

The Struggle Against Sin

And the Discipline of the Lord

- ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.
- 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.
- ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,
- ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."

Hebrews 12:4-13

Changes in Attitudes

JIMMY BUFFET WAS PRECIENT when sang about “**changes in attitudes.**” Sometimes you get exactly what you wish for. Attitudes change, especially these days. They change towards all kinds of things. It only takes a generation. One generation knows a thing, hates the thing, rebels against the thing, and then refuses to teach it to their children. The children no longer know the thing. The new thing becomes normal—what humans have always believed since the world began. When you are a child, you think this is the way things have always been and this is the way they always will be. Then you grow up.

Many people don't realize this, but when people change their **attitudes about something God has spoken** to in his word, their **attitudes about God change**. The horse gets lead by the cart. Let's compare one specific attitude people have and how this mirrors the view of God contemporary with it. Let's look at the attitude our culture once had about **discipline** and compare it to today.

Not that long ago, you had discipline that was not only allowed, but **encouraged** in the public school system. Besides the infamous **dunce cap** that you had to wear in front of the

whole class while sitting in the corner of the room that humiliated you in front of your friends, other forms of corporal punishment were encouraged. One “obviously unbiased” historian writes,

Other strange [note this word] punishments took place in these one room schoolhouses. If a child were to misbehave they would have to outstretch their arms and the teacher would place a heavy book in their arms. The student would have to hold it in that uncomfortable position for about an hour and a half! The children were also smacked on the head or knuckles with a ferule, which was 15 to 18 inches long and wasn't even used for measuring, but just to whack them. Sometimes troublesome boys would even be banished to the girls' cloakroom! (This punishment is very peculiar, but it was unbearable back then.) Sometimes, a teacher would draw a big circle on a chalkboard and have a troublesome child come up and place his nose in it for 30 minutes to an hour. If a pupil littered or spat, they would have to clean the whole floor, too. A child who misbehaved would have to write the phrase “I will not...” and fill in the blank with what they had done, and repeat this phrase 100 times. In the 1800's the worst punishment a child would ever receive was: if a

boy was naughty the teacher would make him go and sit by a girl! (This probably doesn't sound that bad now, but back then "cooties" were a big deal to children.)¹

Some of you may be old enough to remember these things done to your friends (certainly not you). Others have probably been exposed to this from television and movies. It is a pretty **classic stereotype**: the strong disciplinarian, a man (usually the head master) or a woman (usually the teacher), often portrayed as some kind of fundamentalist Christian in the worst sense of the word, sees a child misbehaving and actually takes a kind of sadistic glee in whacking them or humiliating them in front of the class. "I will have discipline in my class! Now, as we were learning. Who can quote for me the names of the twelve Apostles. Billy?" It always goes like that.

Clearly, the view of God and the discipline go together. What is the image being portrayed here? The fundamentalist religious zealots are that way because their god is a mean tyrant who likewise takes glee in punishing. His followers are just like him. It is out of this particular association of the attitude of punishment that a particular view of God is

¹ Josie Brady Education in the 1800's, https://www.education.ne.gov/nebooks/ebooks/Education_in_the_1800s.pdf.

likened, right or wrong.

We can take this to the total **opposite extreme** where in our day, where it isn't possible to have any kind of discipline in class whatsoever. This behavior is now met not with a ruler or rod but with a reward, not with telling-off but with a trophy. "That's good Johnny. You are acting out how you feel. Let's all encourage Johnny, class, to be himself and not to pretend in front of us. Class, the be-who-you-are award of the day goes to? Johnny! Yeahhhhhhh."

Today, all punishment is frowned upon, not only in school, but in public, and if the State has its way even in homes. Adults don't scold their own children, let alone reprimand someone else's misbehaving brat like they did when I was one of those brats long ago. In fact, parents are so leery of the social taboos against discipline, taboos which are reinforced by our media and legal system, that you don't even find many kinds of discipline going on in private in their own homes.

You couldn't get any farther away from the one stereotype from an 1800s school house to this stereotype of 21st century parenting. And along with it is a **completely different kind of God** that is in mind. The god of today is not a mean, masochistic tyrant Father, but a gentle,

nurturing, loving, Mother who never raises her voice, who never judges, who has no rules, and who let's us do whatever we want.

These two gods are total opposites, and my point is, attitudes reflect theology. Attitudes also change theology. Attitudes reinforce theology. It is a kind of chicken and egg thing. Do our bad views of God shape our attitudes or do our attitudes and like and dislikes create a god in our own image? I think the answer is “Yes.”

