

# God's Disciplining Love

*A Love Story Only God Could Inspire*

By Steve Viars

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Hosea 7-10

**Preached On:** Sunday, August 3, 2014

**Faith Church**

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

**Website:** <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

If I asked you this morning to make a list of the things for which you're thankful, what would you write down this morning? You know the Scripture teaches us that we're to rejoice always, did you do that this week? And we're to pray without ceasing. Wherein everything to give thanks for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus so, I hope you are in the habit every morning of waking up and starting to thank your God and reviewing the reasons you have to praise him. You sound like the Psalmist, who said in Psalm 7:17, "I will give thanks to the Lord." Is that you? "According to his righteousness and we'll sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High." So, hopefully this list I am asking you to make this morning in your mind, hopefully it isn't something you'd have to think about very long because you would say, "Hey, I do that everyday. That's an important part of cultivating my heart and preparing for the day." Well, good. What kinds of things would you put on your thanksgiving list? I assume for many of us we would include things like being thankful for our families, for our homes, for our health, for our jobs. We always want to recognize God as the giver of all good things so it would be right to pause and thank him for our material blessings and so if you're in the habit of doing that and if you would do that this morning, great but it probably wouldn't be long for many who are going to hear this message today, to also begin being thankful for the various characteristics or attributes of God that you especially appreciate. In fact, it'd be a very interesting exercise this morning to have you just turn to your neighbor and list the four or five characteristics or attributes of God for which you're especially thankful and then just to compare the list and see how similar they were. I would assume we would find many here praising God for his holiness, praising God for his grace, or for his love, for his mercy, it would actually be a corporate fulfillment of Psalm 7:17, us giving thanks to the Lord according to his righteousness and singing praises to the name of our Lord Most High.

Now, with that in mind, let me ask you another question about this mental list that you're making. How far down would it be before you would find yourself thanking God for his disciplining love? Huh? His disciplining love in your life and in the lives of those around you? Would there be a natural ground-swell this morning by the Lord's people saying, "We are thankful for the Lord's discipline." And by that, just to clarify, we would mean this: both being thankful for God's instructive discipline that he loves us so much that he makes it possible for you and for others to glorify him by living a life characterized in

part by the Spirit's fruit of self-discipline or self-control. You'd be thankful for that, would you not? And while we're in that neighborhood, on the other hand, when you or when someone around you is choosing not to live by the Spirit's fruit of self-discipline or self-control and instead choosing to go down a path of being rebellious or being self-indulgent. You'd also be thankful, would you not, that God loves you enough that through corrective discipline he would seek to motivate and empower you to repent? To admit your sin and to turn around right away and return to the right path both for your good and for his glory?

You see, it is true that the Lord has many, many ways to motivate us to love him and to serve him and to live for him all of our days. When we're thinking correctly, we're also glad that on those occasions when we blow right past all of his positive motivations to live wisely and live well, there is another roadblock on the path to additional rebellion and folly and it is called what? God's corrective discipline and we're thankful for that too in our lives and in the lives of others. Conversely, when we're thinking foolishly, we despise his discipline. We kick against his discipline. We reject his discipline and we continue down the ruinous path. That's why Solomon wrote things like, "My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe his reproof." Good word, huh? Or Proverbs 12:1, "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge but he who hates reproof is," what does the Bible say? "Stupid." There it is, right in the Bible. He who hates reproof is stupid. Or Proverbs 13:18, "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline." Mark that one down. That's a word from God right there. "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects disciplines but he who regards reproof will be honored." Therefore Proverbs 19:20, "Listen to counsel," like the counsel of your sweet pastor on the Lord's day. "Listen to counsel and accept discipline that you may be wise the rest of your days."

