

Endurance and Discipline

Hebrews 10:35-39—Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Hebrews 12:1-13—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, 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. 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; and 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.

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. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 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.

James 1:2-4—Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Lord, if we were to come before you and list the things that we lack, I do not know what we would write down, but You say we lack endurance; we lack wisdom, and we need faith. And hearing You speak to us, we come into Your work of discipline in our lives with a joy that is set before us where the reward that is in mind, where the goal and the high calling and the laying hold of that, keep us on the track. We thank You for Your love for us. We pray that as we share this matter that You will increase our endurance as a measure of Christ is given to us through Your faithful discipline even by the Word of God. So we commit this time to You. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

See the Lord and Hear the Lord

We have talked about the connection of heaven and endurance. We see in the Scriptures that every time somebody saw the Lord, they gained endurance. In seeing the Lord there was a hope that arose in their hearts and enabled them to continue to press on. And we will find that to be the case whether it is John on the isle of Patmos or the Old Testament brethren mentioned in Hebrews 11. When you see the Lord, there is life, there is a hope that arises, there is a goal that suddenly lifts your spirit and sends you forward. The picture that we saw as we traveled through the wilderness is that we are on the way to Zion, we are on the way to rest, and we are on the way to the Promised Land. As we are going along the way, we look up and see Jesus as our Apostle. Even as Moses took the children of Israel through the wilderness, now Jesus is our Apostle and He is taking us through into the land of rest. So we want to look and see Him and follow Him.

And as we are in this time frame, the Holy Spirit calls to us in Hebrews 3:7: "Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, Today." We live today. There is only today, and then His kingdom comes. But if we are going to live today, then it is incumbent upon us as we hear His voice not to harden our hearts. We also need to remember how the children of Israel got all the way to the Promised Land and they would not go in. The Lord was saying, "Go in; go in." Joshua and Caleb were saying, "Go in; go in." And the people were saying, "We cannot go in; we cannot go in," and they lost their opportunity.

We are on the way to the kingdom. The letter to the Hebrews is not about getting saved. The letter to the Hebrews is about coming into the fullness of what we were created to be, coming into God's purpose and being a part of what He has planned. It is a large and comprehensive plan. But if we walk in the light of Jesus our Apostle and we live according to the word of the cross, we do not harden our hearts, and we listen to what He says to us today, this enables the Holy Spirit to do His work within us. Another way we could put it is this: by standing under the cloud and the fire, we stand in Christ. And when we stand in Christ, then He lives in us and by the Holy Spirit does that transforming work which prepares us for what lies ahead in His glorious kingdom. So this is what we tried to present last time in a simple way looking unto Jesus.

"For yet in a very little while He who is coming will come and will not delay." We need endurance that having done the will of God we may receive what has been promised. You remember the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for quite a while, and that promise of a land of milk and honey, houses they did not build and farms already bearing crops that they did not plant sounded like a dream. But the actual travel through the wilderness which was necessary to get them there, they had difficulty with because they had no endurance. Their souls got short. They got mad with each other, mad at Moses, mad at Miriam, mad at the snakes, mad at everything. Their souls were so short, but God had Moses, who kept falling down, praying for the people, interceding for the people, asking mercy for the people, and along with him was the high priest falling down and

praying: "God, don't destroy them. You promised that You would take them in. Lord, You have to take them in." And slowly but surely the tabernacle made its way to the Jordan River to cross over.

Now we have an Apostle and High Priest like Moses and Aaron, and while we are traveling through the wilderness, what a bunch of whiners and complainers we are. I do not like that guy who preached. In our fellowship we have people who cannot preach their way out of a paper bag. I do not like the leadership. I do not like the building we are meeting in; it has too much mold in it. I do not like the saints that I have to sit near; I like to sit near nicer saints. And Jesus, the High Priest, falls down and intercedes for us and comes before the Father and says, "Father, You know in their hearts they want to follow Me; give them another chance. Help them through." And we see that which is going on here on earth is actually being enabled by our Lord's wonderful intercessory work in heaven. This is a wonderful truth that we all understand, and a bigger plan than we are aware of.

