

How Can We Suffer Well?

[Hebrews 12:3-11](#)

Hebrews, Day 46

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 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.
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.

- Hebrews 12:3-11, ESV

I have never had chemo. I know several people who have had it, and from what they've told me, I hope I never have to have it. Chemo makes you sick, takes your energy, often makes your hair fall out in patches, and is generally a miserable experience. No one would ever want to have chemo, except for something worse than chemo: dying of cancer. When you're facing the prospect of dying of cancer, chemo suddenly becomes a life-saving, hope-giving gift!

Life is hard. Often, life is good and full of joy and laughter, but let's face it: Life is also hard. People betray your trust and lie to you. You struggle against the weakness of your sinful nature, frustrated by your failures. People you love die, sometimes suddenly. No one would sign up for the suffering and heartache of this life willingly, except for something far worse: death. Alfred Lord Tennyson put it famously: "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

The hardships of life are especially worth enduring if we know they are working toward something good, some greater outcome. Then, the suffering of life becomes like chemo: It hurts, but it's helping in a more important way. For unbelievers, the suffering of this life is not accomplishing anything greater for them, except perhaps to make the joyful moments of life more enjoyable. But when this life is over for them, the joy will be over, too, while the suffering will just be beginning.

For believers in Jesus, we have a better hope. Our suffering has a greater purpose. The Apostle Paul said, "*For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.*" (2 Cor. 4:17, ESV)

Here in Hebrews 12, we see two kinds of purposeful suffering in the Christian life: the intense struggle against sin and the loving discipline of our Heavenly Father. The fight against sin is real and hard, but as we look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, we see One who endured much hostility against Himself and who, in the Garden of Gethsemane, resisted temptation so fiercely that He sweat drops of blood in His anguish. We are called to consider Him when our struggle against sin grows intense.

Also here in Hebrews 12, we're told that much of the suffering we face in this life is the loving discipline of our Heavenly Father. No children like discipline. Discipline hurts. But discipline, done in love and applied with wisdom, works. If our discipline of our children bears fruit, despite our sin and foolishness, how much better is our Heavenly Father's discipline of us?

So, when life gets hard, we need to remember three things:

1. We'll never have it as hard as Jesus had it, and He endured what He suffered for us, in our place, taking what we deserve.
2. Our Father disciplines us in perfect love and with perfect wisdom. We can trust Him.
3. Our sufferings are only temporary. They will end when we step into an eternity of perfect joy and peace, never to suffer again!