Friends, it's extremely important for us as we consider our lives and the lives of those around us that we are thankful for many things. Many things for sure including God's loving discipline. With that in mind, I'm going to invite you to do something that's a bit different for us around here. I'm actually going to ask you to turn to three places in your Bible all at once. Are you ready for a little gymnastics this morning, a little cardiovascular exercise? Here we go: find Hosea 7 which is on page 643 of the front section of your Bible, the Old Testament and then we'll actually be starting this morning in Deuteronomy 24 which is earlier in the Old Testament, page 150. Then you might want to turn to Hebrews 12. I'll actually have that one on the Powerpoint if you say, "I ran out of hands." Well, you could tear off a little sheet from your bulletin or something but Hosea 7 and then Deuteronomy 24 and lastly Hebrews 12.

Our church's theme, as you know, this year is "Loving Our Neighbors." So we're considering from all sorts of perspectives how every one of us can take specific steps to fulfill what Jesus called the second great commandment. That's what he called it. After first loving the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our strength, to secondly then what? Learn to love our neighbors as ourselves and so this year we want that to especially be true in five ways: the way we love one another in our church family; the way we love our actual neighbors we each live around; the way we love those that the Lord has placed right around our two ministry campuses; the way we

love our downtown neighbors, especially through the work of our Community Development Corporation; and lastly, the way we love our senior citizens, through especially the development of this new senior living community. Loving our neighbors. In order to do that, it's important that we be growing in our understanding of biblical love because it's possible that we could have concluded, "Hey, we're loving. We're loving our neighbors well," and that turn out not to be the case when we compare our love to the characteristics and attributes of our loving God.

So the last several weeks we have turned our attention to the book of Hosea, a love you'd better believe only God could inspire, huh? Where the Lord instructs his prophet to marry a prostitute? That's right, said it right here in the church house. Where God instructs his prophet to marry a prostitute and then love her unconditionally anyway as what? As a living illustration of God's love for his unfaithful people. This morning we're going to be in chapters 7-10 and if you're new around here, you need to understand that we practice expository preaching here or expositional preaching and so what we do is we take extended passages of the Bible and we go verse-by-verse and chapter-by-chapter. If you say, "Why is Pastor Viars talking about this? Is he wound up about something?" No, it's because back last December we laid out our preaching schedule and the book of Hosea was slated for this summer and so I'm talking about what I'm talking about because it's the next thing in the text and we're hoping this morning to find three principles to help us value God's disciplining love. I'm not sure we value it as much as we should. You know? Can you give me a little, "Yes, maybe that's true."

Three principles to help us value God's disciplining love. We're going to get to the verses. I wouldn't ask you to turn to three passages and not ever get there but maybe we need to start right here by reminding ourselves that God loves us by providing instructive discipline. Now, we're going to get to the verses I mentioned in just a minute but I think this topic especially needs proper context so before we think about God's corrective discipline, that is consequences for doing something wrong, let's back up and think about discipline in a positive way. Does that even exist, by the way? Discipline in a positive way as a desired and appropriate way to live in order to please God. What is instructive discipline? Well, we could begin right here in the beauty and the order of creation. In the early chapters of the book of Genesis, God brought order and beauty and discipline out of what started as chaos and a summary of his creation was Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that he had made and behold it was very good and there was evening and there was morning the sixth day." You see, every day the sun comes up in an orderly, predictable, disciplined fashion, right? Absolutely, because it's created by our orderly, disciplined God. Seeds are planted in the ground and they come up in an orderly, predictable, disciplined fashion. That is a good thing.

Pastor Green and I and his family and some others were speaking at a conference this past week in Montana and we had an opportunity to stay at a place of indescribable beauty because of God's powerful, creative, orderly, disciplined hand. We would say with the Psalmist, "They who dwell in the ends of the earth shall stand in awe of your signs. You make the dawn and the sunset for joy every day. You visit the earth and cause it to overflow. You greatly enrich it. The stream of God is full of water. You prepare their

grain for thus you prepare the earth." Here's the point: discipline and orderliness are good things. Do you agree with that logically? Discipline and orderliness are good things.

