

A Father's Discipline Hebrews 12:4-7

Hebrews was written to Jewish people who were undergoing persecution because of their break with Judaism. Some believers perhaps were wondering why: "If God is such a loving Father, why is this all happening?". Hebrews 12: 5-7, urges us to consider Jesus as our example in order to see in our Heavenly Father a perfect picture of Fatherhood.

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

This verse identifies the real battle that the Jewish believers are fighting—the one against sin and against the spiritual forces of evil. They have not yet suffered martyrdom, giving their lives for Christ, they were under a lot of persecution. Jesus experienced the most temptation of any of us, precisely because He wouldn't give in to it. **15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need.** Jesus successfully resisted all of His life, and especially on the cross, when He gave Himself for us and overcame the power of sin and death. We are to look to the example of Jesus, who did resist evil to the end.

5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, If we want to understand the Fatherhood of God, then we must read, understand and apply the Word of God.

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are punished by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He punishes every son whom He accepts." This verse is about the wisdom of understanding God's dealing with us. Proverbs 4:1 **urges us to listen to good, fatherly instruction saying: Listen, my sons, to the instruction of a father, And pay attention so that you may gain understanding, 2 For I give you good teaching; Do not abandon my instruction.** We are encouraged to pay close attention, since God has sent His one and only Son Jesus, the Word to teach us. Hebrews 2:1-3 **For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every violation and act of disobedience received a just punishment, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?** Those who believe that they can act any way that they want, and neglect the Godly life that Jesus has purchased for them will not escape punishment, since we have an even higher calling than those Old Testament saints, having received the power to live righteously by the Holy Spirit. So, we must struggle against sin. All sin is dangerous. There is no harmless sin.

Often we are disciplined or chided for our sin, and we must allow God to get the good out of the discipline by the shaping of our character. Israel suffered many times because of their stiff-necked-ness, their stubbornness and unwillingness to follow God's plan for them, and we will too, if we refuse to follow Jesus closely, in obedience to God. God may allow us to suffer, and discipline us, but God never deserts or forsakes His people.

When we read the word chastening, or chastisement, we tend to think of a whipping. But here the word means child training or education. It includes instruction, discipline, correction, and warning. There is value in being disciplined or punished by God, in that if we will learn the lessons that He is trying to teach us, we will end up following Jesus more closely. And because these Hebrew believers are suffering the pain of persecution, they are being strengthened and encouraged, even though they are suffering. **1 Peter 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

We must not fail to understand the importance of God's discipline in our growth, and we must appreciate it as a growth opportunity, not think miss the point, thinking of it lightly. We can become callous to God and His Word, so that when He is doing something in us or for us, we do not recognize His hand in it. When we are callused, God's discipline will harden us instead of soften us. We may also treat God's discipline lightly by complaining. Instead of showing patient endurance, like the hero saints, we

gripe and grumble. Fretting comes from nothing but disbelief, lack of trust in God to do everything right, especially for His children. Like complaining, questioning shows a clear lack of faith. God's discipline is always the right discipline—exactly what we need.

When we do not care about what purpose God has in the discipline or about how we can profit from it, His discipline cannot be effective. Some people become so overcome in correction that they give up; they become despondent, depressed, faint. The cure for hopelessness is hope in God. God disciplines us to strengthen us, not to weaken us, to encourage us, not to discourage us, to build us up, not to tear us down.

Probably the best parallel passage is in 1 Cor. 11:31-32 where Paul emphasizes **31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.** This attitude adjustment by the Lord is what is needed to save us from being condemned along with the world and sentenced to hell, so it is very much needed, and we actually *should* be very thankful for it, once we understand it from God's perspective. We see something very similar in Rev 3:19 when Jesus is instructing the lukewarm church at Laodicea who had their eyes on worldly things, instead of God **19 Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.** Their concern with the world, being friends with it, instead of following Jesus had caused Him to be on the outside of their church knocking to get in! In fact, He was no longer dealing with that church as a church, but instead looking for individuals within it who would still abide with Him, love Him, follow Him. He doesn't address them as sons, but wants that loving relationship with Him, so that they can be true Sons of the Father. We must accept the judgements and chastisements as discipline from the Lord, and not stiffen our neck toward Him, as Israel did just before they were judged using Babylon. We see this in Jeremiah 5:3 **Lord, do Your eyes not look for honesty? You have struck them, But they did not weaken; You have consumed them, But they refused to accept discipline. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to repent.** We do not want to fall into that group through our stubbornness. So, if we bear God's painful discipline with perseverance, he will at the end receive us into heaven where He lives.

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?

Discipline is part of sonship. God deals with us in His authority as our Heavenly Father, as His sons. Discipline is a process by which we are taught and by which we learn. Because we are all imperfect people, we all need discipline and training, and so all true children of God are chastened or chastised at one time or another, in one way or another. By remaining submissive to the chastening of God, we permit His discipline to mold us into His image.