

Hebrews 12:4-11

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[0 : 00] Please take your copy of God's Word and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12. Our text for study this morning is Hebrews chapter 12 verses 4 through 11.

! Before I read it, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's Word to us, written for His glory and our good. And as such, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Hebrews 12 verse 4 and following. 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? If you are left without discipline in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

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?

[1 : 25] 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. 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. The very first sermon that I preached on the book of Hebrews some months ago was opened with the following quotation from William Lane, who is a contemporary and very respected New Testament authority.

He wrote, Hebrews is a delight for the person who loves puzzles. Its form is unusual, its setting in life is uncertain, and its argument is unfamiliar.

It invites engagement in the task of defining the undefined. Undefined are the identity of the writer, his conceptual background, the character and location of the community addressed, the circumstances and date of composition, the nature of the crisis to which the document is a response, the literary genre and the purpose and plan of the work.

Although these undefined issues continue to be addressed and debated vigorously, no real consensus has been reached. Lane then goes on to do a very careful work to give us the probabilities and the likelies of the letter before us.

[2 : 54] But one matter is without contention. The theme of Hebrews is the supremacy and finality of Jesus Christ.

That is that Christ is greater than, and he lays out this argument in the opening chapters, than angels, greater than priests, greater than the old covenant redemptive economy.

And that Christ is the final word. We need no new revelation. And we need not go back to any system of the world.

Jesus Christ is supreme, and Jesus Christ is final for the salvation of our souls. We know from clues throughout the text that this letter was originally written to Hellenistic Jewish Christians, that is Greek-speaking Jews, that had not seen Jesus, but had heard the gospel and believed.

This is Hebrews chapter 2, the very beginning. And that they had an Italian locus. They were located within Italy, likely on the outskirts of Rome.

[4 : 04] They were suffering and would suffer further. And so we have been exploring at link the letter's secondary theme, the necessity of faithful endurance.

He is working out that those who are in fact in Christ will endure in Christ to the end. Last week we saw the author use the metaphor of a race to encourage these believers and us after a sweeping Old Testament summary of faithful endurance in the following way.

And this is the first three verses of Hebrews chapter 12. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let

us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. So he tells us that it's going to be a race that has to be run with endurance. And to do so, we're going to have to lay aside anything that hinders that race. And the way that we're going to complete that race is by fixing our eyes on Christ as the supreme example of faithfulness.

[5 : 38] He continues this section with further encouragement to faithful endurance amidst these undefined issues that Lane suggests to us, which we will study in the following outline.

Number one, this is our outline for the text this morning. Number one, correction for faltering endurance. Correction for faltering endurance. Number two, challenge to sustained endurance. And number three, reasons for sustained endurance. So number one, correction for faltering endurance. And we'll find this in verses four through six.

At the very outset of today's text, he begins with two corrections. First, he corrects them with the fact that while they had suffered, no one had yet been martyred.

He works to give them a bit of perspective. Verse four, in your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted. To the point of shedding your blood.

[6 : 43] There appears to be a shift in metaphor here from the Christian life being described as the race that is set before us in verse two to that of a wrestling match with sin, possibly also in the Olympic games, a boxing match, right?

This imagery may have popped into his original hearers' minds. Truly, the Christian life is one that must be run with endurance, and it certainly is a struggle against sin.

Now, in verse three of chapter 12, he has just exhorted them to consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself.

Jesus had shed his blood. They had not. It is as if he is saying, quit being so dramatic.

None of you has died yet. It is as if he is saying, stop your whining. John Piper would say, murmur, murmur, murmur.

[7 : 50] I find this a particularly striking correction for the church today. We have suffered so little. Suffered so little.

And we complain so much. But we have suffered so little compared to the death of our Lord. Not a single one of us will ever bear what Christ endured.

While it's possible that we may die a death for the name of Christ, we will not bear the wrath of God for the church in our dying. None of us.

So as we look to Christ, as this perfect example for us, we have not struggled against sin in this way.

If we are considering him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, then we also should not grow weary or faint hearted.

[8 : 48] This is the first correction that he brings to them. Gives them some perspective. Second, the author corrects them because they had failed to remember and apply the scripture to their current situation.

He writes, verse 5, and have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? They had forgotten. And so he is gently reminding them.

Ladies, do not forget that the Bible was written at a time when all of the inheritance of a father was granted to his sons. So you want to be a son, as the Bible expresses it, and you are.

Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 3, verse 26, in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. With this in mind, here the scripture that the author of Hebrews now cites, which is Proverbs chapter 3, verse 11 and 12.

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.

[10 : 02] You see here what the author is doing is he's saying, listen, church, everything you're experiencing, all of the hardships that happen in your life come from the Lord's good hand because you are his children.

This is an astounding perspective shift. If you don't think in these terms, oh, I pray that you would begin to be able to see this morning that the difficulties that are happening in your life are coming

from the one who loves you.

In verses 5 and 6, there are two negative implications. Don't disdain and don't dismay.

The author says, do not regard lightly. Do not cast it off. Do not consider it as it should be considered, the discipline of the Lord.