There's also, take it the next step logically, there is also the joy and honor that could have come through fulfilling our creation mandate. What was that all about? Learning to live under the authority of God in a disciplined way because that was best for us. In Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image,'" in other words, like us, "according to Our likeness; and let them rule," notice this, "over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Let them rule. Let them rule. Let them rule. "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" Theologically, we were created to be dominion havens, meaning to glorify God by in a disciplined way subduing the environment around us. Please note that theologically that's so very important and that kind of disciplined life would potentiall bring our Creator the greatest glory and his creatures the greatest good. Rebellion has never taken you to a good place. That is true.

There is also the clarity of his commands. Pastor Aucoin emphasized this last week. By the way, I'm so thankful for all the hard work Pastor Aucoin and Pastor Green have done in sharing this series with me. Aren't you glad for our pastoral staff? I am so glad for these men that I have the privilege of serving with along with their families. Pastor Aucoin touched on this last week but God has clearly and repeatedly laid out his commands for his people and we could prove that all day long but for example, in Deuteronomy 6:1, "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it." So in Deuteronomy right before they went into the Promised Land, they were rehearsing his commands. Well, what are those? Those are like white lines on the highway. That's instructive discipline to keep us heading in the right direction. God loves us by providing instructive discipline.

There is also the power of his covenants and what I mean by that is throughout Scripture God lays out both the blessings for obedience to his commands and the curses or consequences for disobedience, right? We're not going to take the time to look at all the Old Testament examples this morning for sake of time but that theme is found repeatedly in God's dealings with his people. In other words, God has given us instructive discipline and one of the things that motivates us to keep our lives within the white lines of his overwhelming authority for us is the blessings that come as a result and the consequences that will come if we don't. Please don't say, "Well, that's the Old Testament God." There aren't two Gods, okay? There just aren't and you see that exact same theme carried over into the New Testament in places like Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption." Why is that in the Bible? To help you benefit from God's instructive discipline. "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." To help you benefit from God's instructive discipline.

So here's the point: when we think about God's discipline, the conversation ought to start in a positive way. It really should. With the fact that God instructs us how to live a life characterized by appropriate self-control or self-discipline. Which brings him the highest glory and brings ourselves the highest good. Now with that in mind, look at your section in Deuteronomy 28. Remember, this is right before the children of Israel go into the Promised Land. 1,400 BC essentially. Unbelievable verses. They'll take your breath away theologically if you know your Bible at all. Look at Deuteronomy 28:45, Moses says,

"So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies," did you hear that, "you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you "

God's corrective discipline, let's keep reading,

"The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down,"

don't forget that phrase, it's going to come up later, 700 years later,

"as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you."

Now friend, that ought to absolutely take our breath away. And here is why, in case you are not connecting the dots yet: that passage was spoken in approximately 1,400 BC and those exact words are fulfilled in precise detail during the days of Hosea the prophet 700 years later. You see, because the northern kingdom of Israel has rejected God's loving, instructive discipline, they'll now have to undergo his loving, corrective discipline at the hands of the evil, brutal Assyrians. Here's the principle: God also loves us by practicing if necessary corrective discipline and we can not say that we are going to study the book of Hosea with integrity without dealing with this particular topic.

So now, look please at Hosea chapter 7. I'd like to read, we're not going to read it all, I'd like to read a couple of verses from chapter 7 and then some from chapter 8 just to help us get a flavor for what does corrective discipline sound like and feel like. Hosea 7 beginning in verse 1,

"When I would heal Israel, The iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria, For they deal falsely; The thief enters in, Bandits raid outside, And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them," God says, "They are before My face."

Look at chapter 8:1,

"Put the trumpet to your lips! Like an eagle," we've heard that before, "Like an eagle the enemy comes against the house of the LORD," This is Assyria, "Because they have transgressed My covenant And rebelled against My law. They cry out to Me, 'My God, we of Israel know You!'"

