

Hebrews 11:4-11

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[0:00] Amen. Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Hebrews chapter 12. Our sermon today will be a change from our plan.

! Preparing to preach the following quote, I always find that I can preach best when I can manage to lie a soak in my text.

I like to get a text and find out its meaning and bearings and so on, and then, after I have bathed in it, I delight to lie down in it and let it soak into me.

It softens me, or hardens me, or does whatever it ought to do to me, and then I can talk about it.

And so this week, the text that had been planned for before us was from John chapter 3, verse 22 through 36, the final kind of recorded testimony of John the Baptist by John the Apostle.

And I have done the work of getting the text and finding out its meaning and bearings, doing that careful work, forming an outline, looking at language.

[1:36] But I have had a difficult time this week lying a soak in this particular text. There's another that my mind has gone to again and again and again, not just in this past week, but in the week before that as well.

And so that's the text I would like to preach this morning. You know, a true thing about all shepherds is that they are also sheep.

And I find sometimes, as the task falls to me to preach, that I also need to be particularly ministered to by the Word. And maybe it could be considered selfish, perhaps.

But I think this is what I need to hear this morning. And my hope, then, is that it's also what you need to hear this morning, and that God will bless our time together in His Word.

And so Hebrews chapter 12, verses 4 through 11 will be our text for today. And before I read it, I'd like to pray that God would bless our time in it.

[2:44] God, we thank You for Your Word. And we recognize that it was written long ago, that it had an original audience, but that it is a word to us this morning for us to take up and to read and to consider and to believe.

We know that it was written for Your glory, that You would be known. And it was also written for our good. And so we ask this morning that You would help us as we take some time to consider it. that we believe its promises, obey its commands, that You would move our affections towards You as we look at it, and we would respond as we should to it.

And we pray this for the glory of Christ. Amen. Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 4 and following. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

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.

[3:59] For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives. 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? 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.

Some time ago, we studied through the book of Hebrews, and at the very beginning of that study, I read to you a quotation by William Lane, who's a contemporary, respected New Testament authority, and he said this of the book of Hebrews.

[5:15] 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 in his commentary. But one matter is without contention.

Lots of contention about this letter, but one is without it. The theme of Hebrews is the supremacy and the finality of Jesus Christ.

[6:29] Christ is greater than, the argument goes, the angels, priests, the old covenant redemptive economy, and Christ is the final word.

We need no new revelation. The original audience of this letter were Hellenistic Jewish Christians, that's Greek speaking, that had not seen Jesus, but had heard the gospel and believed, and they were located most likely outside of Rome.

They'd most likely been chased out of Rome and were on the outskirts. They were suffering, the book tells us, and they would suffer further, which is a fact that develops the letter's secondary theme, the necessity of faithful endurance.

We just sang, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, and in verse 2, the last three lines, my hope when tides of sorrow rise, my joy when trials are abounding, your faithfulness, my refuge in the night. And so these original Christians who would have received this letter had many trials all around them, and so this secondary theme sets on top of that primary theme that Christ is supreme and he is final.

[8:04] The hope, the confidence, the joy that they could have because of Christ, even in the midst of their trials. In the first three verses of chapter 12, the author uses the metaphor of a race to encourage these believers, right?

To press on, to press on to the end, right? After a sweeping Old Testament summary of faithful endurance in chapter 11, he writes in Hebrews 12, verse 1 through 3, 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.

And that sets us up for verses 4 through 11, right? The pressing here of the author is that we would endure faithfully to the end, even amidst all of the trials that this life will throw at us.

Another Spurgeon quote, I go through a rotation of these coloring sheets for the kiddos, so if you haven't seen this one out there, this is a picture of Charles Spurgeon in a saddle, riding on the back of a snail.

[9:48] It's because he once said, by perseverance, the snail reached the ark. A bit of a picture of the Christian life, right?

That we press on to the next thing, and sometimes it feels like applauding. We want to do this by the grace that God provides faithfully.

We want to press on. And that's what he's doing in this section of Scripture, right? And so this will be our outline for this morning, and I will explain a little bit further why this text is where my mind has been going.

Number one, we see a correction for faltering endurance. Number two, a challenge to sustained endurance. And number three, reasons for sustained endurance.

So we see in verses four through six, firstly, a correction for faltering endurance. At the very outset of today's text, he begins with two corrections.

[11:04] First, he corrects them with the fact that while they had suffered, no one had yet been martyred. I think he's working here to give them a bit of perspective.