Now, neither view of God I have given is a biblical view of God. Both extreme attitudes about punishment I have discussed have their strengths and weaknesses. Let's take this to interpreting the Bible. We come to a passage like the one before us today, but we also come to the passage with particular attitudes about what is being said and various views of the God it is talking about that prejudice our reading before we even start. How can we possibly hope to understand this passage properly? This is a pressing question to answer and my hope is that in some small measure the passage itself will help us.

The subject is **God's discipline in our lives**. If we understand the passage rightly, **it will shape our view of God** even as **it shapes our view of discipline**. This is as it should

be, as opposed to us shaping our view of the passage by the kind of God and view of discipline that we have before we approach the text. If you will listen to the Word today, He will shape your view of both and the product of it will be to help you in your own life when **the inevitable discipline** that some love divvying out to others and others dread receiving comes to you. For beloved, that is the real question in mind today. How are we to think about it when God comes to us and disciplines us? For if you are really his child, you not only cannot escape it, you will not escape it. To do so is to be or want to be an illegitimate child of the Living God.

The Reason for Discipline

The passage is **Hebrews 11:4-13**. The context provides the reason that discipline now comes up. It begins, “**In your struggle against sin**” (**Heb 13:4**). Some will immediately try to connect this statement to discipline this way: Discipline comes because we sin. When you sin you need someone to set your straight with discipline. Thus, discipline is related directly to sin.

But this is *not* what it says. It says “**in your struggle against sin.**” It does not say that you have sinned. It says that you

are struggling against sin. This refers back to the pilgrimage where we are strongly resisting the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil that have been discussed for dozens of verses now. **The context** of discipline is thus **our struggle against sin**.

The next part of what is said is **the key** to everything else we will talk about today. **“You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”** To whom does this “shedding of blood” refer? Someone suggests that it is still talking about you.

The metaphor in this verse—“resisted to the point of shedding your blood”—comes from the sports arena. The author goes from one sport to the other, from the imagery of the race to that of boxing. In boxing, blood flows from the faces of the contestants when they withstand vicious blows. At times serious injuries result in death. The imagery of withstanding the opponent to the point of shedding blood serves as a parallel to the readers’ struggle against sin.²

But I think this is rather misguided. We’ve seen that it is quite possible that there isn’t even a sports metaphor at all

² Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Hebrews*, vol. 15, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 372.

going on in **Hebrews 12:1-3**. Instead, it is a pilgrimage metaphor where we have a long, hard journey just like they did as OT saints of faith. (Besides, why would he move from a race metaphor to a boxing metaphor)?

Furthermore, whatever the metaphor is, there are two other verses in the way. **Vv. 2-3** have been talking about *Jesus' suffering*, not about us running a race. It seems to me that he isn't talking about us shedding our blood, but rather Jesus. I think he is talking about something like Jesus in the Garden just prior to his crucifixion. “**And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground**” (**Luke 22:44**).³ Clearly, *Jesus is struggling against sin* at this moment. “**Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done**” (**Luke 22:42**). What is the temptation? To not go through with the horrible suffering and death that he would face just a few short hours from that moment. It would have been the greatest sin in the history of the universe had Jesus given in and not done what he swore to do and what the Father sent him to do in eternity past.

Have you ever struggled against sin so mightily as your

³ This would be all the more relevant if, in fact, Luke is the author of Hebrews as I have suggested is highly possible, for Luke is the only Gospel that mentions this fact.

Lord Jesus did? Of course not. And that's precisely the point. But Jesus did. And this opens the way for us to truly understand the Lord's discipline. If you understand that Jesus is at the center of this, you can get the Lord's discipline right. If you don't, you can go off in some very terrible directions. For, no harsh fundamental religious zealot or soft go easy attitude understands Jesus at all in disciplien. Jesus and his struggle against sin is the key to it all.

An Exhortation as Sons

In the previous three verses we saw four commands: **rid** yourselves of sin, **run** with endurance, **regard** Jesus, and **reflect** upon faith. Now we see that these we are to do in light of our struggle against sin. But, says the preacher, this is something we already knew before hand. “**And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?**” (**Heb 12:5**). He hasn't talked about this exhortation before in his sermon called Hebrews. But God has in the OT which they knew quite well already.

“**My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him, for the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom**

he receives” (5-6). This is a quotation from **Proverbs 3:11-12 LXX**. There are two things we need to look at. The **first** is the meaning of the word “discipline.” The **second** is the addition that the LXX has from the Hebrew text (the word is “chastises”).