The Curse of the Earth Touch

The Jews could not wait to get across the border and find the first plot of land and claim it for their own and start growing corn. That is all they really cared about; but the Lord had such a greater plan for them as a kingdom and for His own Son Jesus, and out of that kingdom to bless the nations and rule the earth. It was such a grand plan, but people with tiny minds can only see a couple of days ahead. Therefore, discipline is going to be necessary to increase our understanding and stretch us as to what God wants.

One brother said, "God has predestined that we are to be conformed to the image of Jesus, and with that in mind having foreknown us, He calls us, and He justifies us, and He glorifies us." And right now in this process He is carrying this out even as we are going through this world at the present time. Again, in one sense it is very simple. We stand under the word of the cross, we let the Lord speak to us today, the Holy Spirit goes to work inside, and the Man of glory faithfully brings us to glory and His wonderful plan for us. It is a large plan; it is a great plan. This march from grace to glory, which today would be described as running the race, necessitates that we have an open heaven. If heaven's touch is not on our life, if it is not on our church life, then there is not a sense of that upward call. We might sense something, but we do not sense that upward call. We do not sense a goal; we do not sense reward, we do not have much hope because if we get too earthy, too earth-bound and too worldly, that heavenly touch is missing. When the heavenly touch is missing, it is what brother Sparks used to call, "the curse of the earth touch." That is a phrase he used to speak about assemblies that were formed under the heavenly vision of the all-sufficiency of Christ and had begun to gather; but somewhere along the line the church touched earth and there was this curse of worldliness and worldly ways that began to move in and corrupt that which God was doing. If we are not really under heaven's touch then we begin to say things such as talking about the blood of the Lamb, about the word of the cross, but they have just become words. They are not

a reality to us anymore; they are just doctrine. And no matter how good a beginning any fellowship or company of God's people had, in the little while the temptation is to become earthly and lose that heavenly perspective.

The church is not just the church, we are also the kingdom of God; therefore this heavenly dimension, this kingdom of heaven's dimension is necessary for us to truly be the church. And as we go on sometimes we get so busy that we lose that heavenly perspective, that heavenly burden, that heavenly goal, that heavenly desire. We stop pursuing Christ and we are now learning doctrine, etc. And that is what the Hebrew Christians were in danger of doing because they were laden with many Jewish doctrines and Jewish practices. After they had been born again and had gone through some persecution with the Jews, perhaps having been kicked out of the synagogue, but the synagogue had not been kicked out of them, and now they were in danger of losing this heavenly perspective because they were holding on to earthly things.

I understand that this book of Hebrews is the second least read book in the New Testament, the first one being Revelation. Revelation scares Christians because they do not understand it. Now you people are excepted because you are a bit crazy. You love to hear about all these things—the trumpets, the plagues, the bowls, etc. You are interested in that kind of stuff. Do you realize that you are a vast minority? Most Christians stay away from the book of Revelation.

They also stay away from the book of Hebrews. They say that it is too Jewish or it is too severe or it is too negative. There are so many, "You better do this and you better do that. Could we read Galatians again?" People tend to stay away from this book. It is a heavy book because it is bearing the gravity of God's fuller purpose for our lives. There is a heaviness to God's purpose and the heaviness of the Spirit's exhortation.

The Unchangeableness of God's Purpose

The writer in chapter 6 talks about God wanting to really impress Abraham with the fact that he had a purpose in giving Abraham children and the land and many flocks. God had a purpose in it. Abraham was learning to look at things in a heavenly way, and God came to him as it says in Hebrews 6:17-18: "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed [commanded] with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us."

This is saying that God was trying to communicate to Abraham: "I have a purpose for you and I want to swear to you that I will fulfill it. I want to promise it to you, but I cannot swear by the temple." How could God do that? Jehovah says, "I cannot swear by Baal; I cannot swear by the stars. All I can do is swear by Myself, so I swear twice." In Hebrew and also in the Greek as well as the original Hebrew in Genesis He says, "Blessing I will bless you (that is a double promise) and I will make you fruitful." He doubles down. I have guaranteed it double because I want you to know the unchangeableness of My purpose."

Now somewhere along our pilgrimage the Lord begins to deal with us in a deeper way because of the unchangeableness and greatness of His purpose. He wants to lay hold of us so that we do not just remain like those babies in Hebrews chapter 5 who were regressing back to the milk of the Word. The Lord wants them to press on to maturity as we find in chapter 6. Either you return back to the wilderness and just go with milk or you step into chapter 6 and come into the pressing on to the maturity that the Lord wants for His people. So God gives strong encouragement. And the gravity of God's purpose necessitates discipline.

