

How to Think About Divine Discipline

Hebrews 12:4-11

August 11, 2024

If you're here, a few weeks ago, I was in the beginning of Hebrews chapter 12, we're just going to continue on where I left off. I know many of you are going through some severe trials and tribulations in your life, and I just wanted to continue on in this passage as an encouragement to you. Hoping that this will help you think through your own trials and train us to think through the trials that we will be going through when we come upon them, that we will think rightly about them. But as we get into this text, just want to start by way of illustration about thinking a through the Olympic games a little bit.

How many guys are watching the Olympics? You enjoy watching the Olympics? I've only been able to watch a few evenings, a couple hours, but I love to watch a image bearers of God push themselves to the limit to try to be the best, to push

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themselves to the limit of, of the given limits that God created in them. Those who as Paul said, beat their bodies to make it do what they want, to be faster, stronger. It's fun to see people win a gold medals, see people rewarded for their hard work. Was able to watch a few Americans win gold medals in a few events.

And as you watch some of these, if you've seen the medal ceremonies where they receive the gold, silver and the bronze, they're on the podium. But what no one has ever seen in watching one of those ceremonies from the Olympics, what no one has ever seen is a gold medalist walk off of that stage after receiving that gold medal. You've never seen one of them walk off that stage and go to their coach and start griping about all the discipline that they put them through. I mean, can you imagine a gold medalist getting off the podium and complaining to the coach about how much he harps on him, about his form, about how many training sessions a day he put him through?

That would never happen, why? Because that athlete has just realized what all the training in the discipline was for and that it was worth it because that athlete has his prize in hand.

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Now, if you rolled the clock back a couple of years, when some of these athletes are in the dregs of training, strict discipline schedules, meals, routines, eat, sleep, train with the goal years from realization, well then, it'd be far more understandable that these athletes might be complaining and griping about their coach's training regimen. It's too severe, it's too strict, it's too disciplined, it's too hard.

Does it make any sense to be upset about training years before any more than the day you win a gold medal? Not really, it's all about the right perspective and that's really what this passage in Hebrews is helping us to understand. It's all about keeping the right perspective concerning divine discipline. Because just like a coach with an athlete, God is conditioning us to win the prize. So, if you're there Hebrews chapter 12, let's begin in verse 1. We already a few weeks ago looked at verses 1 to 3. We're going to go through verse 11 today, but Hebrews 12, verse 1.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight in the sin which so

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easily entangles us, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy said before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary, fainting in heart. 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 flogs every Son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you are 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 you have all been 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

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Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our benefit, so that we may share in his holiness. And all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, but to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

We've already looked at verses 1 to 3 where the author of Hebrews exhorts us to run with endurance, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, our prize. And as Christians, we all want to run the race faithfully, right? With endurance, we want to finish, we want to get that prize at the end of our life. And this passage here reminds us that it is by divine discipline that we endure and finish the race well. But let's first think about this word discipline in this passage just to kind of set the tone and a for, for moving forward.

But the word discipline is the Greek word *paideia* that comes from the word *pais*, which means child. But *paideia* has, within the idea of the word, a combination of training,

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instruction, guidance, reproof, correction, even punishment. We might say, as one commentator puts it, that discipline is that which assists in the development of a person's ability to make appropriate choices. We all who have had parents, we, which is all of us, we intuitively know this discipline, from experience. Even if our parents didn't have the right motivations, even if their discipline was wrought with sin, their discipline still had an effect on us.

We know from experience that this discipline is training, correction, punishment, it's a variety of things. Parents are constantly engaging in a combination of training, instruction, guidance, reproof, correction, and punishment. And we who are Christian parents, we discipline in order that our children might grow up, have the ability not just to make good decisions, but God glorifying decisions. And it requires a combination of training, instruction, guidance reproof, correction and punishment to develop this in them. And it turns out that the Lord continues the same work of discipline in us as adults to shape us into the kind of men and women that he wants us to be, in order that we might endure this Christian life.

This is what the author tells us in, in verse 7, look at verse 7, which is the central exhortation in this passage. It is for discipline that you endure, the Greek sentence here is actually only three words for discipline, you endure. That's four in the English, but it's only three in the Greek because the pronoun is built into the verb for discipline you endure. That preposition for can also be used referred to instrumentality, meaning discipline is the instrument whereby you will endure. By discipline you endure, or one commentator says this is probably *causal*, meaning it is because of discipline that you endure, which we all really understand intuitively in the context of a runner running a race, right?

