

“God Uses Hardship to Teach Us Discipline”

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-13 (vs. 7-10)

Rev. Alice Tamrie, Instructor

I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

A. Historical Background

Paul is making a profound argumentative statement in the Book of Hebrews, the 19th Book of the New Testament about whom we should worship – the Lord Jesus Christ! He is God’s perfect revelation of Himself. He affirms that Christ is better than prophets, angels, Moses, other priests, Abraham, Aaron, OT sacrifices, heroes, parents, others. We are all fellow partners and partakers of this Message. We see a repeated use of OT quotations and images in this book. We see the repeated warnings against spiritual unbelief because they were on the verge of renouncing the Christian faith and returning to their former ways. Negligence in good deeds and sloppy attendance at worship services were evidence of a cooling faith. Thus, Paul wanted to rekindle the flame of commitment to Christ. He repeatedly tells them not to “draw back” (10:39). We are to endure in the faith- Christ is the example of this godly endurance and a call to endure God’s chastening—it’s a danger to refuse God! We must stay focused, no distractions!

B. Biblical Context

Being obedient is no less urgent than it is now! These times point to such today, the rise of hatred, racial divide, governmental entities flowing in the wrong direction, etc. Hebrews directs us of the one example of the many things that adheres to our ultimate loyalty and reminds us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (13:8), He is still the only Mediator between us and God. There is a warning if a person willingly turns from fellowship with Christ, the intent is to cause Christians to remember the great cost of God’s grace and to take their profession of faith seriously. This is not to cause doubt in salvation, you can be forgiven, don’t be unwilling, be transparent and ask God to help us endure. Why, because each of us in this study are surrounded by witnesses, you and I have endured, despite the hinderances, entanglement – which we are

encouraged in the Word today to throw those negatives off and fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, as he endured the opposition, HE is a witness; we struggle yes, but not to the point of shedding blood. This lesson is an encouragement, from time to time we do need discipline (7 times). Discipline is painful – but let's be strengthened, consider, and mediate on HIM, run this race and let nothing distract you from making progress as we grow in the faith! We are encouraged and exhorted to live out this Christian living, be disciplined, though chastened sometimes, as suffering comes to all; it is a part of life, even though it is not easy to bear. There is a divine word of encouragement to change your inner self-old self and change your lifestyle and attitude, be healed, not be out of joint by being disobedient, live in obedience, peace, and joy.

II. **The Lesson: "GOD USES HARDSHIP TO TEACH US DISCIPLINE"**

1. **vv. 1-3. Christ is our example.** In essence it tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ as our example as life is a long-distance race. "The cloud of witnesses" are the people of faith mentioned in Chapter 11. They are not just spectators watching us; they are witnesses testifying to the truth of faith. The mass of clouds refers to the people. This is used as a footrace, running for the win! Finish the course and pass on the baton, encouraging those behind us. Now, when you run in the race, "run well...." throw off everything that hinders...any kind of weight" ...rather it is the race, not the training that is in view. Take off what hinders (sin is a crippling hindrance), the race is not a short sprint, but of a distance – this takes sustained effort, keeps on going with great determination. Look to Christ instead of the circumstances. Even then, don't look at the Cross, but on the crown, not on suffering, or torture, agonies, but on the reward! It's what Christ resolves in us! The joy is the heavenly bliss. Jesus went to the Cross because of the joy it would bring! He looked right through the cross to the coming joy. Jesus thought so little of the pain and shame involved that he did not bother to avoid it! He endured it. Glory to God! Christ is at God's right hand forevermore. He "endured opposition from sinful men"; our situation is not unique, our Master endured. Let's not give up prematurely; don't faint and collapse through weariness. We are called to persevere in the face of hardship. What are your hardships?

2. **vv. 4-6**. **DISCIPLINE** is mentioned 7 times.

This is no casual glance, but a firmly fixed gaze. In sin you are bringing hurt to yourself and others at the same time. We all struggle, but the pioneers blazed the way (family, friends, etc. Never lose faith, never flagger your faith, plow through it. Have you shredded blood as Christ did? Have you forgotten the word of encouragement. Don't shrug off God's discipline, but don't be crushed by it either. Can you compare your suffering, consider it to the torture Christ endured on our behalf. Suffering has meaning and he will not lead us into meaningless suffering. It's a very real possibility of shredding blood, and truth, many have been killed because of their faith. Proverbs 3:11-12 teaches divine discipline: "My son" – the certainty of suffering encourages the believer rather than dismay him, because he knows that it is God's discipline for him – "Have you forgotten?"

Disciplines points to sufferings that teach us something. Sure, there is sin, but somehow the hand of God is in it, too. Circumstances are not beyond God's control, but he can use it for his purpose. This is a wise and prudent thought, as a father involves disciplining his children. So, the believer is not to belittle the significance of his sufferings nor lose heart in the face of God's correction. A father could discipline throughout the life and chose to punish as he chose, the right to do discipline was always there. Discipline was only to be expected. In the same way, God disciplines us because He wants to make us better.

3. **vv. 7-10**. **Assigned emphasis is Verse 7-10:**

Discipline ...it is not as misery, accident, or the like that Christians should understand suffering but as disciplines. God uses it to teach important lessons. God is treating us a 'sons/child of God'. Everyone goes through being discipline, we are "illegitimate" if we are disobedient, but still, we are in God's family. He is not disowning you. God is seen as a 'corrector' or "discipliner" by punishing all when we go wrong. This is not arousing respect, not resentment...it is to accept life's suffering as discipline from his fatherly hand (8-9). But God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seemed pleasant at the time, but painful. It is aimed at our good, as it points to God's holy character, producing a character like his own (10). Chastisement is never a happy, joyous affair as it results in righteousness and peace, not to be

irritable, impatient with faults. Suffering is acceptable in the right spirit, or it will not produce the right result. So, we need to see it as “training”, it is the right habit God desire us to have, i.e., “peaceable fruit” follows.

4. **vv. 11-13. AN EXHORTATION TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

So, the focus is to live an acceptable Christian life experience. It is important that God’s people live as God’s people. We are not to take our standards from the ungodly. Because we now know of God’s loving discipline, we must put forward our best effort. Verse 12: “Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees” is an image – if for some reason the hands and legs are out of action, they need to be put right!

Verse 13 is a quotation from Proverbs 4:26: “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Clearly the idea is to put the paths into better order to facilitate travel, specifically for the lame. When Christians are together, there must be consideration for the weak among their members. i. e., the “lame.”. It means that the lame is not to be turned from the right way. In other words, by taking care of the defective/disobedient members of the congregation, the stronger members can help them along the way. Where the Christian life is in any way “out of joint”, steps should be taken to revitalize it.

III. CONCLUSION: GOD IS DISCIPLINING/EDUCATING US

Therefore, we are not to drop out of life’s race, as we must accept and learn from HIS discipline, for he wants to make us better. We are being exhorted to have the welfare of what HE has in mind for us. The result of this is peace and righteousness. As we respect our parent’s disciplining us, so why not embrace God’s training. He is doing what is the holy best for us. Don’t drag your feet, pick them up and do right. We must go to the next best level and grow in spiritual maturity. Renew our strength so we can endure the race of faith. As a believer your focus is to grow in faith. In other words, throw away all the excess baggage, be well oiled and anointed in godly holiness. Keep your eyes on Jesus and his power, run the race of endurance and be actively persistent in the race before us.