

## EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

### Message #33

### Hebrews 12:4-11

We who know the Lord, who are believers in Jesus Christ, need to know and believe that anything negative that happens to us or any suffering that hits us is not simply the result of circumstances or chance or blind fate; it is the result of a Sovereign God who specifically has our development in mind.

There are many Christians who will tell you that some severe trouble or trial actually drove them to God. I have known of people who were driven to a relationship with God because they were experiencing physical problems. I have known of people who were driven to a relationship with God because they were experiencing emotional and psychological problems. I have known of people who were driven to a relationship with God because they felt the crushing weight of their sin. I have known of people who were driven to a relationship with God after suffering some disaster. God has some very unique disciplinary ways to get His people to focus on Him and His Word.

**As we look down through these verses we will notice that there is a word that shows up eight times (12:5, 6, 7, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). It is the word “discipline” (παιδεια). This particular word is one that is used for discipline and chastening that is designed to instruct or train a child (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 333). In verse 11, the word “trained” is the Greek word (γυμναζω) from which we get our English word “gymnasium.” So the contextual idea is, if we are to run a good Christian race, we need discipline that trains us.**

The actual point of the word is, that in order to train and educate a child, we need to give them disciplinary correction. Now you and I are living in a day and age which has seemingly lost the importance of discipline in the training process. Our children lack discipline, parents lack discipline, schools lack discipline, teachers lack discipline, and even our government officials lack discipline. However, God does not want His family lacking disciplinary instruction and He, Himself, sees to it that they get it. The point the writer makes here is this:

**GOD WILL ALWAYS DISCIPLINE HIS OWN CHILDREN WHEN THEY GET OUT OF LINE, TO TRAIN THEM TO BECOME GODLY AND RIGHTEOUS.**

As we have said, this book of Hebrews is a book designed to exalt Jesus Christ, and one of the things we have seen as we have traveled through it is that Jesus Christ is God’s exalted Son (1:2, 5, 8; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3, 28; 10:29). What God wants us to know is that we too are children of God. He has a personal interest in each of us because we are His sons and daughters.

Now discipline may come from the hand of God to accomplish a variety of things. God may discipline us to educate us. Job was permitted to go through some very difficult trials for the purpose of educating him concerning the greatness of God. Paul had some thorn in his flesh that God refused to eliminate because it taught Paul to depend more on God’s grace. God may discipline us to punish us and correct us. When David sinned against God, God took him to the woodshed. He let David’s bones dry up to the point that David was completely miserable.

God's purpose for any discipline is not to depress us but to develop us. Tom Landry, who was the coach of the Dallas Cowboys, once said: "The job of a coach is to make men do what they don't want to do in order that they may be what they have always wanted to be" (Cited from Ray Stedman, *Hebrews*, p. 139).

Now there are a series of eight disciplinary points the writer of Hebrews desires to make:

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #1** – Our struggle against sin has not caused us to shed our blood. **12:4**

The writer of Hebrews begins this section on discipline by saying, "I want you to remember that no matter what hardship or discipline you are experiencing in your war against sin, it is not as bad as it could be." **When God disciplines us, even in sin matters, He never gives us the full brunt of what He could give us.** In fact, the writer says here "you are not bleeding." Martin Luther used to say that the temptations that he experienced were his "Masters in Divinity."

Now there will always be exceptions to this rule. Some believers sin and die. But these kinds of judgments are far and few between.

I like something Kent Hughes said when we are suffering negative things, "Cut the melodrama; I don't see any bodies lying around" (*Hebrews*, Vol. 2, p. 168).

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #2** – We tend to forget that discipline is part of our son ship. **12:5**

The writer says, when you are whining and complaining about everything, you have apparently forgotten the fact that everything in your life is put there by God to develop His children. When God disciplines His children, even on sin matters, He does so to help them develop as His children.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson made an interesting observation when he said, "The greatest anger of all is when God is not angry with us when we sin. That is the worst thing because it raises the question about the relationship" (*Hebrews 12:4-9*, p. 6).

The tragedy for many believers is that when they are going through troubled waters or dark valleys, they seem to lose sight of the fact that God has put us here for our good. Instead of us complaining or remaining indifferent to it, we need to recognize the significance and learn the lessons. We need to reassess ourselves and by faith make adjustments.

Often times you will hear a believer say, "God must have a purpose." You bet He does. His purpose is to develop our faith as a good-looking son or daughter.

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #3** – God disciplines every son He loves and receives. **12:6**

Do you understand this point? Every one of God's children needs and receives His corrective discipline. **God's discipline proves God loves you.** God's discipline is a way for us to deepen our relationship with God and our love for God. This is the only path He uses to develop us. When God punishes us, we must always view it as coming out of His love.