Proven by the way that words are cheap especially in the church house. God says,

"Israel has rejected the good. The enemy will pursue him. They have set up kings but not by me," note that, "They've appointed princes," I didn't know it, now hear this, "With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves that they might be cut off. He is rejecting your calf Samaria, saying, My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence? For from Israel is even this! A craftsman made it, so it is not God; Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces. For they sow the wind," here it is, "And they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; It yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; They are now among the nations Like a vessel," note this, "in which no one delights. For they have gone up to Assyria, Like a wild donkey all alone; Ephraim has hired lovers. Even though they hire allies among the nations, Now I will gather them up; And they will begin to diminish Because of the burden of the king of princes. Since Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin, They have become altars of sinning," What an incredible irony for him, "Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My law, They are regarded as a strange thing. As for My sacrificial gifts, They sacrifice the flesh and eat it, But the LORD has taken no delight in them. Now He will remember their iniquity, And punish them for their sins; They will return to Egypt." Think about that, "They will return to Egypt. For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces; And Judah has multiplied fortified cities, But I will send a fire on its cities that it may consume its palatial dwellings."

And I realize you might say, "I'm new to studying the Bible." Or "I'm old at studying the Bible. I'm not sure I got all that." Let me just summarize the choices of God's people,

what did they do? Well, they believed the Lord was unaware of their choices. You see, one of the fastest ways to a rebellious, out of control life is believing in your heart that God does not know or God does not care. Think about some of the conversations you had this week. Think about some of the choices that you made. Was any of it out of control? Huh? As if God doesn't know or God doesn't care.

They broke the covenant chapter 8, verses 1 and 2 says, and they rebelled against God's law. They chose to be self-indulgent instead of self-controlled. By the way, we're obviously studying a context in which God's people were behaving in a very evil fashion. I'm not suggesting I think the average person who walks into this church is living that way, so what's the polar opposite of some of this? It's when people choose to let the Spirit of God help them live in a self-disciplined way in part by obeying the word whether they like it or not.

I had an occasion for that just a couple of weeks ago, seeing that in a positive way. I was working with a couple from outside of our church in counseling and they had come and they said, "Let me tell you exactly why we are here. Our lives and our marriage and our kids are out of control so much so that we figured we might as well just get a divorce before someone else gets hurt additionally." Thankfully, they came and they trusted Christ and not long after that I began showing them from the word what God's truth says about how husbands are supposed to function and how wives are supposed to function if they want the Holy Spirit to develop in them self-discipline in their homes. I wish I had the video where it obviously started with the guy, because the guy is most responsible for this right, men? Uh-huh. I can hear that from Faith West. I'm getting so many uh-huh's by the men on that one. So the guy, he went first and about halfway through the session here is what he said, he said, "I don't like this at all. I don't like it at all what God's word is telling me I ought to be in my home." And then he said, "But if Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, with his help I'm going to start living that way." Then, of course, because I believe in equal opportunity counseling, don't you believe that? Ladies, we turned over to his honey and we started talking about what the word of God, because Scripture says a little bit about that too, huh? "Yes, that's what I see going on right there." It's so funny, she said, want to guess what she said? "I don't like this at all. I don't like this a lick but if this is what God wants me to do, then with his help that's the way I am going to choose to live in a self-disciplined way." And it's interesting I still have the opportunity to run into them and the joy on their face as a result of living in a way that is consistent with the instructive discipline of God.

Back to the Israelites in verse 4, they made crucial life choices with no consideration of God's will. Can you imagine that? It's interesting how often that comes up in a short section of Scripture: they're out of control, they're on the road to rebellion, they're blowing past decisional crossroads when they could've paused and received instructive discipline from his hand. They did it and they said it and they bought it and they didn't care what God had to say about any of it. Verse 8, they used their wealth because you realize if you are out of control it's going to affect the way you spend your money. Yeah, yeah, they used their wealth to find their joy and their prosperity and their gods. There are

so many more things we could list from this passage but the overall point is: they were doing to their God exactly what Hosea's unfaithful wife had done to him.

Now, two very important points for us to learn from this portion of the book: question one, did God stop loving his people because of their unfaithfulness? Did he? Did he stop loving his people because of their unfaithfulness? Of course not. Question two though, was the nature or the manifestation of God's love different because of their unfaithfulness? Absolutely. And the principle is: if you and I do not choose to benefit from the instructive discipline of God then we should prepare ourselves to experience the corrective discipline of God.