The Lord Jesus allowed His disciples a good period of time just to follow Him, to watch Him and be blessed by Him, and they were, but the day came that the Lord needed to discipline, to discipline these men. And in that last year of His life, before He went to the cross, He started questioning them, talking to them, correcting them and showing them how little faith they had. He started disciplining them for their greater purpose. They were going to be apostles of the church of Jesus Christ, His bride, and their lives needed to be disciplined. So in the last few months of His life the Lord, even as He was personally struggling with His destiny at Calvary, also was burdened to bring these brothers from foolishness, from shallowness, from silliness into depth, into a life that was laid down for the purpose of God.

So here in the book of Hebrews we see evidence of this fuller gravity, this greater purpose in Hebrews chapter 12. If I could put it this way, in the first eleven chapters the writer is saying, "Look up to heaven and see Jesus." Then we come to chapter 12 and he gives us his final one: "I want you to run this race now looking unto Jesus, who is our joy and our hope. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Keep running toward Him. He is your goal, so keep that goal always before you."

The Father Comes into View

Paul said that was his goal. After all those years as a Christian, it was still his goal to know more of Christ, to attain that for which he was attained, to press on, press on, and press higher to the upward call. That is the picture. Then suddenly the Holy Spirit says, "Now I want to underscore the gravity and the sobriety of God's purpose, and I want you to look into heaven and see the Father. The Father now comes into view in the book of Hebrews for the first time in this full way because now it is time to discipline us unto sons.

Listen to the words with the gravity and depth of the love of the Father as He comes to you and says, "My son, do not despise the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved, for whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (see vv. 5-6). The Father is speaking. From the moment we were saved something in our inner being cried out: "Abba," and we came to know our Father who is in heaven. We pray to our Father; we know this "Abba," but now the time has come for us to really get to know Him. Do we really want to know the Father? Many people know and love Jesus, but they are actually afraid to know the Father. The writer of Hebrews refers to Him at various points like this: "The Father is He with whom we have to do. All things are exposed before Him with whom we have to do."

Another place he says, “Our God is a consuming fire.” Now this is our Father. Welcome to the Father.

I want to say this right from the start. All discipline that the Father does is done with grace and mercy, but He is not fooling around. This passage that he quotes here: “My son, do not despise the discipline of the Lord” is actually from Proverbs 3:11. It is very interesting to think about this for just a moment. There are many scholars who believe that this section of Proverbs and the sections that start out with “my son” is the wisdom that Solomon is writing down, but it is actually the wisdom that he received from David. It is almost as if he is remembering these things and writing them down. “My son, do not take lightly the discipline of the Lord.” And he writes it down. That is wisdom.

The Discipline of David for His Sons

It is interesting because David does not seem to have disciplined his other sons very well. We know that Absalom was a mess, and Adonijah tried to become king just before David died. It said that David never said a cross word to him; he never disciplined Adonijah. But strange to say somehow he poured his life out on Solomon, and when you read I Chronicles, you can see it. He shared his secrets, his desires, and his blueprints for the temple with him. He said, “I want you to do this; I want you to get these singers; I want you to have choirs in, I want you to build the temple like this.” David just poured out his heart to Solomon, and part of the legacy of Solomon’s wisdom was his father’s sayings, “My son, my son, my son.”

I want to suppose for just a minute. On the other side of the coin I know David did not discipline all of his sons. The king and his court, six wives and the sons are scattered all over the place. It is not like you could sit down to lunch every day with them, but I wonder if part of the problem was that the other sons were afraid of David and avoided him. They wanted to go their own way maybe because mom was spoiling them. They had a Porsche or Mercedes, and everything is cool. You do not want to get too near David because he keeps giving you those Jehovah words. “Are you praying in the morning and at noon and in the evening? Do you delight yourself in the Word? Do you say that it tastes better than honey to you? Stay away from David. He is going to preach to us all the time.”

But evidently Solomon loved that preaching. He took it all in. It became blessing and wisdom for him. My point is this: If we are going to understand discipline we are also going to get to know the Father. Are you like Solomon or are you like Adonijah? Would you just like to go on with your life and not get too close to this One who may reprove you? Are you like Solomon: “Dad, what do you have to say?” A lot depends on our attitude.