The only reason that runner is able to run and finish a marathon, for example, is because of the training and discipline leading up to that. None of us, if we haven't trained for a marathon, could go out and run a marathon and endure it unless we subjected ourselves to training and discipline. And the author of Hebrews is just reminding us of this reality. He tells them that it is because of the Lord's discipline that they are presently enduring the race, and we'll continue on to endure the race. Thus, he's writing to them they ought to think rightly. We

ought to think rightly about the discipline that we are going through, because as the author tells them, they had totally forgotten how to think about discipline. But first, let's consider what discipline these readers, the ones that the author of Hebrews were writing to. What were they enduring? Well, they were enduring far more than we are now, many of us are now. These people, they were Jewish Christians who had totally separated from Judaism by this point.

The early church was kind of mixed within the synagogues, within Judaism, but eventually there was a separation. There was a clear line that the Jews were against the Christians, there is no more mixing. But the problem with that was within the Roman Empire, in order to worship, you had to worship an approved religion of the Roman Empire and Christianity was not, but Judaism was. And so, they had been, been undergoing great persecution because they were no longer under the umbrella of Judaism. And so many of these Christians, they were being tempted to forsake the Christian religion and go back to Judaism and you can understand that struggle.

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Judaism was the true religion for worshipping Yahweh until they rejected their Messiah. And so many were justifying going back because they were still worshipping Yahweh. But the Jews had rejected their Messiah, and it had become a false religion when it began rejecting truth. Many of these people, they were ostracized from society, they couldn't buy things, they weren't welcome in the marketplaces, their families hated them. There was loss of possession, loss of jobs and these Christians, they had forgotten that all of this was from the good hand of the Lord to discipline them.

They forgot that this was the means by which God was going to cause them to endure their race. They began thinking wrongly about their trials and their discipline. Some commentators think maybe they began to believe the lies that they were enduring these trials because God was angry with them. Like many of the Greek gods, they were angry, so they were lashing out at them. Maybe they thought God's angry with them because they left Judaism. Maybe they thought that if God was really happy with them, then they would have relief from all this pain. They would be at peace with prosperity and ease. They had totally forgotten, the author of Hebrews tells us, that all the

difficulty that the Lord was bringing into their lives, it was the loving hand of God to discipline them, to train them, to condition them that they might continue to run faithfully.

And so, this whole section, is the author's attempt to remind them, help them think rightly about their trials, their difficulties. And that's what we see in this passage, it's going to, it's going to help us think rightly about our difficulties, our trials, the things that come into our life. So, here we have an exhortation to think rightly about the difficulties in our life, the trials, the training that the Lord puts us through, the correction that the Lord brings into our life. It's going to teach us how to view it rightly that we might not lose heart.

And we will see this in this passage in five points, I'll list them here for you briefly and then we'll move on. The extreme of divine discipline, the exhortation of divine discipline, the motivation of divine discipline, the superiority of divine discipline, and the perspective of divine discipline and I'll repeat those as we go. But the extreme of divine discipline, look at verse 4 with me again. The author says you

have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood in your striving against sin. I think as I have read this verse in the past, I took this term sin to me and be in the most broadest sense possible. In other words, I saw it as a reminder that these Christians, they had not struggled against temptation and sin in general so much that they had shed blood over it.

And I think most of us are probably in this category. We've never shed blood in resisting temptation. But to be more clear, every commentator I read clarifies and narrows the meaning of sin here, either to refer to the sin of unbelief and apostasy, or just as a representation of all those who oppose Christianity. It is a reference to martyrdom and opposing all those who oppose the Church, resisting that temptation to forsake Christ and have relief from persecution, which makes perfect sense in this context. These Christians who were being encouraged to not grow weary, not faint, not to turn back to Judaism.

He is reminding them that they have yet to struggle to the point of resisting their persecutors to death. They have yet

resisted unto death, turning away from Christ. They had given up many things, suffered many things, but they had yet to give their lives to the cause of Christ. So why does the author point out the obvious? I mean, we all know we haven't died yet, right? That's obvious, why does he point out the obvious? Well, he is reminding them that they have yet to sacrifice their lives, which they freely offered to Christ in The Gospel.

Willingness to forsake life is at the heart of the demands of The Gospel. Jesus promised those who followed him that if the world hated him, they would hate us as well, if they killed him, we must be ready for them to do the same to us. This is why Jesus told people who followed him count the cost. These are the extreme demands of The Gospel, it is free, but it does cost us our life. The author of Hebrews is reminding these Christians of the extreme demands of The Gospel, of the discipleship that they committed to when they followed Jesus. The author's trying to strengthen those who are about to faint in heart.