Now by the way if you say, "Boy, it's really nice to have you back, Pastor Happy." I realize you might say, "Well, I don't like this at all. I don't like it at all." Well, do you understand, truth is not dependent on whether or not you like it and God is not planning on stopping his program until you get on board? Do we all understand that? So the question is not, Do I like it? Do you like it? The question is, is what I'm saying theologically correct? Is it an emphasis of the word of God? And then secondly, when we're thinking correctly, it does make sense logically that God would treat his people in this way. Consider this question, is it loving for God to allow his children to do whatever we want without consequences or correction? Is that what loving fathers do?

We moved to Lafayette nearly 27 years ago and that was when our oldest daughter Bethany was about two and I realized it's going to be hard for some of you even to understand back in the olden days what it was like but this was back when car seats and seat belts it wasn't quite the big thing that it is today. Okay? And I'll just leave it at that. I'm not saying it's good, I'm not saying it's bad, I'm just saying car seats were not a big deal, seat belts the whole thing. I'm not saying it wasn't legal but it just wasn't that big of a thing. I should probably tell you, at any time I use a family illustration, it is always with my kid's permission and Bethany did give me permission to say this as long as I also said this was the only time in her life that she ever misbehaved. But anyway, I needed to go to Lowe's. For some reason it was just she and I in the car and I needed to go to Lowe's. Obviously some project of great importance that I was in too much of a rush to mess with car seats and so I was going to put Bethany in her car seat and she started the whole fussing thing. Have your kids ever fussed about being in the car seat? They're way too restrictive and all of that and she didn't want to be in her car seat so I let her sit in the front seat with me with no seat belt on. In my mind, I was being a loving father. I mean, who wants to...too much trouble to put all that restrictive discipline on her. Well sure enough, you can figure out where this story goes. At some point between here and Lowe's some goof, man there is a lot of goof's traveling on highway 26, anyways somebody got in my way so I had to stop really quickly and of course Bethany goes flying out of her seat, bangs herself on the dashboard.

It wasn't a terrible injury, thank the Lord, but here's the thing: at that moment by allowing my child to do anything she wanted, I was being the polar opposite of a truly loving father. It's not that God no longer loved his children, it's that his love had to be manifested in a different way because of their rebellion in order to put them in the best



possible position to repent and change the direction they were traveling. And what that means is: because of the choices of God's people, they had to face the loving, correctively disciplinary consequences. Did you pick some of them up in the text? For example, in verses 9 and 10 of chapter 8, their lover, Assyria, would become their destroyer. You say what was that about? Well, as outrageous as this sounds, Israel actually rejected God and tried to make an alliance with the wicked nation of Assyria, the same nation that would eventually destroy them and carry them away to captivity. Now, think about that? How often have you seen someone look to alcohol or look to drugs or look to illicit sex for joy and satisfaction? Take it all the way back to the Garden of Eden, instead of subduing their passions, ruling over them, they were subdued by them and in the end they were destroyed by their booze. Just like Assyria destroyed Israel or destroyed by the rebellion that they thought would serve them so well. That's what Solomon was trying to tell his son, "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline." And I realize you might say, "Pastor Viars, I'm not sure I like this sermon." Well, what do you like better? This sermon or poverty and shame? Because those are the options. "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline but he who regards reproof will be honored."