First, **what is “discipline.”** This is so vital to understand. I think that many people, maybe most, view discipline as exclusively related to punishment. Punishment is, of course, punitive. Here are some words that sometimes come to mind: retaliatory, vindictive, revengeful, harsh, ruthless.

Recall how I said many people relate discipline to sin. Now add to this that many people think about discipline as a harsh, vindictive response to sin and you start to see where both extremes of discipline we began thinking about today come from. The gleeful school master who loves nothing more than to swat bratty kids and the hyper-sensitive laissez faire social worker that pampers spoiled brats and encourages rebellion and acting out in my opinion both stem from the same root belief that discipline is related only to sin and that it is necessarily harsh and ruthless. So it is either one or the other. Maybe some of you had experiences like these on either end of the spectrum growing up either in school or at home. But this is a very skewed view of discipline. And

they both can create terrible harm upon the disciplined.

The earliest use of the word *paideia* was in **the acquiring of culture** or becoming cultured. In other words, think *My Fair Lady* or some Jane Austin novel. We still use the word “discipline” this way. What is your discipline? Are you a doctor, a lawyer, a writer? Or we speak of things like spiritual disciplines such as prayer and meditation.

For the Greeks, this came **through education**, especially young sons. At first, just as in America, this was all about fathers home schooling young Spartan boys. Later, when the philosophers come along, it became increasingly a matter for the State. At that point, only free people were allowed to be educated. But the “family” idea was retained with the pedagogue or teacher who would become as a father to the young boy.

At **no** time was **pampering** the student tolerated. And yet, simultaneously as one dictionary puts it, “**Spiritual love of young people promotes education ... fashions virtue ... [and] everything depends on a good example; fathers must not be teachers of wrongdoing to their children.**”⁴ That doesn’t sound anything at all like our two examples at the beginning, and yet this was the way of it in Greece for half

⁴ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 600.

a millennium.

The Bible has a much more realistic view of human nature than the Greeks did, and so **the sinful condition** is taken into consideration in the OT when it comes to discipline. And yet, education is not abandoned as the first meaning. But education takes on a higher end not simply to culture, but also to create holiness. This comes through teaching (education) the law of God to the covenant children. “**Teach me kindness, and instruction [i.e. discipline], and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments**” (Ps 119:66 LXA). Do you hear how “kindness” is related to instruction/discipline? “**Hear, you children, the instruction [discipline] of a father, and attend to know understanding**” (Pr 4:1 LXA). Do you hear how discipline is parallel here to understanding? “**He that loves instruction [discipline] loves sense, but he that hates reproofs is a fool**” (Prov 12:1 LXA). In this instance, reproof is the flip side of discipline. We might call it discipline that comes become a person has sinned.

What is interesting is that “**Hebrew ... has a whole series of words for teaching and direction, for chastisement and correction, but only the one word יָסַר [ysr] and the derived**

מוֹסֵר [*musr*] can denote ‘to educate,’ ‘education.’”⁵ This is the word used in **Prov 3:11**. *Musar*, “to educate,” is translated as *paideia*, “discipline.” Therefore, even in our context, discipline is about educating and enculturating and instructing and training ... in righteousness. First and foremost, it is a setting right of the mind.

So why don’t we think about this first and foremost when the word “discipline” comes up? Why is discipline a bad word in our culture today? Because we think of punishment first. But why do we go straight to the idea of punishment? Maybe our very passage has something to do with this, though not for the right reasons. The exhortation has four parts:

Hebrew Text		LXX	
A.	Do not regard the discipline [<i>musar</i>] of the Lord lightly	A.	My son, do not regard lightly the discipline [<i>paidea</i>] of the Lord
B.	Be weary when reproved [<i>tokachath</i>] by him	B.	Nor be weary when reproved [<i>elegchomenos</i>] by him
A ¹ .	The Lord disciplines [<i>yakach</i>] those he loves	A ¹ .	For the Lord disciplines [<i>paideuo</i>] the one he loves
B ¹ .	As a father, the son in whom he delights [<i>ratsah</i>]	B ¹ .	And chastises [<i>mastigo</i>] every son whom he receives [<i>paradexetai</i>]
<p>** The last line may very well be echoed in the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus in whom the father is “well-pleased.” The problem here is that the LXX changes the meaning from “delights” to “receives.” So if this is an echo or even a quotation, it is of the Hebrew, not the LXX. Curiously, the Hebrew NT translation of the Gospels uses the same word as the Hebrew word in Proverbs 3:12: <i>ratsah</i>.</p>			

These are two pairs, and the first and second lines

⁵ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 604.

parallel one another. This is where we need to now think about how the LXX and Hebrews added a word to the Hebrew. The last line in Hebrew reads, “... as the father, the son in whom he delights.” “As the father” what? It doesn’t say. So the translator supplied a word that was synonymous with “reprove.”