He is reminding them of what they committed to in The Gospel and that the Lord has yet to demand that of them. They

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have not yet given their lives to the cause of Christ as martyrs, and for that they should be encouraged because that is what they all committed to in following Christ. Well, what we find here is that it is common to be discouraged with severe trials and tribulations, to want to faint in heart. When the Lord has his hand of discipline upon our life, it is easy to become discouraged. But when we feel that we can't bear it, we have to remember what we committed to when we came to him. We committed to be willing to give up our lives and most of us as Americans are far from that in our struggle and in our trials.

So, to think about the discipline of the Lord rightly, we must first set it in the context of the demands of The Gospel. We offered our lives to him in The Gospel, we owe him our lives as he gave his on the cross to redeem us. We should therefore be encouraged and grateful that he has not yet required our life from us. We should be grateful and encouraged that we continue to enjoy good things. We are not yet taken captive and tortured as many Saints before listed in verse 11, and for that we should be thankful. This sets our current struggles in light of the worst-case scenario. Whatever trial I'm going through, you are

going through, whatever form of discipline the Lord is squeezing me through.

If I compare that to what he mentions in verse 11 of being sawn in half, well, I'll pick my trial every time. I don't know about you, but being sawn in two is pretty low on the list of things I'd like to do or be put through. But it puts our trials in perspective when we set them next to the extreme of The Gospel demands. What Jesus has called us to be willing to do as disciples. What many, what all the, the 12 disciples went through, but what we are also called to. We must see the Lord's discipline in our life in the context of the demands of The Gospel, not faint at lesser things that he asks us to endure.

So, as we look at our trials, we must consider the extreme of divine discipline in order to run with endurance and not faint under what the Lord has is pressing us through. But point number two, we must also consider the exhortation of divine discipline, the exhortation of divine discipline. Look at verses 5 and 6, he says, "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. For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He flogs every son whom he receives.”

Obviously, the people that the author wrote to, they knew that they had yet given their life for the faith, that much was obvious. But what the author turns to now is something that they had totally forgotten. That's the, the Greek word there means to utterly forget something. They had utterly forgotten the encouraging truth that God is disciplining them because precisely because they are sons and daughters. He was not disciplining them because he was unhappy with them. Contrary to what they were thinking, the discipleship of the Lord, the discipline of the Lord, was a mark of sonship. It was an indicator of his love for them, not his displeasure of them.

One thing that's interesting about this verse, really verses 5 and 6, is that this concept in one way or another is repeated throughout five books of the Bible. Normally God does not repeat the same truth over and over and over, Mmm, in the Scriptures. God doesn't need to repeat things over and over in

Scripture, one time is enough. But he tells us this over and over and over, probably because we are so prone to forget it.

But just a couple passages to the list where it's mention, Job 5:17 says, "Behold, how blessed," that word bless is happy. It's a mark of divine favor, how blessed, "how happy is the man whom God reproves. So, do not reject the discipline of the almighty." Psalm 49:12 says something similar, then there's Proverbs 3:11 and 12 which the author of Hebrews is quoting here in this passage, so I won't read it. But then there is also Revelation 3:19 where Jesus from the mouth of Jesus, he says, "Those whom I love I reprove and discipline."

Along with these Hebrew Christians, beloved, we must understand the divine discipline is meant to be an encouragement to us as a sign of God's divine favor upon us. We are sons who are privileged to have this training course designed by our heavenly father to make us more like Jesus. He has put before us this course that is designed to shape us into the image of Christ, and he has crafted it just for you, his son or his daughter.

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If you were trying to make it to the Olympics to win gold, you're trying to find coaches to coach you and the most famous, the most decorated coach in whatever sport you want to get to the Olympics in, he took you on as a student to train you, but it was hard, it was rigorous. Would you still be encouraged by that or discouraged by that?

And we'll get to this more later, but how much more so that our gracious heavenly father intimately designs our training schedule, our diet, our workout routine, so to speak. Spiritually, we ought to be encouraged by that, not discouraged because it's hard. It's only hard because this father has taken you as a son or a daughter, and he wants to turn you into the greatest athlete, so to speak. He wants to turn you into, make you more like Jesus Christ.