The text goes on to emphasize that the impotence of their idols would be revealed in verses 6 and 7. They thought their idols would bring them fertility but now they're experiencing great barrenness like the employee who thought he could steal and lie to get ahead financially so he's worshipping money and he knew he wouldn't be caught and now he's out of a job and he's impoverished because his idols let him down. Or the student who worshiped good grades and so he cheated and cut corners and then was exposed and dismissed from the program. His idols let him down. And by the way, it was loving for God to allow his idols to let him down. Why? Two reasons: one as an attempt to bring the person to his or her senses. You see, corrective discipline is often the last ditch effort before the rebellious person hardens his heart and enters the terrifying condition described in the Bible as being beyond repentance. Secondly, as a lesson to everybody else who might be considering it, equally rebellious and self-indulgent choice. Another emphasis in this text is that their purpose would be eradicated. Did you notice that in verse 8? Israel is swallowed up, they are now among the nations like a vessel, hear this, in which no one delights. You see, their submission to God, they're allowing him to help them live a disciplined life, was intended to help them fulfill the marvelous purpose. What were they supposed to be? To be a light to the nations and now because of their rebellion and their unwillingness to control their tongues and their hearts and their passions and their choices, they've been placed on this shelf. Think about all the truth they had been given; think about all the gifts that they had been given. They could have fulfilled their God given purpose of being a light and you realize that could happen right here right now. God has given you all sorts of gifts, all sorts of opportunities to make a difference in this world. How many because of their rebellion, because of their unwillingness to develop self-control, because of their out of control anger, because of their out of control words, because of their out of control choices regrettably they have had to be put on the shelf. Ultimately their attempts at being free from what they viewed as God's overly restrictive law has resulted in greater bondage, please mark that down, grater bondage to their own sin and misery and inevitable consequences.

Perhaps, the worst condition an Old Testament Israelite could ever imagine is found at the end of verse 13, returning to Egypt. Returning to Egypt, back to the place of bondage and captivity. That's why Solomon told his sons, "The ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord. He watches all his past," now hear this, "his own iniquities will capture the wicked. He will be held with the cords of his own sin." You might say, "It's just a little thing. I can do this one time. I can do this five times. I can do this one more time," not recognizing all the things that you believe are giving you freedom, are binding you up with the cords of your own sin. "He will die for lack of instruction and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray."

Now, where is the hope in all of this? Where is the application for people like you and me? Friends, the truth is that God loves us in amazingly similar ways today. There isn't one God of the Old Testament and another God of the New Testament. That's not true. God loves us in amazingly similar ways today. First of all, by making the joy of a self-disciplined life possible and I hope that I have said this enough and that there is no confusion on this particular point: we're talking about self-discipline only as a fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. Why? Because our rebellion is too well entrenched and our sin too thoroughly pervasive for us to be able to successfully overcome it on the long haul by ourselves. So it starts by honestly looking in the mirror of God's word and acknowledging who we really are. That's what C. S. Lewis meant when he said, "Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement, he is a rebel who must lay down his arms." And when you do that, what happens when you're willing to admit your need and place your faith and trust in Christ? Scripture says that he frees us from the penalty and the power of that rebellion. You see friends, Hosea's love and provision for his wayward wife was a picture and a foreshadowing of God's love for us and his provision in Christ. Jesus was willing to die for our discipline. Isaiah said it like this, "He was pierced through for our discipline. For our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well being fell upon him and by a scourging we're healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each has turned to his own way but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us to fall on him." The message of Scripture is that Jesus Christ was willing to bear the brunt of the corrective discipline that we so clearly deserved.

And I would just ask you this morning, has there been a definite time in your life where you have admitted your need? Not some lame, "I need Jesus in my heart." No, "I am a rebel and I want to repent of my sin and place my faith and trust in what Jesus Christ did on the cross as my only hope of eternity." That decision had hundreds of attendant benefits including the fact, here's a praise God moment, "Knowing this that our old self was crucified with him," there is our union with Christ, "in order that our body of sin might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin for he who has died is freed from sin." And that decision, I hope you've made it, that decision is what sets you on a lifetime path of sanctification where Jesus, not you, did you hear Martin Luther's great hymn that we were singing? We're not in our own strength confiding, Christ empowers us to develop the Spirit's fruit of self-control. Paul said, "The fruit of the spirit is love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness, faithfulness, gentleness," and what? I hope you don't hate discipline. "Self-control. Against such there

is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and its desires."

