

## Heb 12:3-13 The Discipline of God

The context of our passage is still “*endurance*,” “*running the race of faith until the end*.” Because only those who run to the end will finish the race. Only those who endure will receive the prize, In v. 3 the author uses the word “consider.” It is a mathematical term that means to look at the numbers and calculate the conclusions. And really, vv. 3-4 continue the theme of vv. 1-2, which is to “*look unto Jesus*,” not only as the “**founder and perfecter of our faith**,” but as our example. Jesus, the Son of God, took on flesh. And this was the greatest humiliation of all history. “**Though he was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant . . .**” (Phil. 2:6-7). Jesus did not come to be served, “**but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many**” (Mark 10:45). As v. 2 tells us, He “*endured the cross, despising the shame . . .*” So, v. 3, we must consider how our Lord “*endured from sinners such hostility against himself*.” Why? So that we may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

“**In our struggle against sin**” we “**have not yet resisted to the point of shedding our blood**.” We are here this morning. And YES, we have trials and afflictions and tribulations! But, we do not lose heart! Why? Because as Christians, as those who have believed on Jesus, those who have received him, those who have counted the cost and follow Him, KNOW that everything we go through in this life is worth it! Jesus is Lord! And when we consider what this world has to offer, and even Jesus asks us, “*Will you turn away?*” But, we answer as the Apostle Peter answered, “*Where else will we go? **You have the words of eternal life***.” (John 6:68). With this in mind, we turn our attention to also “Consider” the discipline of God in our lives as we look unto Christ, which is the subject of vv. 5-13. I have 3 truths (brief) with lots of applications: 1) Discipline is selective, 2) Discipline ensures endurance, and 3) Discipline produces holiness.

1. Discipline is selective. Throughout this passage, notice those who receive discipline. They are the children of God. Look at vv. 5-6. “**And have you forgotten that exhortation that addresses you as sons?**” And then he quotes from Prov. 3:11-12: “**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.**” And then v. 7: God is “**treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**” God does not discipline those who are not his children.

I don’t think any of us “seek” discipline from our parents just for the sake of discipline. Children do you? But, there is something within us that knows if our parents do not discipline us, they do not care. I think SOOO many of the children of this world would love to hear their parents say, “*NO!*” There is some kind of “bond” with the discipline of a parent that causes us to say, “*I’m in the family. I am a child of my parents. They really care for me. They are looking out for my good.*” This is the picture we get with the Hebrews in this passage. This is one of the reasons I believe this letter was written to Christians . . . because the author speaks to them as the children of God.

And notice also the bond between the Father and his children in v. 6. “**For the Lord disciplines the ones he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.**” Today, as his child, you are special. God loves you. And, God receives you. 1 John 3:1: “See what kind of love the Father

has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” One of the ways we “SEE” is because He disciplines us. In Mal. 3:17-18 God says, “**They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.**” Brothers and sisters, you receive discipline from God because you are his child. You are special. And He is the most loving father who knows EXACTLY what we need. The world does not receive such loving discipline.

2. Discipline ensures endurance. The context of this passage, and the book of Hebrews for that matter, is endurance. Throughout the book, the author is exhorting these Hebrew Christians to endure. Keep running the race. As Dory from *Finding Nemo* says, “*Keep swimming.*” Look back to 12:1: “**let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.**” And v. 3: “**Consider him who endured . . .**” And v. 7: “**It is for discipline that you have to endure.**” With this in mind, the author is using the subject of God’s discipline as a means for endurance. In other words, God works in his children’s lives through discipline in order to keep them going.

I’m not sure I’ve really thought about this truth until this week. I’ve always had difficulty putting my finger on the discipline of God in my life. Why? Because my reference for discipline is very immature as it only sees discipline as corrective. And my reference is my own father, who “corrected” me, what it seems like every day, and it was often painful. I was disciplined for not coming to him, for putting myself into danger, for hitting my sister (which she deserved), for being disrespectful to my mother or others, etc. I don’t think I remember my parents’ discipline as that which kept me from danger as I stepped into the road. I don’t remember their discipline as actually keeping me from developing certain life patterns that might land me in jail. I don’t remember their discipline as that which helped me endure in this life. I tend to only remember what v. 11 says, “**For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant . . .**” I forget the outcome of even my parents’ discipline “**peaceful fruit of righteousness . . .**”

In the same kind of way, God works in our lives through discipline, through chastisement, that we may ENDURE this race of faith. Therefore, God’s discipline must become precious in our lives. Without it, we will not endure! It is a necessary means for our endurance.

3. Discipline produces holiness. Look at vv. 10-11: “**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 in 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.**” In these verses the author continues his comparison of earthly discipline from our fathers and the heavenly discipline of God. When we think of our fathers who discipline us, what is their purpose? The purpose is some kind of righteousness. In other words, they want us to grow up to do something that is right, to be a person who lives in some kind way that adds to the family, that adds to society. I remember one of my grandfathers saying to me as he handed me a dollar, “*Son, you are fine young man.*” What did he mean by that? I’m not sure of everything he meant. But, he looked at me as his grandson and he considered my character (I guess) and he approved of the way I was being raised by my parents. My Father (parents) taught me to obey them and other authority

figures. They taught me to be respectful. They taught me to be polite to others. They taught me how to conduct myself in public, at restaurants, at school, etc. WHY? So that I would act in some kind of “moral” “righteous” way. Every culture raises their children to do the same. This discipline is for our good and the good of society. In the same kind of way, God disciplines us for our good (v. 10), particularly that **“we may share in his holiness”** and **“yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”**

This has always been the case with God’s people, God’s children. I think of Ezekiel as he looks forward to the new covenant in Christ. God says: **“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”** (Ezek. 36:25–27). Speaking of the picture of marriage Eph. 5:25-26 Says **“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word . . .”** Or Tit. 2:11-14: **“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”** Brothers and sisters, the discipline of God leads to godliness. And, it also leads to “LIFE” itself. Look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of v. 9: **“Shall we not much more be subject of the Father of spirits and live?”**

Brothers and sisters, if you are a child of God, if you are a Christian, the discipline of God is yours. It is necessary for your endurance. And, it leads to holiness and life The world does not receive this discipline. First, they have not been covered by the righteousness of Christ. This is justification. Second, they do not have the Spirit of God within them. They are not set apart. They are not being made holy in the process of sanctification. This is our privilege brothers and sisters! With this in mind, I’d like to spend the rest of our time in application.

