

“God’s Loving Discipline”  
(Hebrews 12:1-13)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning,

We considered Solomon’s exhortation

Not to trust our own wisdom,

But to trust the Lord’s

When it comes to the spiritually significant choices

We must continually make in life –

And really, all of them are:

Paul writes, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

That’s what we do in other areas:

How many of us

Are willing to trust our own knowledge

When it comes to our health –

Particularly when faced with things

That look life threatening –

Rather than consulting with a doctor?

How many of us

Prepared our own wills or trusts

To make sure our belongings

Would end up in the hands

Of those we want them to

After we leave this world,

Rather than consulting with a lawyer?

If we're willing to seek help from the experts

In things that aren't nearly as important

As the wellbeing of our eternal souls,

How much more should we be willing

To consult with God?

When it comes to how we should live,

We really have very little knowledge and experience –

The same is true of our friends –

But God has infinite knowledge

And has been pleased to give us a book

That gives us all we need to know

As well as directions on how to apply it.

We still struggle with sin –

And because we do

We can never be truly objective

When it comes to our choices –

But He is absolutely holy and pure:

He can be perfectly objective

In what He calls us to do.

And when we consider

That He really does love us

And wants the best for us,

We can be sure He will tell us what's right.

## B. Preview.

Now Solomon also told us

That if we will trust His guidance,

That He will do two things:

First, He will make our paths straight:

He will keep us on the path of safety –

He will show us the right way to live –

And second, He will heal us

If, in His love,

He has had to discipline us.

It's this second blessing

We're exploring this evening

From our passage:

## II. Sermon.

### A. First, because God loves us, He disciplines us.

#### 1. The author to the Hebrews

Is telling us much the same thing

As Solomon did this morning.

Solomon's concern

Was that we trust the Lord to guide us

So that we'll stay on the straight path:

If we don't,

He will lovingly work in our lives

To bring us back.

The author to the Hebrews' concern

Is that we also set aside

The things that get in the way

Of our following Jesus,

And run the Christian race –

This is the same as walking on the straight path,

Though perhaps it expresses greater effort –

If we don't,

God will lovingly discipline us

To get us back on the path.

He begins by exhorting us to *run this race*:

He says in verse 1, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (v. 1).

The cloud of witnesses

Are those in chapter 11

Who lived the life of faith

And made it to the end.

Paul pictures them

As a vast host surrounding us –

As spectators in the Coliseum,

Who have gathered to watch the games –

The difference is,

We're not competing in any earthly competition –

We're running towards heaven.

And they're not watching us –

They're witnessing to us –

They're telling us

Through the testimony of their lives

That the life of faith is the only way to live:

That it's worth whatever we have to sacrifice

To make it to the end.

They're also telling us

That if we are to make it,

There're certain things

We must be willing to do:

We must lay aside every encumbrance –

Whatever slows us down:

He's referring to

The things that are in the world,

That aren't necessarily wrong,

But that become wrong

When we love them too much;

When they get in our way –

And we must lay aside the things

That actually *are* wrong –

The sin which *so easily* entangles us –  
 The things that break God’s Law,  
 That offend His Spirit,  
 And weaken our ability to live  
 As He calls us to live.

Having put these things off,  
 We need to press forward in our service –  
 With the kind of effort an athlete puts out  
 In competing for the prize.

And we need to do so with endurance –  
 It’s a long race;  
 It’s going to take the whole of our lives;  
 Because it is, it’s tempting  
 To ease back after a while –

These witnesses tell us  
 We mustn’t slow down,  
 But continue pressing forward  
 Until we reach the finish line.

2. Second, we need to look to Jesus.

He writes, “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (v. 2).

a. The witnesses of chapter 11 are important –

They show us this is the only life worth living –

But they're not the one

Who will bring us to the end:

Jesus is.

He's the Author of our faith –

He lived and died,

So that we could begin the race –

Through His life, He gave us life –

And He's its Perfecter –

He is the One who will bring it to its conclusion:

Paul writes to the Philippians, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*" (1:6).

b. He's also our example:

He set His eyes on the end of His race –

The joy that the Father set before Him –

He endured the cross –

Counting the shame

He would endure as nothing –

And He obtained the prize –

The Father exalted Him

To the place of greatest honor.

We are to follow Him:

To fix our eyes on heaven;

Endure whatever we must here;  
 So that we too might gain the prize,  
 By His grace.