I've had the opportunity to be involved in a couple of memorial services this week and the difference between someone who dies in Christ and someone who does not is immense. We had brother V.'s memorial service this week, a dear member of this church, just had his hundredth birthday party not too long ago and brother V. as an 100 year old man was at our community picnic just a few weeks ago. What a dear man and if you know anything about Jack V. you know he was one disciplined dude. No question about that whatsoever. We've been going over some of his paperwork because we were asked to do that and reading his testimonies, reading the ways he had the opportunity to have a marvelous spiritual impact on others, to be a light of the nations. Why? Because Christ was working in and through him to live a joyfully disciplined life.

I mentioned earlier, I certainly don't believe that the average person who will hear this sermon today in our church family is similar to a person in Old Testament Israel at the end of the eighth century. I'm not suggesting that at all but I would say this: thank God that there are so many people in our church family who are living in such a way that they want God to develop in them in part, the Spirit's fruit of self-control. Well, then that would lead to this question, why would God ever have to discipline you correctively then? You know, here's something if you have small kiddies. I hope you have taught your kids, we certainly try to teach this to ours, Ephesians 6:4, "And fathers provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up," two tools, "in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord." The teaching and the discipline of the Lord. So, if you said to our kids when they were growing up, "Who do your daddy and mommy want you to be like?" They would have said, "Well, like Jesus Christ." And hopefully they could've given some specific examples of how that was the case. Then if you said to your kiddies, to our kid, "Well how does daddy and mommy help you become more like Jesus Christ? What are the tools they use?" Well, they would say, "One of them is teaching, is one of their tools," and hopefully they could give some specific examples of how mom and dad had tried to teach them. Then if you said to them, "Well, what's the other tool that mom and dad have?" "Oh, it's discipline, corrective discipline." Then if you said to them, "Well, which one do you like the best of teaching or discipline? Which tool do you like the best?" They would say if they were thinking right, "I like teaching." And then if you said to them, "Well, why would mom and dad ever have to discipline you?" What's the answer? "When I didn't respond properly to the teaching." The same is true with our heavenly Father. He's willing to exercise corrective discipline as our heavenly Father.

You might say, "Did you forget Hebrews 12?" No, no but here it is and listen I know we are at the end of all this, please listen carefully to what the writer of Hebrews says about our topic.

"You forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, don't regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,' hear that, 'nor faint when you're reprovved by him for those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives.'"

He disciplines us for our good so that we may share his holiness. Boom, boom, boom and boom.

"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it," hear this, "that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards," hear this, "when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears."

You see, what should you and I do if because of some rebellious choice we're being disciplined by our heavenly Father or if that process is unfolding in the hardened life of someone else? Did you see the answers in that text? Don't despise it. Don't blame it on others, don't say it's not fair, don't make matters worse than they already are by despising it. Beware of allowing bitterness to spring up, the polar opposite of the fact your loving God desires. Fundamentally bitter people do not believe what we're studying this morning. If you continue down that path, what does the text say? You'll defile many with your gossip, with your slander, with your ongoing rebellion, you'll not just destroy yourselves but you will defile many and you could even reach the horrifying position of being beyond repentance even if you're crying an ocean of tears. "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline."

The implications for the fall are immense. They're immense. I realize you may not like hearing about this particular attribute of God. My job is to teach you all the word and your job is to respond to all the word and if what we're talking about is true, do you realize that we're living in a community filled with people who in some cases are not prepared to face the corrective and ultimate discipline of God and that's why I hope we would say, "We've had a great summer and all around the world haven't we? Now we're going to get our hands on the plow and get as much done for God this fall as possible because it's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God unprepared." Paul said, "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord," KJV, "the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We also have the opportunity to plan right now, to seek to grow in the Spirit's fruit of self-control as we move through this fall together.

Let's stand together for prayer:

*Father in heaven, thank you for trusting us with hard truth and, Lord, thank you for loving us even in the hard ways. And I pray that you would help us now to respond to*

*what we've heard in a way that would be for your best glory and for our best good. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*