And do not dismay when you are being disciplined. He says, nor be weary when reproved by him. The opposite, therefore, are two positive exhortations for us.

[11 : 13] That would be, do regard, pay close attention, appreciate the discipline of the Lord, and do refresh, which I recognize is bad English, so you could say, or be refreshed, be encouraged, be uplifted by the fact that God disciplines you.

The author wants us to see that the challenges that we face in this world are for our good. They are given to us by his kind hand.

Why? Love. The text tells us, for love, the Lord disciplines the one he loves.

Being disciplined is a sign that you belong to God and that he is seeking your good. Do you believe this? Do you believe that you belong to God and that his discipline is an act of loving kindness to you?

Or, do you think that you know better? That you could arrange your life in a more suitable fashion? That the challenges of your life, the things that seem to keep you from enduring faithfully, are unfair and misplaced.

[12 : 36] That they couldn't possibly be kindnesses from God. Beloved, if your faith is faltering, you need correction.

You need perspective and you need the promises of God. The Lord disciplines the one he loves.

To make the point a bit further, let me give you one more text. This is Psalm 84, the second half of verse 11, which says, no good thing does he, God, withhold from those who walk uprightly.

uprightly. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. If you are in Jesus Christ this morning, if you have repented and believed in the person and work of Christ, knowing that he kept the law for you, that he died the death that you deserve, right?

You don't come to God on your own merit, but because of the merit of Jesus, right? If you have turned from your sin and you have said, I need a savior, Christ is this great savior to you, then you are clothed in his righteousness.

[13 : 53] Therefore, you walk uprightly before God. When God sees you, he sees the uprightness of Christ. Psalm 84, 11 says, no good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

If you're in Christ, you walk uprightly. As such, God withholds no good thing from you. That is, your life is full of good.

Maybe not by your definition, but it is full of good, of God's defining, and it is aimed at, it is for your sustained endurance.

God loves you far too much to be terribly concerned about the benefits you're receiving now. He's far more concerned about the benefits that you'll receive forever.

He has the mindset of eternity, and we very quickly are forgetting that we are a people passing through a vapor in the wind, and God is preparing us for a future glory.

[15 : 05] The Lord disciplines the one he loves. have you forgotten the text that addresses you as sons? Secondly, we see in the text, in the first half of verse 7, a challenge to sustained endurance.

The author has told us that Jesus endured, endured, and it is imperative that we endure. It is for discipline that you have to endure.

Culturally, we tend to have a very negative view of discipline. You may have either never been disciplined in your home, or you were possibly disciplined with severity.

The word discipline means to teach or instruct. This is what this word means, which means that discipline ought to be viewed as a positive thing, especially that discipline which comes from the Lord.

Additionally, the discipline of God for his children never involves his wrath. Theodore, I'm going to guess Latch is the way you pronounce this very oddly spelled last name, who is an Old Testament scholar, put the point this way, God's plans concerning his people are always thoughts of good, of blessing.

[16 : 31] Even if he is obliged to use the rod, it is the rod not of wrath, but the Father's rod of chastisement for their temporal and eternal welfare.

There is not a single item of evil in his plans for his people, neither in their motive, nor in their conception, nor in their revelation, nor in their consummation. So we can read Psalm 23 this morning, and we can unite with the psalmist in saying that God's rod and his staff are a comfort to us.

We can declare that he is in fact the good shepherd. So we should endure our hardships as kindnesses from God, as helpful discipline.

And this discipline takes three forms. So we'll step outside of the text just a bit. I want to give these to you quickly. Discipline takes three forms. I'll give you a couple of Bible examples for them. Number one, corrective discipline. Sometimes we need to be shown the error of our ways. We need to be shown it. There needs to be consequence for our action.

[17:43] And we need to experience the temporal consequence of our sin to keep us mindful of its eternal consequence, especially if we are not found in Christ.

An example of this is found in Paul's letters to the Corinthians. Some of them were sick. Some had died because of their abuse of the Lord's Supper. And Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 32, So God brings along corrective discipline, helps us to see that there is error in our way. And there's a consequence here and possibly forever. Second form of discipline is preventive discipline. Sometimes we need to be kept from sin by discipline.

An example of this is the humility God worked in Paul, which he speaks of in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 7, where he wrote, So to keep me from becoming conceited, there's the preventive measure there, Paul was kept humble, right?

He wasn't allowed to become conceited, he goes on, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

[19:15] You see that Paul takes this as a kindness from God on his behalf. The third form that discipline takes is instructive discipline.

Sometimes we are taught lessons proactively through discipline. This was the case for Job, who after enduring much suffering that was neither corrective or preventative, he declares in Job chapter 42 verse 4 and following, Here I will speak, I will question you, and you make it known to me.

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. Through Job's suffering and his following dialogue with God, he reached a new and more complete understanding of his Lord.

Because Job was doing well, God allowed suffering so that Job would do all the more well. Much like an elite athlete gets pushed by a coach, those at the top of their game don't stop getting coached.

