

SHOW US THE FATHER

HEBREWS 12:3-14

DISCIPLINE FOR THE DISOBEDIENT



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Have any children here ever been disciplined by their parents? Given a row (telling-off), sent to your room, grounded, spanked, or worst of all had your phone or computer taken away for a time? How many of you enjoyed it? None of us enjoyed it, did we? So why do they do it? You've probably asked that question at times. Maybe you've answered that question yourself: "They hate me... they got it wrong... No good can come of this."

Sometimes our heavenly Father disciplines us by sending pain or loss into our lives. How many adults here have been disciplined by their heavenly Father? How many of you enjoyed it? None of us, did we? So why does he do it? **Why does our heavenly Father discipline us?** Sometimes we answer the question: "God hates me... God's got this wrong... No good can come of this." The Apostle Paul disagrees with your answers and offers alternative and accurate answers in Hebrews 12:3-14.

BACKGROUND

God's Fatherhood brings many desirable blessings into our lives.

- Designer for creatures
- Love for the loveless
- Compassion for the hurting
- Provision for the poor

We're so thankful for these blessings from our Father. But we don't see his discipline as desirable or a blessing, do we? Neither did the converted Jews in the Apostle Paul's day. In fact, they were so discouraged, frustrated and angry that they were on the point of giving up the faith altogether. "God hates us... God's got this wrong... No good can come of this." "Wrong, wrong, wrong!" says the Apostle, and offers alternative accurate answers.



1. OUR FATHER DISCIPLINES US LOVINGLY (3-8)

Our Father disciplines us for our sins

"In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (4).

Not all suffering is God's disciplining us for our sin. Some suffering can be a test (Abraham in Genesis 15), some is to develop character graces (Peter), some is to defeat Satan demonstrate God's powerful grace to others (Job), some advances God's kingdom (Joseph in Genesis), some is to prevent sin in the future, some can be to show God's glory (the blind man in John 9:1-3).

But some suffering is God disciplining us for our sins. Some biblical examples are: Moses was barred from Canaan for losing his temper and publicly dishonoring God; Eli lost his two sons because he failed to discipline them; David lost his kingdom and his peace for adultery and murder; Hezekiah lost God's presence for his pride; Zechariah lost his speech for his unbelief; Peter suffered for his denial of Christ.

When our Father disciplines us, he's rebuking us for not fighting enough, for succumbing to it too easily without a fight. As the Apostle puts it here, sin is to be fought against and resisted to the point of shedding our blood. That's how seriously God takes sin and wants us to take sin. His chastisement advances that. That does not mean that our Father disciplines us for every sin. But it does mean that he disciplines us for significant sin.

Our Father disciplines us as his sons (and daughters)

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. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (5-6).

When I was growing up, teachers were allowed to chastise us with a leather belt on our hands. This was terribly abused by some teachers, and eventually banned because some teachers hit kids so often and so hard that it left them traumatized. They would never have treated their own children like that. But, lacking that relational connection, abusing their students was much "easier."

Our heavenly Father's discipline is always relational. It's always as a loving Father towards his beloved children. There's never anything other than love behind it and in it. God never stops loving us when he disciplines us. In fact, it is one of the proofs of his love, because just parents do not discipline other's children, God does not discipline those he does not love (7-8)

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Do not forget. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord" (5).

Do not faint. "My son, do not...be weary when reproved by him" (5).

Do have faith. It does not feel like love, but we must believe it is love. The hand holding the rod is full of love.

Do fight. Don't fight your Father, but fight the sin that he's fighting against in you.

DON'T FORGET OR FAINT
BUT HAVE FAITH AND FIGHT.



**But my experience of discipline has been so abusive.
God disciplines us perfectly.**



2. OUR FATHER DISCIPLINES US PERFECTLY (9-10)

"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? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them" (9-10).

Our earthly fathers give imperfect discipline

There is no parent living who doesn't have regrets in the area of disciplining their children. God instructs us to discipline our children (Prov. 13:24; Eph. 6:4). Some parents refuse to discipline and they (and society) suffer the consequences with unruly children who cannot discipline themselves.

Other parents discipline too frequently, or too harshly, or too unfairly. Sometimes it is sin that motivates them, but sometimes they get it wrong even when doing "as it seemed best to them" (10).

Our heavenly Father gives perfect discipline

He is our heavenly Father and therefore a holy and perfect Father in all that he does, including the way he disciplines us. He is the "Father of spirits" which emphasizes his relational connection with us. He does not discipline us for every sin (thankfully), but knows exactly what to discipline, exactly when to discipline, exactly how to discipline, and exactly when to stop. He has never spoiled nor abused one of his children. Look how Jesus "shows us the Father" in how he disciplined his disciples, especially Peter.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Respect and submit to your parents' discipline. This does not mean that you have to submit to abusive discipline. Not at all. That's sinful and evil and you should get help from someone wise that you trust if you're in that situation. But, you are called here to respect and submit to your parents' discipline.

Respect and submit to your heavenly Father's discipline. Perfect discipline should produce perfect submission. He is not motivated by frustration, pride, or anger but only by a desire "for our good that we may share in his holiness" (10).

GOD HAS PERFECT CHASTISEMENT
FOR HIS IMPERFECT CHILDREN



But what's the point of it all?
Beautiful fruit



3. OUR FATHER DISCIPLINES US PRODUCTIVELY

Discipline is painful

"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant" (11).

No child walks away from discipline saying, "That was great, can we do that again tomorrow?" Rather, they walk away feeling pain: physical, relational, financial, social, or even digital pain. If it doesn't hurt, it's not discipline.

Discipline is productive

"...but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (11).

When our parents discipline us, all we feel at the time is pain. But, in the long run, there will be good results, although it can take a lot of hard "training" for kids to eventually see it. Sinful discipline will often produce no good fruit and much rotten fruit (such as trauma, PTSD, resentment, and will often reproduce itself in the victim's parenting of their children. But good (though imperfect) parental discipline is productive because of (not despite) the pain.

Our heavenly Father's discipline is all "for our good" (10). There is no greater good than giving us a "share in his holiness" (10). Again, that may not be immediate, it may take time, even a long time, but "later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (11). Paternal pain is productive pain.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Run from sin with all you have. Look at the verses which introduce this section on our Father's chastisement. "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted" (3). The Apostle's argument is if God's perfect Son endured so much hostility from his enemies without fatigue or fainting in order to save you from your sins, how much more should you submit to God's loving chastisement to save you from your sins? If God's perfect Son fought sin even to bloodshed, how much more should his imperfect sons do the same?

Run after holiness with all you have. "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (12-14). This is not the time for resentment, anger, frustration. It's time for holiness, holiness, holiness.

OUR FATHER'S ROD
FILLS A FULL BASKET



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

Jesus. Jesus suffering the anger of God to save us from our sin should always frame the way we consider our suffering the loving chastisement of God to save us from our sin.

Love. Instead of seeing discipline as an undesirable experience that disproves God's love, we should see it as a desirable blessing that proves God's love for us.

Discipline. Our aim in all discipline of our children should be to demonstrate and exhibit God the Father's discipline.

Prayer. My loving Father, thank you for your discipline. Use it to replace rotten fruit with good fruit, and my bad with your good. Train me to resist sin so that I'm spared more discipline.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has your experience of earthly discipline impacted your view of God's discipline?
2. How can we know if our suffering is God's discipline or for another reason?
3. How will this sermon change the way you discipline your children?
4. How have you reacted to God's discipline in the past (or present)?
5. What's the connection between discipleship and discipline?
6. How does discipline differ from punishment?

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