I know this is a bad example, but in a way it is the difference between Esau and Jacob. Jacob was a pest. I know that some of you have named your children Jacob; I hope they are not pests. But Jacob was a pest. He was talking to grandpa first because Abraham was still around. He said, “Grandpa, what does it mean to have the birthright? What does it mean to have the blessing? What was it God told you about a kingdom and being a

blessing to many nations. What are all those things? Tell me about it.” Isaac grew weary with telling him all these spiritual stories. He would say, “Esau, get me a beefsteak, will you? This boy is tiring me out.”

I bet Esau never asked a question about birthright, blessings, spiritual responsibility, what it means to be a patriarch over the family. What does it mean to bring them into God’s desire and plan? What does this heavenly city mean that Abraham talks about all the time? Esau said, “Ah folly. Let’s go out in the woods and hunt deer.” But Jacob wanted to know.

The Father will Bring Us into Sonship Through Child Training

So I pose this question, “Do you want to know the Father even in discipline?” Why does He discipline? Is it a good guy, bad guy? Jesus is the good Guy, your High Priest, your Apostle who loves you. And then the bad Guy comes in. No, that is not it at all. It is the Father’s responsibility to bring us into glorious sonship. That is the Father’s business. If you are a father it is your business to bring your sons into mature sonship.

Back in the old days, it was simpler because if you were a carpenter you brought your son up to be a carpenter. And part of bringing your son up was teaching him the trade. And God our Father is in the business of making grown-up mature sons out of His children. He gladly receives all the children saved by grace, and now it is time to make them sons. In the New Testament, it talks about us being adopted as sons, and the actual Greek word is “the placing of sons.”

Just believe for a moment. I come from royalty, the royal family of Dana. I saw a kid on the street that needed help and I had compassion on him and said, “I am going to adopt you; you are my son.” So you bring the kid in, but he does not know the Dana kingdom at all. He does not know that everybody in Dana’s kingdom eats with their left hand because I am a lefty. He does not know that I like the color blue. So you see this new kid has to learn, not just how to dress, how to eat, but I have a kingdom, and I need to train my child how to serve, how to reign, how to be merciful, how to be loving, how to live truthfully and righteously. There is a lot to learn.

The Father is placing sons. And the word here is: “Despise not the discipline of the Father.” The word *discipline* is actually “child training” in Greek. Immediately you feel better about it because you thought He was going to discipline you, but now you hear He is just going to child train you. His child training includes reproof with strong words. Wait a minute; that is not so much fun. I thought child training is when dad goes with me down the street, running alongside me on a two wheel bike with training wheel; he is child training.

Child training includes reproof: “You did wrong, son.” Also whom He loves, He scourges. That literally means in Hebrew and Greek “He whips you.” Our Father in heaven is not politically correct; He believes in using the rod. Our Father says you need the rod; you have foolishness in you and He is going to knock it out of you. And if you say something wrong He is not going to remain quiet. “Oh well, isn’t that sweet; he is talking.”

He is going to reprove when you need to be reprov'd. Discipline is not punishment; it is child training. It is conforming us to the likeness of Jesus Christ. We have that in us, but it has to be brought out by discipline, and we need to learn to endure under that discipline. The Holy Spirit is working all the time this sanctifying process—spirit, soul, body.

Already I have to stop because I just said the Father comes with severity and sobriety to discipline His sons including male and female sons, and already some people have fainted. That is our problem today. I do not know where we got this screwy psychological idea of inflating kids' self-esteem. "Oh, you are wonderful. Isn't that cute the way you are tearing up my phone or whatever it is. That is so cute, and you can be anything you want. Yes, you can. There are no winners or losers; we are all winners." You know there are winners and losers. There is right and wrong. There is need for your hand to be slapped when you are stealing the cookies. What has happened is that everyone has gotten so fluffy that if you reprove them in the church, they take offense and faint. If the father were to come to us with some grown-up talk and say, "Now I want you to shape up from your selfish, silly life and get on with My purpose," half of the folks would just faint right away. That is why He has to say, "Don't faint when I reprove you. I do not want you fainting; I want you to listen to Me and do what I say." It is a whole different thing.