In your struggle against sin, verse four, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. There seems 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.

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.

[12:10] None of you has died yet. In your pursuit of Christ, your master and Lord, he died, but you haven't arrived there yet. And I find this a particularly striking correction for myself and for the church today.

We have suffered so little compared to the death of our Lord. What trials we could list in this room, right? Don't quite measure up to martyrdom for the sake of our faith.

If we are considering, mindfully thinking about him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, then we also, the logic follows, should not grow weary or faint-hearted.

That's the one correction. Second, the author corrects them because they had failed to remember and apply the scripture to their situation. He says in verse five, and have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

They had forgotten. They had forgotten. So, he is reminding them. And 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.

[13:34] 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 were all sons of God through faith.

Right? Inheritors, that's what you want to see in that place. So, with this in mind, hear the scripture that the author of Hebrews now cites.

He said, have you forgotten this text? They had. So, he reminds them, still verse five, 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 he chastises every son whom he receives. They had forgotten the application of this text.

In verses five and six, there are two negative implications. Right? Don't disdain. Do not regard lightly.

[14:38] Do not think wrongly about the discipline of the Lord. And, don't dismay. Don't be weary when reproved by him.

Recognize the place of suffering in the life of a Christian. Don't disdain. Don't dismay. And, the opposite, therefore, the positive implications can also be found from those two verses.

We are to regard rightly, to think correctly about the discipline of the Lord and we are to be refreshed. So, don't disdain.

Don't dismay. Do regard. Do refresh. Or, be refreshed. 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 God's kind hand. Every single one of them. Whatever trial may come for the life of the Christian, it's given to us by God's kind hand.

[15:48] Why? It seems like I could come up with some better ways for God to express kindness towards me. Why does God do it this way?

It's because He loves us. The Lord disciplines the one He loves.

That's where my mind was going again and again and again over these past two weeks. Of interest, I've preached this text before and I had to grab the notes from someplace else.

My study is displaced right now. I'll talk a little bit about why in a minute. I had to do some technological things I don't normally do and I grabbed these notes and I pulled them over to another place and I had to do some formatting and I did a control off.

I selected everything and I went back to the standard formatting which took out all of my boldfacing. I like to boldface the text. You ever look at my notes?

[16:46] It's usually the only thing that's boldfaced. It's just the text that we're in and everything else is indented and I keep my head straight in other ways. But the text, the text, and it took out all of the boldfacing of the text and so this morning I'm reading through it and I'm making some little changes and I'm re-bolding the text and I got to the top of the second page and the only thing in this entire set of notes that didn't unbold itself, which is probably some bizarre formatting thing I did the last time I was doing this, but the only thing that wasn't unbolded was that phrase at the top of page two in my notes.

The Lord disciplines the one he loves and I cried. It's where my mind had been going. It's what I needed to see. The Lord disciplines the one he loves.

Why do trials come into our life? If you're a Christian, it's because God loves you. Being disciplined is a sign that you belong to God and that he is seeking your good.

Do you believe this? Do you love the discipline of the Lord the way that you ought to? Or do you think that you know better that the challenges of your life, the things that seem to keep you from enduring faithfully are unfair and misplaced?

That they couldn't possibly be kindnesses from God. I think we're all tempted to do that very thing. So, this is my anecdotal, this is why my mind has been on this text.

[18:26] My life's just been really chaotic lately. Lately may not even be the right term for the past five years. Those of you who know us well know that we decided to take on a big house project where we built a house for my parents and now we're remodeling a house and it's taking forever.

And it's my fault. I chose to do this thing. It has been a major, major, major task and it is making me go thin. I'm just running on fumes all the time.

It's where I spend any extra energy that I have on working on this project. And I'm grateful for it for a lot of reasons. I think there's a lot of good that's going to come out of it. I don't doubt God's goodness in it, but has it been a challenge chugging away at this thing, trying to get it done.

So it's a major area of my life that is just incomplete. Things are just in pieces right now. Even the home that I finished, got a CO4 so that my parents could move into it, is not really finished.

My sweet mom has just been opening her kitchen drawers without drawer pulls on it this entire time since the beginning of January. because I still got to put knobs on the drawers down at their house.

[19:39] It still needs to be painted, things like that. It's not quite done. And then two weeks ago, you all were likely aware that the downstairs of this church building flooded.

