to our heavenly Father (verse 9). God's design in our afflictions is our "profit," that by them we might become increasingly "partakers of His holiness" in an experimental way. Though these chastenings are unpleasant to flesh and blood, nevertheless "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" issues therefrom when we are suitably "exercised thereby" (verse 11).

Now from these considerations a very obvious conclusion is drawn, and by them a bounden duty is enforced. In view of the "great cloud of witnesses" by which we are encompassed (verse 1), seeing that the saints of other days—in themselves as weak, as sinful, as much oppressed by the world as we are—fought a good fight, kept the faith, and finished their course, let us gird ourselves for the contest and strain every effort to persevere in the path of duty. In view of the fact that our Leader, the Captain of our salvation, has left us such an example of heroic endurance (verse 3), let us earnestly seek to follow His steps and acquit ourselves like men. Finally, because God Himself is the Author and Regulator of our trials—the severest of our chastenings proceed from a loving Father, seeking our good—then let us not be cast down by the difficulties of the way nor discouraged by the roughness of the path; but let us nerve ourselves to steadfastness in the faith and fidelity to our Redeemer.

Thus the coherence of our opening "Wherefore" is perfectly obvious and the duty it presses so plain that there cannot be misunderstanding. In view of all the above-mentioned considerations, and particularly in view of the fact that the most precious fruits issue from afflictions when we are duly "exercised" by them, then let us not be dejected in our minds nor faint in our spirits by reason thereof. As the champions in the public "Games" used their hands and arms to the very best of their ability, and as the runners in the races used their legs and knees to the best possible effect—and in case their hands and knees began to fail and flag, exerted their wills to the utmost to rouse up their members to renewed effort—so should we be very courageous, zealous and active, and in case our hearts begin to fail us through multiplied discouragements, we must marshal all our resolution and strive prayerfully and manfully against giving way to despair.

"Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down." The duty here enjoined is set forth in figurative language, but the meaning is nonetheless obvious because of the graphic metaphors used. The apostle transferred unto members of our physical body the condition in which the faculties of our souls are liable to fall under certain trials. For the hands to hang down and the knees to become feeble are figurative expressions, denoting the tendency to abandon the discharge of our Christian duty because of the opposition encountered. For the hands of a boxer or fencer to hang down means that his arms are become weary to the point of exhaustion; for the knees to be feeble signifies that through the protracted exertions of the runner his legs have been debilitated by their nervous energy being spent. The spiritual reference is to a decay in the Christian's courage and resolution. Two evils

produce this: despondency as to success—when hope is gone effort ceases; weariness in the performance of duty.

This same figure is employed in other passages of Scripture. In [Ezekiel 7:16, 17](#) we read, "But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be as weak as water:" here the reference is to that inertia which is produced by poignant conviction of sin after a season of backsliding. Again, in [Ezekiel 21:7](#) we are told, "When they shall say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings, because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall fail, and all knees shall be as weak as water:" where we behold the paralyzing effects of consternation in view of the tidings of sore judgment. But in our text the reference is to the disheartenment caused by fierce opposition and persecution. Despair and becoming weary of well doing are the two evils in all our afflictions which we most need to guard against. It is failure at this point which has led to so many scandalous backslidings and cursed apostasies. Such an exhortation as the one before us intimates that the Hebrews had either already given way to an enervating spirit of gloom or were in great danger of so doing.

Now "It is the duty of all faithful ministers of the Gospel to consider diligently what failures or temptations their flocks are liable or exposed to, so as to apply suitable means for their preservation" (John Owen). This is what the apostle is seen doing here. In view of the lethargy of the Hebrews he exhorts them to "*lift up* the hands which hang down, and the feeble

knees." The word "lift up" signifies not simply to elevate, but to "rectify" or set right again, restoring them to their proper state, so as to apply them to duty. It was a call to steadfastness and resolute perseverance: be not dejected in your minds nor faint in your spirits by reason of the present distress, nor be so terrified of the threatening danger as to give up hope and be completely overwhelmed. Under sore trial and affliction, persecution and the prospect of yet sorer opposition, the temptation is for the heart to sink within us and the path of duty to be forsaken.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees:" literally, "hands which are loose" or slack, dangling inert; "feeble knees" is still stronger in the Greek, being almost the equivalent of palsied knees—enervated knees which need bandages to brace them. In view of which he calls them to arouse themselves, to stir up all their graces unto exercise, to refuse taking the line of least resistance, to renew their courage and bear up under their trials. Resolution will accomplish much to stimulate jaded nerves and flagging energies. The Christian life, from start to finish is a struggle, a fight, an unceasing warfare against foes within and without, and only he who endures to the end shall receive the crown of life. To give way to dejection is harmful, to sink into despair is dangerous, to quit the discharge of our duties is the fore-runner of apostasy.

But the question arises *how* are we to set about this particular task? To say that we are helpless in ourselves affords no encouragement; in fact to affirm that the Christian is utterly impotent is to deny that there is any vital difference between himself and those who are dead in sins. Christians in their greatest weakness have *some* strength, some grace, some

spiritual life; and where there is some life, there is some ability to stir and move. And God is pleased to assist where there is *sincere endeavor*. The believer is responsible to arm his mind against discouragements by considering God's design in them, and the blessed fruits which issue from trials and afflictions when we are duly exercised by them. Of what value is a clear intellectual grasp of the nature and end of Divine chastisements unless it produces a practical effect upon the heart and life? Let the distressed saint ponder anew the blessed considerations set before him in [Hebrews 12:1-11](#) and find in them motives and incentives unto renewed courage, fidelity and perseverance.