There is a brother from Richmond who told me many years ago and I never forgot it. He said, "God plays hard ball. We play soft ball, but God means it." There is a lot at stake in His kingdom and His Son's coming. There is some preparation that is necessary, and the Lord is serious about this. So He is disciplining us.

Work Out Your Salvation with Fear and Trembling

You are all familiar with the Scripture in Philippians that says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12b). That is because you respect God your Father. Do you respect God your Father? There are some people who disrespect God. Do you respect Him? "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." As the Father speaks His words to you, the Holy Spirit will back it up inside, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. He speaks a word to you and then He performs it from within. We see our Father working in this wonderful way. Now look up in heaven and see your Father as He is disciplining us. While the Father disciplines us, we still of course hold on to our precious High Priest. He is doing such an inward work of atoning. We still hold on to our Apostle who is taking us toward our destiny, but now our Father is working on us.

Is that discipline too hard? Is it too hard to accept? Do we have to go to a church that does not use the word discipline? Do we need a safe zone in our church? Can you believe college campuses now have safe zones where kids do not have to hear the truth anymore? They can just sit there and believe what they want and nobody will bother them because they have a safe zone now. I tell you something is wrong with that especially at college where you should be able to stand on your own two feet and begin to think things other than silly thoughts.

To Stay in the Race Means Discipline

So in the church we cannot faint away. Let's go back to the picture of walking in the desert. Here is the Father's discipline: "Son, you have gotten out of the light; go back in under the word of the cross." Did that kill you for the Lord to say, "Now come on, you are neglecting the Word; get back under that light"? That is all. We need that. And as long as we get under the light, then the Holy Spirit can work in us. If we get out from under heaven, then the Holy Spirit goes silent because there has to be a correspondence between heaven and earth for things to get done. "But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). There is a living dynamic in the Spirit working in your life when you are under the light. Get out from under the light and heaven cannot touch you, and you will grieve the Spirit within. In one sense the Father cannot discipline you unless you have decided to lay aside every weight and every besetting sin. Unless you have decided to run the race and look at Jesus, then the Father will not discipline you. It is your choice. Do you want that goal—Jesus? Then run the race and look to Him, and the Father will discipline you to keep you in the race, and you will gain endurance in that race.

In high school, I played football, and I was a big guy. In the old days, the kids did not train all year. When the football season was over, we never touched another football again nor do any more exercise. But the next September we would go out again and begin to work out all over again. We would work at calisthenics, but I could only do two pushups, and it made me so sore. After a half hour of calisthenics, we had to run a half mile around the track. I could not make it. I fell down a couple of times, and I even fainted. Back in those days they did not give you water. You just sat there for a while and then got up and started running again. It was tough. Three weeks later, I was in good shape and I could do the two laps and fifteen pushups, but it was tough. Endurance comes through practice, exercise and discipline, and that is what the Lord wants to do in our lives. Therefore, you have to have a good attitude. I wanted that letter. I hate to tell you but I went to Babylon high school where I grew up. And because I was a football guy I had a Babylon jacket with a big orange B for Babylon. I was proud to be in Babylon where I was born and raised and played. I knew nothing of Christian things in those days. I wanted that jacket and that letter, and of course all that goes with it, being big man on campus, and that kind of stuff.

Count it as Joy when You are Disciplined

Do you have a goal? Do you want to attain to that for which you were created in the kingdom? You have a purpose in the kingdom, even if it is a small part; fulfill that purpose in the kingdom. So you have to have a good attitude. That is why only somebody who has been to camp three years in a row, who has gotten back into shape by the Father in heaven, and has been under discipline long enough, who happens to be James, could possibly say, "Count it all joy when you experience various trials." Now most people say, "Count it all joy! What, are you crazy?! But he said, "Count it all joy knowing this, that the trying of your faith works endurance, and let endurance have its perfect work that you

may be matured and complete.” Ah, yes, count it all joy! Do you count it all joy? You are still not buying into it, are you? You should.

In other words, he says, “When you come under various trials, you are not happy that they came, but you count it as joy because you see the end of it—maturity and endurance in your life. This is the attitude we find in this story.

In chapter 12, the Father is now going to discipline now that He has us running the race. But before He disciplines His son, He says I just want you to notice what Jesus endured in His race. In Hebrews 12:2, “For the joy set before Him Jesus endured the cross.” That is quite an endurance. He ran that race for you.