3. But there is a price we must be willing to pay –

The same as Jesus paid:

We must endure whatever the world dishes out

Without compromising or turning from the path.

The author continues, “For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin” (vv. 3-4).

Jesus ran a difficult race:

He was hated by His own people;

Betrayed by one of His own;

Crucified as a common criminal;

And endured God’s wrath on the cross.

We must be willing

To endure the same,

To make it to the end:

To gain the prize.

B. That’s a tall order.

How can we do it?

The good news is,

The Father will make sure we do –

He has given us His Son,

And through His Son,

He has given us His Spirit,  
 So that we will have the power to do this.

And when we grow weak  
 And fail to stick to the track,  
 He has committed Himself  
 To put us back on the road  
 Through His loving discipline:

The author writes, “You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES’” (vv. 5-6).

1. Discipline is not punishment –

It has an altogether different motive:

When God punishes,  
 He’s giving the one punished  
 What they deserve  
 For the crimes they’ve committed –  
 He’s giving them justice.

If we’ve trusted Jesus,  
 Jesus has already borne our punishment on the cross –  
 He’s already endured God’s justice.  
 God will never punish us  
 For what Jesus has already suffered –  
 That would be to require a double payment.

Discipline, on the other hand,

Can mean two things:

It can mean instruction –

Such as what the Lord calls us to do

In the bringing up of our children:

It means to guide, train, educate –

This is what the Lord does for us

Through His Spirit, Word, and trials.

But it can also mean to correct –

When our children go the wrong way,

We discipline them in love

So that they'll go the right way:

We turn them from the path

That will ultimately hurt them,

Into the path that's good for them –

Our Father also does this for us.

He does it in several ways:

He might trouble our conscience –

Convict us by His Spirit;

Help us to sense we've done something wrong;

Make us grieve over the sin we've committed –

He might take away something

Of our assurance that we belong to Him –

This happens whenever we offend and grieve His Spirit.

He might take something that's important to us:

Maybe the thing that made us sin in the first place.

David writes in Psalm 39:11, "With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity;  
You consume as a moth what is precious to him."

He might touch our health –

Not all of our physical problems –

Or the other things mentioned –

Come about because of our personal sin –

Job lost his wealth, his family and his health,

And it wasn't because he sinned (Job 1:22).

There were things God wanted to teach him –

But there are times when sickness

Is the result of personal sin –

As we saw this morning

In the case of the Corinthians.

2. Because discipline is both instructional and corrective,

We really can't avoid it,

Nor should we want to:

The author tells us,

If we aren't disciplined by the Lord,

We really don't belong to Him.

He writes in verses 7-8, "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (vv. 7-8).

Even Jesus was disciplined –

He wasn't corrected,

Because He never sinned,

But He was taught by His Father:

The author writes in 5:8-9, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."

Since we are now His children –

Through faith in Jesus –

He also teaches us:

As we saw this morning,

He shows us the good and right path;

And He correct us,

That we might be holy:

We read in verse 10, "He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness."

We can't avoid discipline,

But we can perhaps minimize it –

At least the corrections we need for sin –

By not yielding to the flesh in the first place.

We know it's impossible to avoid sin all together,

But by His grace, we can avoid a great deal of it.

The more we use the things

God has given to strengthen us,

The more we yield to the Spirit,

The stronger we'll grow,  
 And the more we'll avoid the sin  
 That offends and quenches  
 The Spirit's work in our hearts.

3. But when we do step out of line,

And fall into sin,  
 And the Lord sends correction,  
 There's something we must do:

The author writes in verses 12 and 13, "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."

We need to repent –

We need to strengthen our resolve  
 Again to do what is right and good.

If we do, we'll be healed;  
 And having learned our lesson,  
 We may well be stronger than before –  
 The Lord can use even our sins  
 To help us to grow in His likeness.

But if we don't,  
 His discipline will become even more severe:  
 The limb that is lame will be put out of joint (v. 13).

He loves us too much  
 To ever let us go.

We shouldn't use this as an excuse for sin,

But as a reason to avoid it –

Though it's true we may be better on the other end,

His discipline is not pleasant:

The author writes in verse 11, “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.”

Let's learn to be thankful

That the Lord loves us enough to discipline us

So that we'll stay on the path,

And arrive safely in heaven. Amen.

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