So, we ought to be encouraged, beloved. This is a sign of our sonship that we are his children. But in this exhortation, there are two errors to avoid, two errors to avoid. It's in the text there in verse 5, regarding lightly the discipline and then

fainting from it. If you want to make these a couple sub points in your outline, errors to avoid when being disciplined by the Lord. We might say despising it and fainting from it and I'll just give you a few ways that we despise it and a few ways that we faint from it.

Arthur Pink wrote a, a very good commentary that was helpful in flushing some of these things out, I owe most of this to him. But we despise divine discipline when we first are callous to it, we despise divine discipline first by callousness. Callousness towards divine discipline looks like a stoic resolve just to grin and bear it and get through it without actually considering what the Lord is trying to teach us through it. Pink says, "Not to even despise the smallest trials, for there is instruction wrapped up in each one." Don't be stoically determined just to get through your trial, but think humbly about what the Lord is trying to teach you through it.

Secondly, we can despise divine discipline by complaining. Sinners are so prone to complaining, aren't we? I mean, when we read our Bibles, we see the absurdity of it, especially in, in

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the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the wilderness wanderings in Israel, people constantly complaining, never learning their lesson to trust in God, but we're no different. Too many Christians complain about the most petty of things, the things that they have to eat, like Israel in the wilderness, or even the weather, or even when somebody cuts us off in traffic.

Again, every little thing that the Lord puts into our life, it's part of His plan of discipleship. He's training us, revealing our impatience, our ungratefulness, so that we might repent and be patient and grateful. But when we complain about what the Lord is doing in our life, we despise his discipline. May that not be us, beloved, and may we repent quickly of those things.

Thirdly, we despise discipline by criticizing, we criticize divine discipline when we question the usefulness of what God is having us go through. It is essentially questioning the infinite wisdom of God. But this is like saying I can't possibly fathom what good can come from this. How could anything good come from this situation? How many of us have been guilty of uttering

something like that? All of us, but, beloved, this is questioning the infinite wisdom of God.

To question the usefulness of what God is putting us through is about as sensical as one of those little toddlers back there questioning the usefulness of story time, the usefulness of the gate around the playground to keep them out of the parking lot. Or one of those same toddlers questioning the usefulness of corporal discipline in the home. They can't possibly comprehend or fathom the larger picture of those things.

They don't have that capacity, and in a similar way, beloved, we can't possibly fathom the usefulness of the things God is putting us through. We have such a limited perspective, God is infinitely wise, the Bible tells us the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisest of men. So beloved, let us repent quickly of the questioning of the usefulness of whatever God is ordained in our personal plan of discipleship. So, we despise divine discipline by callousness, complaining, and criticizing.

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And finally, we despise divine discipline by carelessness, or we might say laziness. Again, this is just trying to sloth through life and God putting trials in our life or tribulation or correction from other people. And we're really just lazy and we don't even want to think about what the Lord is trying to teach us. We're not hard, we're not trying to bear it and get through it, we're just too lazy to even stop and think about it. Such as despising the Lord's discipline, let us be careful as we have trials come into our life that we do not despise God's discipline.

That's the first error, despising the Lord's discipline. The second error as we are exhorted to not faint under it. The second error we can make in the Lord's discipline is fainting from it. What does it look like to faint from divine discipline? Well, I think if, if the trial is very severe, just giving up. But most of the trials that we endure, they are not that great in severity. And I think the first mistake we make in fainting is to exaggerate what we are going through. This is why the author began where he did. He ended verse 3, remember Jesus Christ, keep your eyes fixed on him so you will not grow weary, fainting in heart and then he reminds them you haven't yet died.

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Don't exaggerate your trial to the extreme when it's not there. If you have kids, you are familiar with this, but you can ask the simplest thing sometimes and the child turns this relatively small thing into this massive ordeal. All the sudden a request to take out the trash or something simple like that has been exaggerated to such a degree that the you would think you just ask this kid to kill its puppy. This little thing has become this massive ordeal, and if something small has been exaggerated, or if the discipline is really significant, it can lead to giving up all effort and physical exertion. So, it begins with either a severe trial or an exaggeration of a small trial, which turns into giving up all effort or physical exertion.

You feel that you can't run the race anymore, you give up. You run off the side of the road, you tumble in the grass, you can't run anymore. To faint means to resolve that, I can't do what God is asking me to do or endure. I can't do it. Darkness sets in, hope fades, and it gives way to despair. Dark thoughts enter in, thoughts of questioning one's sonship before the Lord, doubts about God's goodness and gratitude. We have to remind

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ourselves, beloved of, and we're going to get into this next. What draws us out of that despair is remembering who God is, his love for us, that the great father, our heavenly father, has taken us under his wing as his son, as his disciple, and he has intimately crafted this for us.