In verse 3, “Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners.” Jesus endured the running of His race. I just want you to see what My Son has already done. Then in verse 4, He says, “You have not resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.” But Jesus shed blood and endured through that whole thing. The Father is saying, “You do have a goal, you do have something to imitate, you do have something to see that the Lord can give you endurance to go through whatever it is that the Lord wants you to do. Through this endurance, Jesus was perfected and now has become the Author and Perfecter of our faith as we are going forward into glory.

Sonship is Wonderful

Then the Father by His explanation of these verses basically tells us this: I want you to get the positive out of this discipline, so here He gives us some simple things. Here is the good news: this sonship is very wonderful.

Verse 6: “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” Now do not get upset by this “scourging” word, but look at the other two things. The first thing you see is that if the Father has taken up your discipline, you know He loves you. You know your Father loves you because He is disciplining you. It also means that because He is disciplining you, you are His son; not potentially His son; you are His son and that is why He is disciplining you. If you were not His son, He would not do it, but you are His son, and He has now taken a personal interest in your being made a son in glory.

Verse 8: “But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.” Here again we are partakers of discipline. Therefore, when the Father comes around, He knows you are ready to encounter whatever discipline He wants to give you.

Verse 9: “Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?” His discipline increases our life, our Zoe life.

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.” Wonderful!

Verse 14: "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." This process is going to bring you into the place where you become more and more pure in heart and you will be able to see the Lord. How wonderful this is! And our Father says, "Now I know that your discipline seems tough and not joyful, but think of the goal, think of the sonship, think of the maturity that will be gained in your life."

Now I want to share four areas that are mentioned in the book of Hebrews in which the Father is trying to discipline us. If we can just keep this one thing in mind; He is disciplining unto sonship. He wants us to become sons. He is not punishing; He is disciplining, and this is important to remember.

Fainting Because of a Bad Conscience

The first problem that needs discipline is a very basic problem and it is what I am going to call "fainting in the wilderness because of a bad conscience." Many, many teenagers have this problem.

Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

So many saints do not draw near to the Lord because they are afraid of the Lord because every time they draw near, their heart condemns them; their conscience is guilty. So they circle back around into the wilderness. There are many Christians, especially young people, who go through this. They are not part of what is going on because they feel so guilty and have such a bad conscience, and of course the devil is working on them 24/7. We know that our accuser accuses us before God day and night, trying to bring us into condemnation. So our conscience bothers us, and we cannot get into the Promised Land. We are stuck in the wilderness.

Applying the Blood of Jesus to Our Conscience

Hebrews 9:14: "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" What the Father is doing is reapplying and helping us to understand the precious blood of Jesus. You need the High Priest to get you out of the wilderness of a bad conscience. How wonderful that we can serve the living God! But we have got to stand and gain victory under the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12 talks about the overcomer and the first thing it says in verse 11 is: "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb"

Dear brothers and sisters, no matter how young or old you are in the Lord, if the precious blood of Jesus Christ is not your present reality and position, then you are under condemnation. The enemy will see to it. Those Jews, like many people here, were raised in a strict culture of outward laws, expectations and righteousness, and as a result of that they are known for their guilty conscience. The people who are producers of guilty conscience around the world are Jewish mothers. They make you feel guilty all the time

no matter what you do, even if you do something good. They all have a guilty conscience because they have strict laws and high expectations. They cannot live up to it and they feel guilty for the whole of their lifetime. Thank God, we have the precious blood of Jesus Christ that can wash away all of that stuff.

In I John he talks to the little children. "Little children, love one another and let your hearts be assured before Him." Whenever your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart. What is he saying? Little children have a heart problem because they feel guilty all the time. When your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart. He has applied the blood of Jesus because He knows why you do what you do. He knows your weaknesses already, and He has made a way for you to live without that condemnation and without paralysis from serving the living God. If you are in that kind of position and you always feel condemned, then you have got to start pleading and praying with your great High Priest. He understands you, He loves you, He knows you, He was one like you, He was tempted like you. We need to come to Him with all of our weaknesses and allow the High Priest to deliver us by His precious blood. So what does that mean? It is so simple, but the Father disciplines us with this. Every time you sin, confess your sin.