Septic system backed up. We had remediators come in Friday night and into Saturday and rip out two thirds of the flooring and flood cut the sheet rock downstairs. Totally displaced me out of my study.

It was maybe the one place in my life that things were steady and stable because it was the thing I get to control, my little zone, my space that I got to hang on to. And it got thrown in boxes and moved to the other end of the hall down here.

And I frantically packed up the things I thought I needed most and set up a folding table at the house that I'm trying to remodel, which is pretty chaotic. So I'm juggling all of those kinds of things. We're finding that we didn't have the flood coverage that we had hoped for and that the work that's already been down there is being exorbitantly charged for. We're going to have to enter into a whole issue with that company trying to get that sorted out and then to get it all put back together in some reasonable amount of time.

[20:53] Where we're living right now is being really kindly provided for by my father-in-law. They're so sweet to us. We're living rent-free, but we're living in a one-bedroom, one-bath apartment.

It's 640 square feet. We've been there for five and a half, six years. We've been making it work. Praise God, there's a lot of good things that have come out of it.

We've now been there long enough and old enough that things are starting to fall apart. So not only do I have projects here and projects out the other house, I have projects at the place that's supposed to be free and easy. My father-in-law did a cool thing, I think.

It looks really neat. He used a galvanized tub for the sink. The bathroom sink is this galvanized tub and it looks neat, but it just doesn't function very well. And we discovered this week that it's rusting through.

It has pinhole leaks all over it. And I tried to use some roof flashing to seal it up just for temporary and it failed.

[21:59] So the sink is leaking, it needs to be repaired in some more proper way. That's why I'm not totally clean shaven this morning because I really couldn't use the sink this morning when I got up.

So many things going on and on top of that for the last couple of months I've discovered, I've noticed some, I'll call it unexplained bruising on my body.

The inside of my forearms, the inside of my biceps, ribs, wrapping around onto my back, up my back, backs of my knees and legs. And we're running blood work and praise God the things that might be popping into your mind that it could be not those things.

Got a clean CBC panel back. But we're on this road now trying to figure out what in the world is going on, why. I feel okay but we're just not sure what's happening there.

Nothing, nothing seems settled. Nothing seems stable. On top of that, I worry about you guys. There's so much going on in the life of our church.

[23:07] I can't disclose details to you but I got a text this morning, hey we won't be here, rushing a toddler to CHOA, to the emergency room, passed out, blue lips.

I mean, and praise God, just before I got up here, I prodded for an update and everything's fine, she's doing well. Those types of things, I mean, I carry them, I worry about you guys and there's so much going on in the life of our church.

It's a temptation to lose hope in the midst of all of that. There's a temptation to think it's unfair, but God, I'm doing all the things I think you've had me do.

Why does it have to be so hard all the time? Beloved, if our faith is faltering, we need this correction. We need perspective and we need the promises of God.

The Lord disciplines the one he loves. Take a phrase away today, if you just blank out everything else that's said this morning.

[24:21] Let that sentence just catch in your head and in your heart. The Lord disciplines the one he loves. To make the point just a little bit further, I'll give you one more text.

This is Psalm 84 and verse 11. There it says, No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

good. So if you are in Jesus Christ this morning, if you've repented and believed in the person and work of Jesus, then you are clothed in his righteousness. You therefore walk uprightly before God. And as such, he withholds no good thing from you. That is, your life is full of good. Every circumstance that comes your way, good.

It's a good of God's defining because it is a good that is meant for our sustained endurance.

[25:28] Second point, the challenge to sustained endurance. Verse 7 says, It is for discipline that you have to endure.

The author has told us that Jesus endured, verse 2, and it is imperative that we endure. Culturally, we tend to have a negative view of discipline.

You may have either never been disciplined in your home or were possibly disciplined with severity. The word discipline simply means to teach or instruct.

So you could read verse 7, that first part, it is for instruction that you have to endure. That 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 spell his last name and not try to pronounce it, L-A-E-T-S-C-H.

[26:41] If you know who this is and how to pronounce that last name, please tell me later. I want to say Lech, but I don't know. Theodore, an

Old Testament scholar, put the point this way, quote, his plans concerning his people are always thoughts of good, of blessing.

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. This 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 should endure our hardships as kindnesses from God, as helpful discipline. This discipline takes three forms.

First, corrective discipline. Sometimes we need to be shown the error of our ways. We need to experience the temporal consequence of our sin to keep us mindful of its eternal consequence if we are not found in Christ.