Let the hope of ultimate victory nerve you. Look forward to the goal: the determination to reach home is a powerful stimulus to a weary traveler. Earnestly endeavor to counteract every disposition to faintness and despondency by viewing your trials and persecutions as a part of God's discipline for your soul: then submit to them as such, and seek to get them sanctified to your spiritual profit. Remember that you cannot fight with hands hanging down, nor run the race set before us if your knees give way; so summon all your resolution to remain steadfast in the discharge of every duty God has appointed and assigned you. Rest in the love of your heavenly Father, assured that all of the present distress is designed for your ultimate good, and this will reinvigorate the soul. Finally, seek grace to lay hold of and plead the promise, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" ([Isa. 40:31](#)).

It is to be noted that this exhortation is couched abstractly. It is not "lift up *your* hands," which would restrict it individually; nor is it "lift up the hands of those who are dejected," which would

limit the exhortation to a ministry unto others. Worded as it is there is a *double* reference: it is a call to the individual Christian to persevering activity, and it is an exhortation for him to seek the well being of his fellow-Christians. That our text *has* a reference to our seeking to encourage and strengthen fellow-pilgrims is clear from a comparison of [Job 4:3, 4](#) and [Isaiah 35:3, 4](#), with which [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#) may be compared. The best way for the individual Christian to strengthen the hands of his feeble fellows is by setting before them a worthy example of faith, courage, and steadfastness. In addition, he is to pray for them, speak words of encouragement, remind them of God's promises, relate to them His gracious dealings and powerful deliverances in his own life.

"And make straight paths for your feet." The previous verse concerns the inward frame and spirit of the believer's mind; this one has respect to his outward conduct. As Barnes has well pointed out, the term used here signifies "straight" horizontally, that is level and plain, all obstacles are to be removed so that we do not stumble and fall—cf. [Proverbs 4:25-27](#). The word for "paths" is derived from one meaning "a wheel" and signifies here "the marks made by a wheel"—it is paths marked out for others, leaving the tracks which may be followed by them. The reference, then, is to the believer so manifesting his course that his fellows may see and follow it. The Christian course is *exemplary*, that is, it is one which impresses and influences others. How very careful should we be then as to our conduct!

Here, then, is an exhortation unto the Christian to see well to his *walk*, which means the regulating of all his actions by the revealed will of God, to be obedient unto the Divine precepts, to

follow not the ways and fashions of an evil world, but to cleave to the narrow way, and turn not aside from the Highway of Holiness. "It is our duty not only to be found in the ways of God in general but to take care that we walk carefully, circumspectly, uprightly and diligently in them. Hereon depends our own peace, and all our usefulness toward others. It is a sad thing when some men's walk in the ways of God shall deter others from them or turn them out of them" (John Owen).

"And make straight paths for your feet." A most timely word for us today when iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold, when the poor and afflicted in Zion stand in need of all the godly encouragement they can obtain. We are surrounded by a "*crooked* generation," both of professing and profane, whose evil ways we are but too apt to learn; we are beset on every hand by temptations to turn aside into what Bunyan termed "By-path Meadow," to enter paths which God has prohibited, to feed on pride and indulge our lusts. How the heart of the mature Christian aches for the lambs of Christ's flock, and how it behooves him to walk softly and carefully lest he put some stumbling-block in their way. Solemn indeed is "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity" ([Ps. 125:5](#)), and also "They have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein *shall not know peace*" ([Isa. 59:8](#)).

"Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." The word "lest" is a translation of two Greek words, "that not." It is a word of caution and prevention, warning each of us that carelessness as to our own walk is likely to have an ill effect upon weaker Christians. The word "lame" is transferred from the body to

some defect of our graces which unfits the soul for the discharge of Christian duty: one who is lame is ill-capacitated to run in a race, and one who is lacking in courage, zeal, and perseverance is ill-fitted to fight the good fight of faith. Walk carefully then, my brother, if for no reason than for the sake of the feebler saints. Backslidden Christians are the plague of the church: inconsistencies in God's people spread discouragements among weak believers.

There are always some "lame" sheep in God's earthly flock. While there are some Christians with strong and vigorous faith, so that they "mount up with wings as eagles, run and are not weary," and make steady progress in practical holiness, all are not so highly favored. In most families of any size there is one frail and sickly member; so it is in the various branches of the Household of Faith. Some are constitutionally gloomy, temperamentally vacillating, physically infirm, and these have a special claim upon the strong. They are not to be snubbed and shunned: they need an example of cheerfulness set before them, wise counsel given to them, their arms supported by prayer and love's solicitude for their good. Whatever is weak in their faith and hope, whatever tends to dishearten and discourage them, should be carefully attended to, so far as lies in our power. A stitch in time saves nine: many a sheep might have been kept from falling into the ditch, had one with a shepherd's heart gone after it at the first sign of straying.

"But let it rather be healed." "Heal" signifies to correct that which is amiss. It is the recovering of a lapsed one which is here in view. Instead of despising sickly Christians, exercise love's sympathy toward them. While we should be thankful if God has

granted us healthy graces, we must beware of presumption: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; *considering thyself*, lest thou also be tempted" ([Gal. 6:1](#)). To those groaning under the burden of sin, tell them of the sufficiency of Christ's blood. To those fearful about the future, remind them of God's faithfulness. To those who are despondent, seek to cheer by citing some of God's precious promises. Study the holy art of speaking a word in season to the needy. You will be of great value to the church if you develop a spirit of compassion and the gift of lifting up those fallen by the wayside."

- An Exposition of Hebrews.