Reproof and certainly chastisement both have in mind correction through punishment. And sin is clearly in mind here, as we are being tempted to sin, if we fall, we need these to correct us. And certainly, discipline has this side to it – *if* a person has sinned. The Bible understands that corporal punishment done properly is good for a person. “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him” (Pr 13:24). “Discipline” is our word in Hebrews.

The “rod” here is most likely not some kind of a switch or club, but a staff such as a shepherd would use. “Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” The point was not to beat the tar out of the sheep, but to get the dumb animal back in step. It is corrective, and sometimes it might have hurt a bit.

So included in discipline can be corporal punishment. But it is not *only* corporal punishment. In fact, this is only a last measure, not a first or only measure of discipline.

Discipline is about lovingly teaching and bearing with someone as they grow. Perhaps the most interesting thing about discipline in Hebrews 12 is that the first subject of it was not us, but Jesus. This is the point of **vs. 3**.

For the analogy to hold, **Jesus has to have been disciplined by his Father**. Does that stun you? If so, maybe it is because you still do not properly understand discipline. Consider the language. You are struggling against sin, but you haven't struggled like Jesus has, to the point of shedding blood over it. The analogy is between Jesus as incarnate man and you. Jesus is the Son of God throughout Hebrews. But have you forgotten, **"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord"** (5). Again, the analogy is between The Son and God's other adopted human sons.

Finally, this quote from Proverbs ends with this language. **"As a father, the son in whom he delights,"** or as the YLT puts it, **"Even as a father the son He is pleased with."** Does this remind you of anything in the NT about Jesus? This is what the Father says of Jesus at his baptism (**Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22**) and at the transfiguration (**Matt 17:5; 2Pe 1:17**). In fact, the Hebrew translation of the NT uses the very same word as **Proverbs**

3:12 does (*ratsah*).⁶ Again, the context of Proverbs 3 is discipline. But Jesus never sinned. Therefore, discipline does not always involve sin.

The way we should read the quote from Proverbs is therefore not as some English translations do, when they translate “discipline” as something like “chastening” (YLT or KJV), which to most of us would imply some wrongdoing. The ESV is right to leave it simply as “discipline.” The **discipline** (the first line of each pair) should be seen in its original meaning in **a positive way**, as teaching rather than punishing. But the second lines where it is reproof or rebuke or scourging that is in mind, this is the more negative side and is that last very specific part of discipline. Yes, God does the latter, but with Jesus he only did the former, because Jesus never sinned. So looking at the four lines again you would have discipline which is not because of sin, reproof which probably includes it, disciplining those he loves which may not be because of sin, and chastising which probably does.

The Necessity of Discipline

⁶ The problem here is that the LXX changes the meaning from “delights” to “receives.” So if this is an echo or even a quotation, it is of the Hebrew, not the LXX.

Again taking this back to Jesus, this now becomes the good news for the rest of the passage. As we turn to the last verses of the passage, we want to take a look at **three things**. First, the **necessity of discipline**. Second, **the benefits of discipline**. Third, **the proper response to discipline**.⁷

The necessity of discipline. “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?” (Heb 12:7). Sadly, with the deeply perverted view that discipline is **vengeful retaliation** against someone that so many have these days, this once-upon-a-time rhetorical question needs to be proven to a whole bunch of people, perhaps even some of your own friends. Maybe even to yourself. That’s the point of showing you what true discipline is all about. My friends, discipline your children. If you do not, then you really don’t even have a right to be called their parent. Because you certainly aren’t acting like it. Your job is not to be their best friend. It is to create mature, cultured, holy adults. That is what it means to be a parent.

This verse is actually an echo of **Deuteronomy 8:5**. “Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.” This fits well with

⁷ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 581.

the overall context of Hebrews where time and again he has used the entire Exodus story as an example to Christians today. God tested them. They fell. But now we know that this testing was actually a form of discipline. Israel is the LORD's "firstborn son" (Ex 4:22).

