

Hebrews

Responding to God's Discipline

Hebrews 12:7-11

INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 12:7-11 (NASB95)

BODY:

I. God's Discipline is an Essential Piece of the Father - Son Relationship.

Hebrews 12:7-8 (NASB95)

II. God's Discipline is Administered Perfectly for Our Eternal Good.

Hebrews 12:9-10 (NASB95)

A. The Contrast Between Our Earthly Father and Our Heavenly Father.

B. God's Discipline Prepares Us for Holiness and Eternity.

III. God's Discipline Yields the Peaceful Fruit of Righteousness.

Hebrews 12:11 (NASB95)

A. All discipline seems difficult for the present.

Hebrews 5:7-9 (NASB95)

Romans 8:28 (NASB95)

B. All discipline is designed to produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

(1). It teaches us the terrible devastation caused by sin.

(2). It strips us of self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, and pride.

Mark 14:29-30 (NASB95)

(3). It helps us shift our focus from this life to eternity.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NASB95)

(4). It uncovers hidden sins and blind spots.

(5). It strengthens our faith and brings us closer to Christ.

(6). It develops compassion and humility.

(7). It makes us more usable in His service.

C. For discipline to be effective, we must submit to the "training" process.

Hebrews 12:11b (NASB95)

CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing our passage of scripture in Hebrews concerning God's discipline in our lives. Last week we covered the **process** of God's loving discipline of His children in verses 4-6. This morning we will discuss the proper **response** that we should have to His discipline in verses 7-11. The scriptures tell us that, by faith, we have been adopted as children of God and are co-heirs of the kingdom with Christ. As children we will be lovingly disciplined by God, just as our earthly father disciplined us for our good.

The subject of "**God's loving discipline**" of His children is one of the most **essential** truths in the Bible for you to understand and apply. We are not guaranteed a comfortable life in this world. God may choose to put us through trials and tribulation. If you do not understand the purpose of His discipline and respond to it negatively, you will not persevere when the trials come upon you. The author of Hebrews is trying to prepare his readers to endure by faith the trials that are approaching. His instruction was written to the readers in his day to be prepared for the trials and persecution that were confronting them and it also applies to us today.

In order to endure the Christian struggle against evil, we **must** understand what Scripture teaches about God's loving discipline.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 12:7-11 (NASB95)

⁷ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, so that we may share His holiness. ¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Prayer

Many people have allowed difficult trials to turn them away from God. Trials are a fact of life, but how we respond to them is our choice. It is difficult to understand how God can be **both** good **and** omnipotent, and yet allow the horrible suffering that we see in the world. But to cease to believe in God on account of suffering does not make God cease to exist, and it does not resolve the problem. To "**run with endurance the race that is set before us**", we need to know how God wants us to **respond** to His loving discipline. Our text

teaches that, in order to respond properly to the Father's discipline, we must submit to it and grow in holiness through it.

That word, "submit", grates on many souls. **God is the Ultimate Authority!** Whether you like His program for your life or not, it is not wise to rebel against it. The author of Hebrews gives us **three reasons why we should submit to God's loving discipline:**

BODY:

I. God's Discipline is an Essential Piece of the Father - Son Relationship.

Hebrews 12:7-8 (NASB95)

⁷ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

The point of these verses is that discipline is a mark of genuine sonship. As I said last week, I never disciplined other people's disobedient children. But I did discipline my daughter, because I loved her and I wanted her to grow up to respect proper authority.

The author states that if you lack discipline, you are not a true child of God, but rather illegitimate. In that day, illegitimate children had no inheritance. To be an heir of the promise of eternal life, make sure that you are a genuine child of God through faith in Christ.

But, since both believers and unbelievers alike go through trials, what does the author mean when he says that some are "**without discipline**"? How can we know if the trials that we go through are an evidence of our being God's true children?

The primary answer, as I just said, is, "Have I truly repented of my sins and trusted in Christ alone to save me?" If so, the further answer lies in **how we respond** to the trials that come our way. A true child of God submits to Him in the trial and seeks to grow in holiness. An illegitimate child shrugs it off as bad luck or, worse, turns against God and grows bitter. Also, if a true child of God sins, he will be troubled about it. An illegitimate child will gloat that he got away with it or shrug off his sin as no big deal. But a true child of God submits to the Father's discipline, because such discipline is an essential part of the father-son relationship.