Therefore, don't faint, you can do what the Lord is asking you to do. So, don't despise the Lord's discipline, don't despair divine discipline, but understand that it means you are in the position of divine favor. And all of this divine favor will culminate in a seat at the father's table, far better than any gold medal. But to further encourage the reader, who the author is worried about fainting in heart, the author with the same quote here reminds us of the motivation of divine discipline. And that's point number three the motivation of divine discipline.

Look at verses 6 through 8, "for those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines," as sinful men and women, sinful parents, we don't always discipline out of love, do we? Sometimes we discipline because we're annoyed, we want our child to make good

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decisions because they're bad decisions really annoy us or a whole host of other motivations could exist in our discipline. And such motivations, sinful motivations, mean that the discipline can be out of impatience, it can be too severe, it can be not severe enough, errors can be made, and because we are finite, our discipline is not perfect. And such experience with our own sin and our own motivations can make us doubt God's motivations, make us doubt his purposes in our life.

One of man's great repeating sins is to think God's just like us. Wondering, doubting, why God is doing something in our life can be a subtle questioning of his motives. We have to remember everything that our heavenly father puts us through, no matter how big or how small, insignificant or severe, is always motivated by love. As God's children, we never need to question God's love for us or whether what God is doing is for our good, we should never question such a thing. We at times do, but it is a sin of doubt, we need to remember.

This is the same truth that the, the author of Hebrews is reminding them of, but it's more explicit in Romans 8:28, "that

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for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to His purpose," God is working all things together for the good of those who love Him, and that good is being conformed in the image of Christ. Not our temporal happiness or comfort, but that ultimate good is being conformed into the image of Christ. And when we think, why is God doing this to me, we need to quickly remind ourself of this reason, it's for our good.

God is doing this because he loves me, is working good in me to make me more like Jesus. And this should then lead us to ask the question, if God is doing this for my good, what is he trying to teach me through this? Because we know it's always for our good, the author of Hebrews goes on to say for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? It's a rhetorical question, back then it was there's not a father who doesn't discipline his son, it's not so rhetorical today, there's, it's much more common today that parents lack discipline of their children, they just let them go to follow their own heart.

But among the authors audience here, this was very rare, they would have been reared in a Judeo-Christian ethic, the Old Testament. They would have been taught that those who did not discipline their sons there was actually an act of hatred, Proverbs 13:24 say as much, "If you spare the rod, you hate your son," but this reminds us that it is actually those who go without discipline that are under the judgment and hatred of God. There is not one son whom the Lord has, who he does not lovingly craft a plan of discipline and then execute that in their life.

When we are discouraged with what the Lord has marked out for us, we must understand that God is a loving father who loves us and has, has our best interests at heart and we are often tempted to doubt this, beloved, but when we are tempted, we must remind ourselves of this. And that is precisely what the author of Hebrews is doing, because they had forgotten. Remember God does all things because he loves you.

So, you've seen the extreme of divine discipline, the exhortation of divine discipline, the motivation of divine

discipline. Now point number four: The superiority of divine discipline, look at verses 9 and 10 with me. "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 benefit, so that we may share in his holiness." That word, furthermore, indicates that he is expanding on this common illustration of the father son relationship. But the author moves to reveal how much more superior the relationship is between the heavenly father and us versus our earthly father who disciplined us as a child.

And in reality, our heavenly father and his discipline of us is superior in every way to earthly discipline in our earthly fathers. But we will restrict it to what the author of Hebrews mentions here. We're just going to look at three areas of superiority that the author mentions. The superiority of the subject, the scope, and the benefit. The subject, the scope and the benefit. So, the first subpoint is a superior subject. "We had earthly fathers to discipline us, shall we not much rather be subject to the father of spirits and live?"

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There's a contrast here between earthly fathers and our heavenly father. This contrast is more obvious in the Greek, our English translation, at least the LSB says earthly fathers. If you look at the little, if you have one of the LSB Bibles with a footnote has a little footnote there that helps us understand this a little bit better. It says the literal Greek reads fathers of our flesh, earthly fathers are could be rendered fathers of our flesh. And there's another note right under that which says it is a contrast between the father of flesh and the father of our spirits.