The first person of the Holy Trinity is the Father. The Father, by definition, has a Son. He has acted in history in such a way as to show you that he is the Father of all whom he disciplines, and his discipline—rightly understood—becomes a model of sorts for how we are to treat our own children. Always patient, always kind, never vengeful, slow to anger, abounding in love, yet resolute in purpose—the will grow his child up so that his child is conformed the way he wants him to be conformed.

The end of this is heaven, not earth. Earth is the crucible of our discipline. This is the suffering we are given in this life. We are given it by God.

I came across a book this week called *Does God Send Sickness?* The back cover reads, "God has been taking the blame for sickness and disease for centuries. We have been told that He sends sickness as an aid to spiritual growth and piety or as a punishment for sin. Vast amounts of Scripture have been cited to support this claim. This idea has

contributed to the lack of faith prevalent in the church today for healing and deliverance. After all, if God gave a person sickness then His willingness to heal is questionable.”⁸ It is a typical Health and Wealth theology, more in line with today’s views of discipline in school than what we see here.

We have seen the kinds of things he has in mind already as loss of property, imprisonment, torture, and death for the Name of Jesus. Sometimes, the discipline can also take forms of “natural” suffering as it did with Job. How will you respond when you lose your house, your family, your own health? Whether from sin or, like Jesus, simply because you are God’s son, how will you respond to these things? What are you longing for? Heaven or happiness here and now? **Thomas Manton** said, “Afflictions do not make the people of God miserable ... A Christian’s worst state is happiness. He who loves God is like a die; throw him high or low, he still lands on a solid square. Sometimes he may be afflicted, but he is always happy.”

“But,” you say, “I don’t want to be disciplined.” As you are going through it, who does? Not even our author does. That’s why he says in **vs. 11**, “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant.” Literally, “it does not

⁸ Troy Edwards, Does God Send Sickness?: A Study of God’s Character In Relation to Sickness and His Victory Over It (Vindicating God Ministries, 2015).

seem a joy.” Rather, it seems sorrowful. But that is exactly why James says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4). And again about Jesus do we not read that “in bringing many sons to glory, [God] should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering” (Heb 2:10). And again, “Being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (5:9). How was he made perfect? Through the discipline of his Heavenly Father because he is The Son.

Thus it continues. “If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated (all being those in ch. 11 etc.), then you are illegitimate children and not sons” (Heb 12:8). The KJV rightly translates this word as “bastard,” that is someone born of a noble father, but his mother is a commoner, and not the king’s wife. He is a product of adultery and he holds no claim upon the ancestry of his father. You are a counterfeit. Because that word has become a curse word in our day, another is often sought by translators. But “illegitimate” softens the meaning too much in my view. Sometimes harsh words are needed to wake us

up. If we are never disciplined, then we have no claim to God as our Father. This is **the necessity of discipline**. Without it, you aren't even a Christian.

The Benefits of Discipline

This leads us to the second thing. *The benefits of discipline*. We may not like discipline, but as James said it creates something vital in us. Hebrews uses an analogy. “**Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them**” (Heb 12:9). It doesn't say “loved” them. It doesn't say “liked” them. It does say “respected” them. Even when done horribly and brutally, there is a certain kind of respect that comes when a parent knows he is to discipline his child.

Hebrews certainly doesn't have child abuse or anything evil like that in mind. He is looking at it from the best light. Our earthly fathers disciplined us according to what “**seemed best to them**” (10). They did what they thought was right. Sometimes they are wrong. Sometimes they are right. When a parent wrongly “disciplines” (in quotes because it probably shouldn't be called that any longer) a child, that parent needs to fess up and confess that they have done wrong to the child. And I mean, say it to the child.

Emulate what you desire in them. This is not weakness. This is godliness.

But the point is, how much more the heavenly Father? He never messes his discipline up. He does it according to all that he is and never less. “He disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.” This is the first and second benefit of his discipline. The proverb says, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him” (Pr 22:15). When done rightly, firmly but in love, never in anger, it is for our good. It is not to harm us, not to destroy us, not to lord it over us. How much more the Lord’s discipline?

This is where Jesus is once more so vital. If we have a Savior who knew what it meant to be disciplined by his Father, then he knows how to discipline us as someone who understands that discipline. That means that even when we sin, his discipline comes from empathy as a man just as it should. When the Father disciplines us, he knows what it meant to discipline his Only-Begotten, and he does not do that harshly or with premeditated intent of malice. He loves The Son. He loves all his sons. He loves them as sons. His discipline is for their good.