We have been giving a series of money con artist illustrations in our journey through II Peter. But let me give you a good money story that I know of that truly was wrought by God. I remember a believer telling how he had cheated God out of the offering he should have been giving. He said he gave but not what he should have been giving. He said things started to fall apart in his physical and his financial world. Unexplainable expenses hit him and he was going to God and praying. Finally it dawned on him that perhaps this had come from the hand of God. He said he decided to get back to the basics of Biblical giving and eventually everything in his world turned around. He said as he looked back on that, it became a great moment in his Christian experience, because he learned how to obey as a son; and when he learned that lesson, things changed in his relationship with God.

I don't know what your issues are when it comes to your relationship with God. As we saw last time, you have to run your race and I have to run my race. But what I do know is that God will keep His eye on every son and every daughter, and when they drift from Him, He will discipline His children because He loves them.

God knows how to discipline every son in order to get them to move the right way, and if a son will learn the lesson, he will become a son blessed by God.

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #4** – Discipline from God proves God is our Father. **12:7**

Proverbs 13:24 says, “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.” God’s discipline is not about Him being a God of wrath; it is about Him being our Father.

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #5** – Lack of discipline from God proves we are not His child.  
**12:8**

You can get into serious trouble if you are not a parent of a child and you try to discipline a child. Just recently in this area, a teacher got in trouble because she put tape on a student’s mouth. The father, who looked to me to be a loud-mouthed loser, was throwing a big fit and demanding the teacher be fired. Well when I was growing up, I had a teacher put tape on my mouth and I deserved it. In fact, I’ll bet the girl deserved it. But the problem is we are living in an undisciplined world in which a teacher doesn’t dare discipline anyone’s child.

Back in N.T. times, it was expected that fathers would discipline their children, and if they didn’t, then you knew the child didn’t really belong to them.

If when you sin you do not sense the weight of it, or everything about your life is just sailing along and you have no problems ever, then you have good reason to wonder whether or not you belong to God.

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #6** – We should submit ourselves to our heavenly Father like we did our earthly fathers. **12:9**

If we were willing to respect and to submit to our earthly fathers, how much more should we reverence God and submit to Him who is our heavenly Father.

Of course, we are living in a day and age in which many children refuse to submit to their earthly fathers. Paul predicted that in the last days children would be “disobedient to parents” (II Timothy 3:2). They would be ungrateful and disrespectful. Children like this will rarely yield their lives to Jesus Christ.

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #7** – God’s purpose of our discipline is for our good and His holiness . **12:10**

I want you to carefully observe what is stated in this verse. Our earthly fathers disciplined us “as seemed best to them.” They had to make the decision as to when to discipline and as to how to discipline. They did their best. None were perfect.

Any of us who are fathers, if we are honest, will admit there were times when our disciplinary action was not the best. Speaking for myself, there were times when I think my discipline was too severe and there were times when I think I was too lax. I recall one time I punished the wrong child. I tried to do my best, but I was not perfect. I know there were times I had a bad day at work, and when I got home I would snap at the children for really not much of anything. I tried to discipline right, but there were times I failed.

God is different. His discipline has never been wrong. He has never had a bad day when He disciplines His child. His discipline is always good and it is always for the purpose of us sharing His holiness.

In the aftermath of failure and discipline of the Lord comes an actual reflection of the Holiness of God. When God has taken us to a low moment, we don’t want to go there again so we make adjustments.

**DISCIPLINARY POINT #8** – Receiving discipline is not momentarily joyful, but those who are trained by it blossom in righteousness . **12:11**

When God lets us experience negative things, He is training us. We can either resist it or respond to it.

Two of the greatest words of **verse 11** are “yet, afterwards.” What these words tell us is there will always come a deliverance for the child of God. There will be an end to the discipline. The process will work and in the end righteousness will be seen.

**Now carefully observe from verses 10-11 that “holiness” and “righteousness” demand a context of discipline.** If we are to share the holiness of God and if we are to have the peaceful fruit of righteousness, we will experience the hand of discipline by God.

C.S. Lewis said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to arouse a deaf world” (Stedman, p. 140).

If we are going to survive this world, we need a better grasp of the Word of God, because it is in the Word of God where we learn God’s plans and purposes.

**Let me leave us with some parting thoughts:**

- 1) Do not focus your attention on your sufferings; focus your attention on your Savior.
- 2) Realize that everything in your life as a believer is there by the hand of God.
- 3) Ask God to help you learn the lessons you specifically need to learn.
- 4) Believe that even when God disciplines us, it is for our good and development.