All that to say the father's, our heavenly father's discipline is superior because it is spiritual apart from the word of God and the spirit of God. The best fathers are men at best and can only discipline their sons according to the fleshly nature. The human father can only discipline his son according to his physical nature apart from the word of God and the Spirit of God; not to mention an unbelieving son or daughter is spiritually dead, Ephesians 2. So obviously you can't train a spirit that is dead, but our heavenly father, he has the power to give life to our spirit and provide a discipline that penetrates much deeper into our souls.

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So, I can, as an earthly father, discipline my kids to clean their rooms and I do. I and my wife can teach them how to cook and we do. We can teach them how to meal plan and grocery shop, put a list together and we do that. We can teach them to eat right, to exercise, and we do. We have spent hours and years training them and disciplining them, and really that has been the pattern of parenting for generation after generation, even among unbelievers. But apart from the word of God and the spirit of God, this fleshly discipline never takes into account the spiritual nature of man, nor can it affect it.

Because our heavenly father is spirit, he is the giver of life. He can give us spiritual life, and his divine discipline is designed to penetrate our souls, to discipline our souls, to walk in righteousness, faithfulness to him. But apart from regeneration, the best we can do as men is to teach people to beat their bodies into submission. It's all external pressures, helping people make right decisions. How much more superior is the heavenly father who literally changes someone from the inside out, disciplines them to walk in the spirit?

And if our heavenly father's discipline is so much superior, how much more so should we submit to his discipline? If you are mature, then you look back and you respect your parents. There's a mark of maturity that a once in your pride, you were very critical of your parents. It's a mark of maturity when you can look back and see all the hard work that they put into you and respect them for it. Because you were probably a brat, like me. You were a difficult kid, a sinful kid, just as I was. If we've grown up and matured, we look back respecting our parents even when their efforts were imperfect and sinful.

How much more so should we subject ourselves to God's perfectly wise discipline? We subject ourselves willingly, not fighting against it by despising it or fainting from it. And I just want to stop at, at this point. And I think it's important to talk about the means that the Lord uses to discipline his children, the instruments and the agents. God's not like a father physically present. He does instruct us through his Word, yes, through prayer, reading his Word, through trials, through sicknesses that he gives us.

But he does use personal agents as well. This can be fellow church members. This can be and this is why God imbued them with authority, this can be church elders. I don't think anybody would argue that when it comes to that is part of the elders' job of the church to train, to guide, to council direct even correct the course people are on. But when it comes to reproof, where we have to say you know what the direction you're going is, is totally wrong. You need to actually do an about face and go the other direction.

You need to stop going this way and go this way. Well, especially as us, Americans, people conditioned to revolt against authority, that's what our nation is built on, revolution. We really don't like being told that we can't go this way, we have to go this way. We don't really like to be told that we have to wear a mask. We don't like as Americans being told we can't do something we want to do.

But listen beloved, it's no coincidence, you look on the very next page in chapter 13, verse 17, the author of Hebrews

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says because he knows it's going to be the leaders of the church, who God is using to discipline them, to train them, to correct them, to guide them, to reproof, offer reproof. He says, "obey your leaders and submit to them -for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." God uses human agents as a means of discipline, and we all know this. If our child gets saved, we don't just throw him a Bible and say, okay, God's going to discipline you, I'm done. No, as, as parents, as Christian parents, we know God's using us to raise that child in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

God uses, as we get older, same thing among other things, people, elders to train, correct, guide, and reprove his people to discipline them, to train them to make godly decisions. And beloved, when you are callous or you complain or you criticize other people's discipline of you, the elders' discipline of you, you should be careful because you might find yourself striving against your heavenly father who put those elders in your life whom you committed to submitting to when you joined the church.

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Now look, we are imperfect men with imperfect counsel, but God is sovereign, and he is perfect, and he is using the council of imperfect men to bring about his perfectly wise discipline. Don't kick against the goads, beloved, submit to the discipline of your heavenly father, understanding that he is going to use other people to do it. Understand the sovereign control of your father, even over those around you in your life. But he is, as a subject, infinitely superior to any human father, because he can use any manner to discipline.

He is a superior subject, able to discipline our spirits with perfection. But next we find the divine discipline is superior in scope. Look at verse 10 again, "They disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them." As human parents, we're first limited by a time period to discipline our kids. We have a short time period to instill in them all that we want them to know in order to make good decisions. Eventually, we've got to let them go and put into action all the things that we taught them and disciplined them to do. But divine discipline is superior because there's no restriction on a time period.

A child will eventually move out from under the parent's authority, but even as an old man, you're still under God's authority and discipline. God has our entire life to train us, to correct us, to guide us, to reprove us, to make us into the image of Christ. He isn't limited by a short time period. and but second, as earthly parents, we are limited as to what seems best to us, what appears best to us, as we discipline our kids.