What is the result of that? Second, so that we may share

in his holiness. Whose holiness? Well, God's certainly. But this is only understood through union with Christ. You are being conformed into the image of the Son (8:29). You are in union with the Son (Rom 6:5). Again, going back to his own discipline. He knows what it was like and through it he was "made perfect." Not that he ever sinned, that isn't what it is talking about. It is talking about the final result, the end, his resurrection and glorification. He made it through and finished. Yours will not be exactly like his, in that you have sinned many times. Yet, it will be kind of like his in that he became a human and you are a human. He is a Son and you are sons and daughters.

The next benefit of discipline is that after the moment has passed, no matter how harsh it was, even if it results in death, "later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (11). Now this is the work of the Holy Spirit. In heaven, we will bear fruit in season and out of season (Rev 22:2). But even now, when we go through the discipline of the Lord, its product is the fruit of righteousness. We all long to be righteous, and the benefit of God's discipline is that it makes us that way.

The Proper Response to Discipline

The proper response to discipline. Of course, if you long to be righteous, that means you need to **respond properly** to that discipline. This is the last two verses. Both have connections to the OT. “**Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.**” This is a quote from **Isaiah 35:3**, “**Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.**”

Now, you might be tempted to think that the context of Isaiah is to endure some kind of suffering. Especially since this is a command for you to do. But this would be a wrong assumption. The whole section is pure gospel. “**The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you’” (Isa 35:1-4).**

You do not endure God’s discipline like Japanese

Americans endured a internment camps during WWII or like POWs endured the horrific tortures of the Imperial Military. You don't grin and bear it. You don't suck it up. God is not out to get you. He is not torturing you. His purposes are not those of the vessels he may use to test you.

The strength to endure does not come from bearing up and buckling down, but from the realization that vengeance is God's. Salvation is yours. If you know him, it is because he has chosen you in Christ. He has set his love upon you. He intends to finish what he started with you.

Our last verse reads, “**And make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather healed.**” Jacob wrestled with God. God touched his hip and put it out of joint (**Gen 32:25**). But that was the night that Jacob was finally saved. The command then, in light of the gospel, that is the proper response to discipline is to **lift your drooping hands**. Our hands droops, like Moses', because they tire of the battle. Jesus is fighting the battle for you. So lift them up and praise him. Worship him in the discipline. Don't complain.

Strengthen your weak knees. Our knees get weak because we tremble and fear at the enemy. We want to run. Jesus is Lord Sabaoth—the Lord of Hosts. He has already

defeated them at the cross. But he is not your enemy. So do not fear him. Do not tremble in cowardice or fear of your life. If he is your God through Christ, you have nothing to fear. If he is not, then you aren't even being disciplined as a son anyway and he is simply giving you over to your sins. This wretched condition exemplifies our culture to a tee. It is not enviable. That is what you truly want to fear, for it only results in rot and decay and worms and death.

Finally, **make straight paths for your feet**. This refers then to going back to God's law and doing what it says. **"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"** (Ps 119:105). We make our feet straight by obeying God's law. Since we could mention thousands of things, I particularly want you to think today about how you carry out discipline and how you receive it.

What kind of a disciplinarian are you? Are you that mean tyrant? Are you that person who never disciplines at all? Do you get easily angered and in your discipline scream and yell, so that maybe you are not harsh with the stick but with your mouth. Do you understand now what discipline is for? Some of you may have had parents or teachers who were brutal, and this has effected you to this day. Are you emulating that brutality as fathers or mothers to children, as

bosses to workers, as anyone who is over another? Is that how God the Father treated the Only-Begotten? Was he brutal to the Lord Jesus? Did he flog him? Did he beat him? Did he scream at him?

No, but neither did he let him have a soft and easy life. The Father subjected him to the whims of men to test him. And our Lord Jesus came out of the fire unscathed to resurrected life. He never sinned in how he responded to it. But you often do. Sometimes your discipline is for sin. Other times it is not. How do you respond to the Lord's Discipline? Do you grumble? Does it consume you with worry and fear and doubt? Does it make you never want to discipline your children? Is that what made Jesus perfect, never being disciplined? The phrase Father of Spirits (vs. 9) is appropriate here to end. “**And they fell on their faces and said, ‘O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation’**” (**Num 16:22**). How you respond has ramifications not only for yourself but for many others too.

But if you keep the Lord Jesus at the center of this, and his relationship to his Father in heaven, understanding that he did not escape discipline because he is the Son, then it will help you greatly in how you carry out your own discipline

and how you also receive it. In this way, it will be for your good, to make you holy, and it will lead to the peaceful fruit of righteousness to any who have been trained by it.