First question as we think about application: What are some ways we see the discipline of God in our lives? In other words, “What is the discipline of God?” We’ve seen the benefits. But, what does it look like in our lives as we are going through it? This truth is something I’ve always struggled to understand. I think it is because I’ve seen discipline as only corrective. In other words, I only think of the “spankings” I got from my father when I disobeyed. So, as I look at my life, I don’t see this kind of “corrective” discipline. This truth has been too narrow for me. But, I/we must see the discipline of God in much broader way. In some ways, the entire life of a Christian is one of discipline.

We must begin to understand that in some way “ALL” God’s working through trials, tribulations, persecutions, sufferings, etc, is a part of his discipline. And it is ALL for our good. As we’ve seen, for our endurance, for our holiness in sanctification. Loss of loved one, sickness, stress at job, losing your job because of your faith, getting older and not being to physically do what you used to do, ALL THESE THINGS AND MORE! I think of Joseph and all he went through being sold to slavery and going to prison, as well as his elevation in Egypt; ALL part of the discipline

of God for his good. So, maybe having a more biblical, comprehensive understanding of God's discipline is more helpful than we know. This is why such a sermon is important. We must view the discipline of God in this way as SPECIAL to his people in our sanctification as we walk this road to heaven. Again, I am not sure I've seen this until recently. Frankly, I've been more fearful because I don't think I've seen God discipline me in the way my parents did (though the principle is present.) In this passage, the "discipline" of God is meant as an exhortation (a good thing). I hope this has been the case with this sermon! This sermon should add a new "dimension" to our understanding that God works all things to our good! I think of Elisha and the armies with his servant (2 Kings 6) Elisha sees the big picture and is patient, enduring, peaceful. His servant is not! . . . Until he sees the care of God in the horses and chariots of fire. This is exactly what a proper understanding of the discipline of God should do for us! May it be so! I hope that what I am only beginning to learn at 56 that some of you at a much younger age can learn today, or at least begin to learn. Now, on to some specific applications.

Application: Discipline is something we submit to and accept, knowing this is our training. It is for our good. I think of the Fusion training with Jeremiah and Josiah (soon Abby). It is hard. It is grueling. It is testing. But, they submitted. They knew it was for their good. This means we do not kick and scream under the discipline of God. We do not complain! We accept the trials, tribulations, hardships, persecutions with contentment. As v. 9 says in comparing how we endured with our own fathers, "**How much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?**"

Application: Do not forget. (v. 5) Do not let this truth leave your mind as you receive discipline. Do not forget! When we forget these truths, we "regard lightly" the discipline of the Lord. And we "grow weary" under the trials of this life (v. 5).

Application: Discipline brings encouragement. It adds security to a relationship. How often do I look back on the discipline of my father with fondness.

Application. Discipline is the most loving action of a loving God. God loves his children. Therefore, he allows and brings discipline for our good. Have you ever thought that the difficulties you are facing are a product of a loving God that is producing something in you that leads to glory. This means that the discipline of God is always for our good (Rom. 8:28). The things that transpire in this world are tools of the devil to bring us down in our fight with sin. But, for his people, God uses them for their good. This is the form of discipline God uses, which goes way beyond what our parents did with us and what we do with our kids.

Application: Know that God will not give us more than we can handle (by his grace). This means that discipline can look very different in the lives of his children. This also means that the more godly, the more sanctified we become, the more we can handle. (Again, consider Jesus! None of us will endure what he endured. Only the Son of God could go to the cross and rise again!)

Application: God's discipline is always perfect. Our earthly parents are not always consistent or always get the discipline right. They do what is right to them. But God always does what is right. This means that even in the sovereign difficulties of our lives, God's discipline is right. Therefore, ask, "*Do you want godliness and life?*" Then, accept the sovereign "disciplines" of this life.

Application: We must learn to think in this way: God does not so much “punish” his children as he does “discipline” his children. This is because Christ has already been “punished” in our place (gospel).

Application: Look at vv. 12-13: **“Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joining but rather be healed.”** The discipline of God should produce encouragement, **“strengthen hands and feeble knees.”** At the end of the day, this is the way we must view the discipline of God. This is why this passage is so helpful for us today. The knowledge and understanding of God’s works of discipline are an exhortation. God’s discipline does not make us frown, but instead brings delight.

Application: When it comes to the discipline, the “chastisement” of God, we either do one of two things. We despise them (grumbling and complaining, thinking bad thoughts about God, etc.) Or, we are fainthearted. We fall apart under the trials of life. Either of these positions is a sin. Either of these responses are hurtful to us and our sanctification. This is why the author exhorts us to CONSIDER the discipline of God. God is a good father. He knows how to make us endure. He knows what we need for godliness. He knows what leads to life. So, let me ask, “What is bad about any of these things? Tell me! Then why do we complain about the things of this life? Why do we grow weary and come to despair? Because we know God is working his discipline for our good.

And, At the end of the day we must Consider Christ, knowing that our Lord has gone through much more than we have as our example.