Maybe you've had this experience, maybe you've endured this as a kid. But if you have ever disciplined your child, giving them a consequence in a situation where you thought you investigated, you thought you knew everything, you thought you knew all the information, you did what seemed right and best in the moment. But later the other kids come and confess that they had conspired against this kid and lied about it, and you actually spanked the wrong kid. This kid was actually innocent. It's heartbreaking when you do that.

But we don't have, we don't as human parents, we don't have divine sight for all things. That's limited by our knowledge of what is. We don't have wisdom for every situation, but how

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encouraging is it to know that our heavenly father is not limited in any capacity. He has full knowledge, perfect knowledge of all things and acts for your good with perfect wisdom and how to bring about that in your life.

The trials beloved, that the Lord brings into your life are perfectly crafted with infinite wisdom to expose your heart to teach you what it is the Lord wants to teach you, and to change you, correct you, turn you from sin in the perfect way. They are brought about with perfect wisdom to bring about the best good in your life. In God's infinite wisdom, he's acting for your infinite good and you are, where you are, in the situation you are in because that is what's best for you.

And in, in God's infinite wisdom, he's put all of us sinners together in this church with the elders that we have, the leaders we have. And though we are all imperfect and sinful men, God works perfectly through us by bringing about what is best for his people, there's no question about it. He sees the full scope of reality, and our heavenly father crafts our discipline with perfect knowledge and wisdom.

And if we, looking back at our earthly parents, if we respect them, if we know that that was good for us, even though they were laden with sin and error and frailty, how much more so should we submit to this perfectly good and wise father who is crafting our plan of discipleship. So divine discipline is superior in subject, in scope, and finally it is superior in benefit. Look at the last part of verse 10, "He, while they are human parents and fathers, disciplined us for a short time, as seen best to them. He disciplines us for our benefit so that we may share in His Holiness." Again, the benefit of, of earthly discipleship or discipline is not insignificant.

Whenever, and you know this, whenever you come across an individual who had very little discipline, they aren't enjoyable people to be around, are they? Those individuals were not served well by their parents and the society isn't served well by all those who go, all those people who go get jobs and they still think the world revolves around them and they are the authority. It's not an insignificant thing for parents to discipline their children and how to be productive members of society and make

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good decisions. Such children will benefit from this fleshly discipline for the rest of their life.

It is not insignificant, but divine discipline has a far superior benefit. Then it could be summed up in this, "what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?" Sharing in the holiness of God is infinitely more beneficial than any benefit of natural discipline. When we undergo divine discipline, our souls are sanctified to our own benefit and others to the ultimate reality of not just being an accepted member of society here on earth, but as I mentioned earlier, eventually to stand holy before him, to have a seat at the heavenly father's table in the heavenly kingdom.

If all the Olympic athletes submit themselves to the rigorous training, to the possibility of winning a gold medal, most of them who compete don't get a medal, they don't win. If they're willing to submit themselves to that kind of rigorous training, how much more so should we submit to the divine discipline of our heavenly father for the certain attainment of

holiness, which is infinitely and eternally more valuable than even much fine gold.

If a certain outcome, beloved of divine discipline, is us being like Jesus, sharing in his holiness, man, let us be quick to repent of despising his discipline or even fainting under it. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, knowing that it is our current discipline that the Lord is using to make us endure, to shape us into the image of his son. And if we submit ourselves so readily to earthly, to earthly discipline for earthly benefits, how much more so should we submit ourselves for superior eternal benefits? And if our hearts desire, as it is for every Christian to be holy, as he is holy, man, let us be quick to repent of kicking against this discipline. But if our desire is anything but holiness, we'll find every excuse to try to remove ourselves from under his hand of discipline.

That brings us finally to point number five: Tthe perspective of divine discipline in verse 11, he says, "and all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful. But for those who have been trained by it, afterwards, it yields

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the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Delayed gratification is something most people today do not understand. To endure something now for a reward that comes later, people don't know how to do that these days. We live in a society of instant gratification, and part of it is the technological age we live in. We don't have to put letters in the mail and wait weeks to get a correspondence back.

Most of the kids in here are never going to experience this, but I remember being a kid and ordering something out of a magazine, six to eight weeks you have to wait. Man, nowadays if I order something on Amazon and I have to wait six to eight days, I'm not happy; this supposed to be two-day shipping. We don't want to wait for anything, we just get them instantly. It's how it's supposed to be, and this conditions us to then think that this is just reality, this is how it is, that we can have anything we want instantly. Why do I have to go through this trial? Why can't I just have it instantly?