They get pushed further on. We are often instructed through our hardships. We must remember that the challenges of our lives are discipline that comes in one of these three forms and we must be discerning and sorting that out and we must remember that it is loving and it is for our good.

[20:52] James Moffat, who's a contemporary commentator, stated in his commentary on this text, to endure rightly, one must endure intelligently and by which I think he means mindfully.

If we're going to endure the hardship of this world, we must understand why it comes our way and the purpose for it. Third, reasons for sustained endurance.

We'll see this in the last half of verse 7 and through the end of the text in verse 11. The author gives four reasons for sustained endurance, beginning second half of verse 7 and on.

Number one, he gives us a paternal reason. A paternal reason. He writes, God is treating you as sons.

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline in which we all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

[21:57] The logic goes, if you are sons, then you will receive discipline. If you are not sons, then you will not receive discipline. Because this is true, we should not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him, but should rather be encouraged to press on by it.

God loves us as our father. Second reason for sustained endurance. It is a lesser to greater reason. There is a Latin phrase I wrote down and I am not even going to try to pronounce it for you. A logical tool, a lesser to greater argumentation. The logic here goes, if this is so, then this must be even more so.

He says in verse 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?

Now I recognize that not all of you have fathers who disciplined you or disciplined you well. You may not have had the type of respect for your fathers that the author is here implying.

[23 : 18] If that is the case for you, I want you to know that he is speaking in generalities and that the lesson he is teaching does not have to be lost on you because your frame of reference is different from the one he is implying.

So here, if you have a father who disciplined you and you respected him, or if you have ever noticed a father who disciplined well and you respected him, then how much more should you respect God? Fathers who discipline their children are a shadow, a reflection of our great God who disciplines us for our good.

So we should much, much more respect God and therefore respect his loving correction. His loving correction is always perfect.

It's always perfect. He does not fail the way that earthly fathers fail. And as such, therefore, it is always respectable.

[24 : 21] The third reason for sustained endurance is a sanctifying reason. Verse 10, For they, these fathers, 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. It's a sanctifying reason. We've said this already before, but God is about working in our lives, aiming us to look more like him. Good earthly fathers do this, right? The discipline of our children is aimed at making them look more like our children. You are my son, therefore, you should look like this.

You should live like this. But we do this so imperfectly because we're fallen and we fail in many, many respects.

But our heavenly father does not and never does. Everything that he is working is working us in the direction of looking more like him so that we would share his holiness.

[25 : 31] And if your holiness is not the highest aim of your living in this life, then you're shooting too low. If you're aiming at other things, it's not a worthy enough thing to aim at.

God aims as the aiming should happen. He's aiming at your holiness. Romans 8, 28 gives us some direction in this.

I think all of you, when I say Romans 8, 28, go, I know this one. I got it. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for the good for those who are called according to his purpose. You probably dropped the last half of that off of there because we don't want to think about what God's purpose is in the good that he's working.

Because really we want to think about our purposes in the good that God is working. And so we make it into this strange mystic verse. I know it's true.

Everything works out. Everything for a reason. And we're looking for the reason. We're trying to understand. We're giving ourselves this hope. Like, yeah, I don't like what's happening right now. But somehow, some way, yeah, it's going to be good.

[26 : 35] good. The text tells us the good. We don't have to guess at the good. The clue of that is the last part of verse 28. For those who are called according to his purpose.

What is the purpose? Verse 29 tells us. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

That's the good that he's working in your life and in my life if we belong to him. God is working all things together for that great and highest good.

Read there. Share in his holiness that we will be conformed to the image of his son. His son, who was himself God, but was fully man and submitted himself in every way to the father.

Our high example of faithful endurance. This is what he is making us into. And we won't arrive at it on this side of glory, but we are moving in that direction steadily for the praise of him who is doing it.

[27 : 47] This is a wonderful reason to press on. A sanctifying reason to appreciate the kind corrections of God. And then the fourth reason for faithful endurance.

is a joy-filled reason. A joy-filled reason. Verse 11 says, 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.

The author recognizes that there is a disconnect between the experience of discipline and the reality of discipline.

He notes that for the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. He knows that it hurts.

He has experienced that hurt, and he sympathizes with us in that. But, by implication, it yields pleasantness. In the moment, he says, it's painful, but it will yield pleasantness, which he calls the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

[29 : 05] Doesn't that sound wonderful? In the midst of trial, you're sailing the sea of this life, and it is getting rocked by the storms of this world.

In the midst of temptation, doesn't that, the peaceful fruit of righteousness steady you?

We can be steadied. We are steadied by our loving God as he trains us to yield this in our lives.

Isaiah chapter 32 verse 16 and 17 says, justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field, and the effect of righteousness be peace, and the result of righteousness quietness and trust forever.

I love that. I love that. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness quietness and trust forever.

[30 : 13] So hold up and hold on. love. We have a loving God who disciplines us for the sake of faithful endurance.

Beloved, it is because he loves you. Trials of this life are not outside of his control. They're being brought your way, whatever it is, for your good.

May we be those who declare, Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 39. We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Let's pray together.