We should submit to God's loving discipline because..

II. God's Discipline is Administered Perfectly for Our Eternal Good.

Hebrews 12:9-10 (NASB95)

⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

The author makes two points in these verses:

A. The Contrast Between Our Earthly Father and Our Heavenly Father.

Verse 9 contrasts "our earthly fathers" with "**our heavenly Father**". The discipline from our earthly father focused on their imperfection. Every earthly father falls short in his knowledge of his children and in wisdom as to how to train and discipline them. But our heavenly Father knows each of us thoroughly and perfectly, including all of our thoughts and motives. He deals with us in perfect wisdom. Good earthly fathers seek to prepare us for life on earth. But God is preparing us for **eternity**.

The author's point is that the discipline of our earthly fathers was beneficial, even though it was flawed by human shortcomings. We respected them for it because we can see how we benefited from it. But God's discipline is absolutely perfect.

B. God's Discipline Prepares Us for Holiness and Eternity.

The important thing with regard to God's discipline is the spirit in which we respond. If we resist and harden our hearts, we will miss the purpose of the discipline. If we are truly God's children, this will result in more discipline. God's intention is that we respectfully submit to it. It is possible to submit like the defiant little boy whose mother told him to sit in a chair until he calmed down. He clenched his teeth and said, "I'm sitting on the outside, but I'm standing on the inside!" That is not true submission!

We should submit to God because He has the sovereign right to do with us as He pleases. That is the point of the Book of Job. Even though Job was the most godly man on earth, God had a perfect right to take away everything Job treasured. No man has a claim against Almighty God.

Job learned a basic lesson that we all need to learn: **God is God and I am not God**. If the creator of the universe wants to take my wife, my daughter, my possessions, my health, or my life, that is His prerogative. Faith eventually arrives at saying, "The trial was not as severe as it **could** have been. It was not as severe as it **should** have been. My Savior, Who deserved no punishment, suffered far worse for me." And so faith submits to the Father's discipline, trusting that He administers it perfectly for His eternal purpose and for my eternal good.

Lastly, we should submit to God's loving discipline because..

III. God's Discipline Yields the Peaceful Fruit of Righteousness.

Hebrews 12:11 (NASB95)

¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems **not** to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

A. All discipline seems difficult for the present.

Discipline **seems**—to our limited, time-bound perspective—"not to be joyful, but sorrowful." I am glad that the Bible acknowledges that fact! God's discipline is **not** easy or pleasant. It is **not** wrong to cry out loudly to God or to weep when you are going through a difficult trial, because Jesus did that very thing.

Hebrews 5:7-9 (NASB95)

⁷ In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. ⁸ Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. ⁹ And

having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

God gave us tear ducts for a reason!

But, how does weeping fit with the Bible's command, "Rejoice always" in 1 Thess. 5:16? That command does **not** mean that we always go around with a smile on our face, saying, "Praise the Lord," even when we are hurting. It does **not** mean saying that you feel great when you do not, which is hypocrisy. Even Jesus admitted, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death" in Mark 14:34. The key is, in the midst of the trials and the tears, to focus on the goal: the peaceful fruit of righteousness. If we keep in mind what God is doing is in light of eternity, then we can endure with inner joy and peace, while at the same time admitting the pain and sorrow.

As Paul wrote to the Romans...

Romans 8:28 (NASB95)

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

B. All discipline is designed to produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

"Righteousness" is synonymous with "holiness". Both terms mean godliness or conformity to Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of godliness. He shows us what it means to be a righteous person in thought, word, and deed. True holiness or righteousness is not just external, but begins at the heart or thought level. A truly righteous person has godly motives. He seeks to glorify God in everything.

Righteousness and peace always go together. You cannot have **true** righteousness without peace, or **true** peace without righteousness. I emphasize **true** because sometimes people mistake relief from trials as God's peace, even though they disobeyed God to gain that relief.

God's discipline produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness in many ways. Here are seven:

(1). It teaches us the terrible devastation caused by sin.

When David sinned with Bathsheba and murdered her husband, the Lord forgave his sin, but He also took the life of the son that they conceived. Also, the Lord raised up evil against David from within his own household. His son Amnon raped his half-sister, Tamar. Tamar's brother, Absalom, murdered Amnon and later led a rebellion against David. By letting us suffer such painful consequences for our sin, God teaches us that sin causes devastation and death, so that we will flee from it when we are tempted.