Well, it doesn't work that way, there's a reason the spiritual life in the Bible is depicted as in the context of an

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agrarian society of planting and taking care of that and growing in the harvest, much later. Farmers can't go buy a crop on Amazon, you can't order fully disciplined kids on Amazon, as much as we might like to. It takes a lot of time and effort and that's how we need to see our own Christian life. It's going to take time and effort; it's not going to be an instant thing.

What God is making us into isn't an overnight process, it's not something that can happen that quickly. And beloved, what seems really, really painful right now, fight through that pain. There is a reward waiting for you in the end. It's not, it, it might come tomorrow, but it might be a very, very long way away. Don't buy into the common experience you have every day that you can have whatever you want within a few hours or days.

And the benefit of experience having a few more years is that you get trained by this, you begin to learn. And that's the problem with our technological age, it trains us something different, that actually teaches us we can have whatever we want right away. But age and experience and the discipline you

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endured as a child teaches you that if it's worth it, it's probably going to come with some pain and some cost.

We have been trained in our own life experience that we have to suffer, and the reward comes later. But our world and our life experience teaches us something very different as well, competing spirits, you might say, and we have to test the spirits. Dear friends, when trials come, when we are pressed, when we are convicted, when we struggle with sin, it is painful for the moment, but it will result in the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

We have to keep this perspective when we suffer, when we are in suffering, in the midst of suffering, and under divine discipline. We must keep the perspective on the end, what the author says, the afterwards, what all of this pain will produce. And it's not just the end in our glorification in heaven, but we know that each trial in this life is producing righteousness in us. Each trial in this life, the Lord designs in order to create endurance in us to continue to run to the end; with every trial in our past has conditioned us to get us this far.

So, when we go through more trials, we know this, we just have to remind ourselves of it. We have to keep this perspective on the afterwards, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. And when we have this perspective, we can, as Paul commands us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, we can be thankful in every circumstance. You can be thankful in every circumstance, no matter how hard it is in your life, because your mind is not on the present difficulty, but on the after effect that it will produce, the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

So, in conclusion, if we want to run the race with endurance, we must understand that we endure by means of the Lord's discipline. Thus, discipline is a good thing. But as we struggle with difficult things in our life, we can't forget like they did in this book. We must remember that God has not called us to sacrifice the extreme of what we had committed in our accepting his Lordship in our life, we committed to giving our life to him, forsaking everything and following him.

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Thus, we should not faint in thinking he has asked too much of us, we must remember the exhortation that we are sons. God disciplines us because we are his children, and we ought to be encouraged by that. Not complaining or criticizing his discipline, not fainting under it, but being encouraged by it. We must remember that all of his discipline is done in love for us. He's not a wicked tyrant who wants to cause suffering for suffering's sake.

He loves you and has your ultimate good in mind. And we must remember that his discipline is superior in every way, it's perfectly good: he's all knowing, he's all wise, he makes no mistakes in his discipline, he is limited in no way, and the benefit of his discipline far outweighs any earthly discipline. He's doing this that we might share in his holiness. So, beloved, let us keep this perspective in divine discipline.

Let us keep our eyes fixed on our prize in Jesus Christ, who is working in us to make us more like Himself. And the pain we go through now is nothing compared to the joy to come. Let us keep our eyes on the prize, repenting quickly. When we forget

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these things, let us bind up the faint-hearted fellow members of our church, gently reminding them of these things, or even rebuking those who have gone astray willingly. But let us remind ourselves of this often, beloved, not forget these, as these Hebrew Christians had. Let's pray.

Our gracious heavenly father, we are so prone to wander. We're so prone to forgetfulness of your love for us. I pray, Lord, that we, as men and women who are under your hand of discipline, that we remember these things, be encouraged by them, that we might continue to run with endurance the race you have set before us. I pray for any of those who may be here who are despising your discipline, who are fainting under it.

We pray, Lord, that you would strengthen them, correct them, rebuke them. And for those who want nothing to do with you, those who have not committed their lives to you, maybe those who are sitting here who know nothing of your discipline, they're going on in sin peacefully. I pray, Lord, that you help them see they're illegitimate children. They're not really your sons. For you do correct and rebuke and turn back those whom you

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love. We pray, Lord, that you would work all these things in our minds and our hearts. We love you, Lord. Amen.