

A Study of Hebrews

"Jesus Is Better"

Sermon # 23

"When God Disciplines His Children"

Hebrews 12:4-11

How many you here this morning ever got in trouble as children? How many of you ever suffered punishment as a result? How many of you enjoyed that discipline? The truth is that we did not enjoy being disciplined as children, yet we understand that it was both necessary and for our good. By the same token, as adults we still don't enjoy being disciplined by God, but it is necessary and for our good.

This morning there are some things that we must learn if we are to profit from God's discipline.

First, We Must Learn The Perspective for Difficulties. (vv. 4-5a)

"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. (5) And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:"

We can take comfort and strength from the promises of God's word. But, we have to know what they are!

Secondly, We Must Learn The Purpose of Discipline.

The value of discipline and correction depends entirely on our reaction to it (Prov 15:31-32).

There are three types or purposes of Divine discipline;

Corrective, Preventive, and Educational. [John McArthur. The McArthur New Testament Commentary: Hebrews. (Chicago: Moody, 1983) pp. 385-389]

Let's look at each of them briefly.

Corrective. The church at Corinth is a prime example of the corrective discipline of God. In 1 Cor 11:30 Paul plainly told these

believers "For this reason (their sinful behavior) many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep." Paul goes on to say, that they are being "...chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." (v. 32)

Preventive. Sometimes God disciplines believers in order to prevent sin. The Apostle Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7) to keep him from becoming proud. Just as we put restrictions and limits sometimes even literal fences to keep our children from harm, so our heavenly Father sometimes puts restrictive circumstances in our lives for our good!

*Educational. God's purpose in discipline is also to teach us if we will listen. Just as it is possible to attend school and learn nothing, it is possible to be disciplined by the Lord and learn nothing from it. C. S. Lewis hits the nail on the head when he says. "Many would rather have a benevolent grandfather in heaven whose prime interest is our contentment than have a Father whose prime interest is our character." [C. S. Lewis. *The Problem of Pain*. (New York: MacMillian, 1962) pp. 40-41*

We Must Not Only Learn The Purpose of Discipline but ...

Third, We Must Learn To Properly Response to Discipline

"...My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; (6) For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

The writer of Hebrews gives two extremes when it comes to reacting to the discipline of God. The first is to "despise" his discipline which is to be indifferent to its significance. It is to refuse to even consider that something that is happening in our lives may be God

trying to get our attention. We may be vaguely aware on some level that this may be God's hand, but we dismiss the thought and blow it off. By refusing to consider why we are going through difficulties we fail to benefit from the experience.

The other extreme is to allow ourselves to become "discouraged" by difficulties. Instead of being indifferent to the discipline of God they are overwhelmed by it all.

So how do you respond to the difficulties that roll through your life? Do you cover your ears to keep from hearing what the voice of God may be trying to say to you through this experience? Do stop to consider what God may be trying to work out in your life through these difficulties?

We Must Learn to Properly Respond to Discipline and ...

Fourth, We Must Learn There is A Progression in Discipline! (vv. 5-6)

"... My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; (6) For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

As look again at verses five and six we see that there are three different words used to describe God's discipline to his children. I want you to mark them in your Bibles, in verse five mark the words "chastening" and "rebuked" and in verse six mark the word "scourges."

Now let's examine each of these words. First, in verse five, is the word "chastening", often translated "chastisement" or "discipline." Generally when we see the word "chasten" we think of what we in the South call "gettin a whoopping!" Actually the Greek word (paidiea)

denotes the overall training of a child. It signifies whatever is done to train, correct, develop and mature children in order help them develop as they should. By the same token the purpose of Christian discipline is to develop our character.

Then in verse five there is the word "rebuke." This particular Greek word (elencw) means to convict or reprove. It implies a rebuke that is deserved and that carries conviction. A "rebuke" is a verbal correction. A rebuke is a gentle reminder from the Lord that we need to correct some action, we have veered from the course and we need to get back on course.

The third word is found in verse six is "scourges" and it is a much stronger word than "chasten" or "rebuke." The word translated "scourges" (mastigoi) means to be whipped.

Let me see if I can put this in modern terms. Suppose that you have been invited for dinner in the home of another family in the church. Prior to your arrival at their home you caution your children about what kind of behavior is expected of them. Yet after a while one of your children is misbehaving, so you take them aside and you "rebuke" them you give them a stern verbal warning about their behavior. Time goes by but your child still will not behave themselves, so you take them aside privately and you "scourge" them, that is you administer punishment in an effort to correct their behavior. As an interesting aside, just for a moment consider this question, "What do you do, if after all of this discipline they refuse to behave!" Well, I don't know about you but, here is what I would do! I would take my child aside and say, "Before you can embarrass

yourself or me any further I am going to take you home.” Could that be an explanation of 1 John 5:16 which says, “There is sin leading to death.” The sin unto death then would not be a specific sin but rather a point at which a believer HAS become such an embarrassment to themselves and to the kingdom of Heaven that God would decides to take them home?

We Must Not Only Learn There is A Progression In Discipline but

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Fifth, We Must Learn The Products of Discipline. (vv. 7-11)

- It Proves Our Relationship (7-8)*

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? (8) But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”

The common reaction when we are going through severe trials in our lives is to believe, “God does not love me. God doesn’t care what happens to me! Or If God loved me he would not have allowed this to happen to me.” But that entirely contrary to what God’s word says. In fact if you can sin and get away with it, you better do some serious self-examination.

As a pastor have had the occasion to be around a lot of children over the course of twenty-five years in the ministry. I have over the years spoken a word or two of correction here and there to a child I thought may be about to hurt themselves or others, but for the most part I have refrained from disciplining the children of others. Although there have been occasions upon which I may have wished too. At

times we have all wanted to discipline someone else's children when they disturb us or irritate us. When we have thought, "I wish I could have them for just about a week."

But there has only been one child who has regularly received my corrections, my own child. My discipline in her life, painful and unwanted, was evidence that she belonged to me and that I love her. The discipline proves the love and the relationship.

I want to establish one thing even if you get nothing else from the message. 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. I sure that my parents down through life were sometimes embarrassed to admit they were my parents. My actions may have even broken our fellowship at times but, it never changed our relationship.

- *It Proves Our Father's Love (9-11)*

"Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? (10) For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (11) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

The message you give your children when you discipline them with love is, "I care too much about you let you misbehave. I care enough

about you that I am willing to spend the time and effort to help you learn what is appropriate." Discipline is exacting. Discipline is costly. Consistent Discipline will wring you out to the point that you do not believe you have the energy to carry it through. But not to pay the cost is to tell the child, "You are not important to me. You are not worth it!"