(2). It strips us of self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, and pride.

By nature, we all have the tendency to think, "**Others** may commit terrible sins, but **I** could never do such a thing!" Peter thought that the other apostles might deny Jesus, but not me!

Mark 14:29-30 (NASB95)

²⁹ But Peter said to Him, “*Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.*” ³⁰ And Jesus *said to him, “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.”

The Lord had to show Peter that his heart was just as prone to sin as everyone else’s heart.

We are all prone to trust in ourselves, rather than in the Lord. It is wise to have a prudent savings plan, but if **we trust** in our savings, God has ways of wiping out our accounts. It is wise to eat well and to exercise regularly, but if we are **trusting** in those things to preserve our lives, God has ways of bringing sickness or injury to teach us that we depend on Him for our next breath and for every day’s supply of food and water.

(3). It helps us shift our focus from this life to eternity.

By nature, we are all too focused on this life, in spite of the fact that life is a like "**a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away**". Paul reveals the obvious fact, which we all tend to try to ignore, that since our bodies are wearing out we should shift our focus to eternity.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NASB95)

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

(4). It uncovers hidden sins and blind spots.

Sometimes we are unaware of our sins or shortcomings until God brings some trial that exposes them. Paul had an amazing vision of heaven. Although he was a humble man, the danger was that this vision would puff him up with pride. So the Lord sent a messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh, to keep Paul from exalting himself. Whatever that thorn was, it kept Paul from falling into the sin of pride over his heavenly vision.

(5). It strengthens our faith and brings us closer to Christ.

Through his thorn in the flesh, Paul learned to trust Christ in ways that he had not done before. He learned the sufficiency of God’s grace and strength in the face of his painful weaknesses. Adversity has a way of causing us to lean on the Lord in ways that we do not need to when times are trouble-free and going our way.

(6). It develops compassion and humility.

Sometimes we look down on others who are suffering. We arrogantly think, “If they would just get it together (**like me!**), they would avoid all these problems!” Then God sends affliction to us. Suddenly, we have more compassion for those who suffer. We lose our proud judgmental spirit and grow in sympathy.

(7). It makes us more usable in His service.

Fruit grows best on vines that are pruned. The fruit of the Spirit grows in hearts that have submitted to the pruning of God’s discipline. The fact that righteousness is a **fruit** shows that it takes time to grow. We have instant coffee and instant photocopies and instant just

about anything. But so far, no one has come up with instant fruit! It grows slowly, but surely, in our lives as we submit to God's discipline.

Thus, all discipline seems difficult for the moment, but it is designed to produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Finally,

C. For discipline to be effective, we must submit to the "training" process.

Hebrews 12:11b (NASB95)

...yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

To benefit from God's discipline, we must be "trained" by it. An athlete has to strip himself of all needless weights or encumbrances that would hinder him from running well.

God is the perfect spiritual trainer. He knows where each of us is lacking and what we need to develop the spiritual muscle to run well. But we have to submit to the program that He prescribes for us. If we dodge the training, we will pay later by being defeated by temptation and sin.

CONCLUSION:

Maybe you are wondering, "If all trials are God's discipline, designed to make us holy, is it wrong to seek to get out from under them? Is it wrong to go to the doctor when we are ill? Is it wrong to try to get a better job? Is it wrong to try to resolve problems that irritate us? Why not just submit to them, if they are designed for our good?"

The answer is, it depends on our attitude toward the Lord in the trial. Is your heart in submission to the heavenly Father? Are you relating each trial to His awesome love for you and trying to learn the lessons that He intends? Are you willing to accept His will even if it does not coincide with your wishes?

As you know, Jesus in the Garden, prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done". Three times Paul asked God to remove his thorn in the flesh, but when God told Paul that His grace was sufficient, Paul was content to live with the distress.

So in every trial, whether major or minor, stop and examine your heart. Are you truly in submission to God? Are you seeking to learn and grow in holiness through the trial? If so, it is not wrong to ask the Father to remove it, if it is His will, and to take steps to resolve the problem. Often, in His grace and love, He will remove it. But, sometimes He will say, "My grace is sufficient for you." When He does, you have to trust that He is your loving Father who has your best interest in view. If you submit to Him, He will produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness in you!

What a Day That Will Be!