An example of this is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Some of them were sick and some had died because of their abuse of the Lord's Supper. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 32, but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

[28:14] Discipline also takes the form of preventative discipline. Sometimes we need to be kept from sin by discipline. An example of this is 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, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh.

We don't know what that was, specifically what it was. He calls it a messenger of Satan to harass me to keep me from becoming conceited, to prevent pride in me because of the revelation of God shown to me.

This thorn was given to me. The third type of discipline that we see in the Bible is instructive discipline.

Sometimes we are taught lessons proactively through discipline. This was the case for Job after enduring much suffering, was neither corrective or preventative.

He then declares, I heard of you by the hearing of the ear. This is chapter 42 verse 5. But now my eye sees you.

[29:36] I had some understanding of you, but now I have beheld you. And I think God pushes at us in this way all the time.

We've come to the end of ourselves thinking that we have it figured out, thinking that we have anything under control that we would flee to him, find our value, our worth, our joy, our peace in him.

Through Job's suffering and following dialogue with God, he reached a new, more complete understanding of God. Because Job was doing well, God allowed suffering so that Job would do all the more often instructed through our hardships.

God says, good, keep running, endure more, press on. We must remember that the challenges of our lives are discipline that comes in one of these three forms, and we must remember that it is loving and it is for our good.

We have options when it comes to our understanding of God. God could be good and not sovereign, hoping that things work out for his people, or God could be sovereign and not good, not enacting his rule over the world to bring about the good of his people, or he could be both, and he is.

[31:07] And he is all the time sovereign and good. James Moffat stated in his commentary on this text, to endure rightly, one must endure intelligently.

You must take up these truths and know them that we might endure. Third point, and lastly, reasons for sustained endurance.

We picked this up in the last half of verse 7 and on through verse 11. The author gives three reasons for sustained endurance. Number one, a paternal reason.

Halfway through verse 7, God is treating you as sons. The logic goes, if you are sons, then you will receive discipline.

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.

[32:22] I am being taught. Oh, it's so good to be taught because it proves that God loves me. Secondly, we see a lesser to greater reason.

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 the type of respect for your fathers that the author is here implying. 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?

[33:39] Of course, the answer is much, much more. His loving correction is always perfect and therefore always respectable.

We then see a sanctifying reason. I'll tell you there were three, there was actually four. A sanctifying reason. Verse 10, they discipline us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness.

God's discipline is aimed at making us more like him. And this is a great joy for the Christian heart that we would put off the world and put on and look more like Christ, that God would be exalted in our lives.

A parallel to this is Romans chapter 8, verse 28 and 29. Many of you are very familiar with verse 28, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Every Christian loves verse 28. I've not heard anybody try to argue against what verse 28 means, but I think they missed some of the point of it. I think a lot of Christians look for the good, and there are some tangible things that we can touch.

[35:04] We can see how particular things are being produced out of the good. I'll go through an intersection, there's an accident in, and I'll be so thankful for the delay that I had earlier, because I could have been in the middle of that accident.

I can see, oh, that person that pulled out in front of me, who was so annoying because they were going so slow. Oh, look at the good God worked. I wasn't in this intersection when this accident happened, but we're constantly doing that kind of thing, and the text doesn't leave us guessing what the good is.

It doesn't leave us guessing. Paul has something very specific in mind. He goes on in verse 29, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to, here it is, be conformed to the image of his son, that we would look more like Christ, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. flesh. So we're being disciplined for holiness. And then fourth, there's a joy-filled reason.

Verse 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.

[36:22] The author recognizes that there is a disconnect between the experience of this discipline and the reality of this discipline. He notes in verse 11, it seems painful.

It doesn't seem pleasant at all, but by implication it yields pleasantness, which he calls the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Doesn't that sound wonderful? in the midst of trial, in the midst of temptation, we can be steadied.

We are steadied by our loving God as he trains us to produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

As we don't forget the promise that calls us sons, as we remember that he brings things into our life because he loves us, because he wants us to look more like Christ.

We're being trained to produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Ah, I want through any trial that I experience, and through any trial that you experience, even the suffering that Christ experienced to the point of death, to produce this, right?

[37:50] Unshakeable, steadiness, confidence in the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So hold up and hold on.

Regardless of what you're walking through right now, we have a loving God who disciplines us for the sake of faithful endurance.

look to Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. May we be those who declare, Hebrews 10, 39, that 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. here.