Confess and Pray to Get Over a Bad Conscience

I John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In order to get over a bad conscience, you may have to pray that prayer and confess that sin a thousand times. It does not say do it ten times and then it is no good anymore. You keep confessing when you sin and know that the Lord Jesus will forgive you, and then let the Lord help deliver you. The Word has to retrain your heart. A lot of us have a guilty conscience, but it is not the conscience given to you by God. It is the conscience given you by your upbringing, and that conscience needs to be crucified with Christ, so that your real conscience, which the Holy Spirit is working in us, can be sensitized. Once you sense the reality of the real conscience it never condemns you; it may convict you of sin, but it will not condemn you. Your society or family or your culture-given conscience can hold you back from serving the living God.

I know men to this day that have been Christians thirty years and they still feel they are such dirty rotten sinners that God could never use them. They are circling around with condemnation. You have to get up every morning and open up Romans 8:1 and say, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." You need to baptize yourself in that verse because the Word of God will finally be applied to your heart, and you will realize that you are free; you are not under condemnation. There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. But unless you are disciplined in this matter of confessing, and standing on the precious Word, then you will always be tripped up. You will try to serve God, and immediately when you begin to pray your mind says, "I cannot pray; I am not worthy to pray; I am no good." And your prayer just kind of leaks out. Your faith leaks out because you said, "I am no good; I am not worthy; what right do I have to ask God to

do this or that? God knows your heart. You come to Him and pray with faith knowing that you are His child and you are under His precious blood.

The two commandments of the Father's discipline for those people who are dealing with a guilty conscience all the time are: 1) Draw near to your High Priest. 2) Overcome by the blood of the Lamb. To those who are dealing with sins and problems, the more you have been dealt with, the more precious the blood of the Lamb is. We live because of the precious blood of the Lamb. We serve the living God because of the precious blood of the Lamb. There is a discipline, a very simple discipline. It is the discipline of little children who are trying to grow up and serve the living God but they have to get over this by His precious blood.

Shrinking Back from the Crucified Life

The second problem that needs discipline is shrinking back at the Jordan River of the crucified life. There are many Christians who want to serve God, try to serve God, but as soon as they start to serve God they are tripped up by encumbrances and besetting sins. Before we run the race we have to lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us. Now these entanglements are not necessarily evil in themselves, but they are entangling your race. Our greatest entanglement is our self-life. You will not be able to swim over the Jordan River in flood tide by the strength of your self-life, and the Father's discipline has a way of bringing you to the end of yourself. The more you struggle, the more exhausted you get, the less fruit you bear, and He begins to restrict you.

I do not know if you have ever done this, but I have. I really served the Lord with all my heart doing this and it bore no fruit. It is so discouraging. Of course, I realized I was doing this thing and the Lord would not allow it to bear fruit. We have to learn that to live is Christ, not I who serves. This is the Jordan River. And when Christians come up against this thing, they keep trying and trying. Okay, I am going to try and swim across, but they cannot make it. Okay, I have a bunch of stuff on my raft and I think I can push it across. It is too much baggage, and you cannot make it across. The Father's discipline is to frustrate Christians who are trying to serve Him. That sounds really mean, but because we want to serve Him out of our own self-life, we have to come to the place where we cannot do it anymore.

Besetting Sins

A lot of times the reason we cannot ford the river is because of a besetting sin. I realize in this passage here the context probably implies the besetting sin is our unbelief which says this: "I can never really serve the Lord. I can never really get into the Promised Land." But I will almost have to say that in everybody's life, there is one besetting sin that keeps tripping you up. I do not know if it is anger, pride, lust, or something, and it just keeps tripping you up every time you try to serve God. There is no way through except for Galatians 2:20; there is no way through except the Lord's deliverance in your life. Struggle as we may, nothing sets us free except the Holy Spirit who is exposing and stripping these things in our lives.

About thirty brothers in New York had a retreat, and they were asked what they would like to talk about. And when they received everyone's answer, the topic was pornography. These are Christian young men, and they are trying to get over this temptation that stares them in the face every day. It besets them. How can you serve the Lord with that kind of addiction? They got serious with one another and formed accountability partners in this whole matter of trying to deal with it. If we are going to serve God, it is not going to be with that kind of besetting sin, not that kind of garbage in our lives. No, the Father will not allow it. He will set up trials in our lives, things that will undo us and expose our failure. We might get frustrated and even be like those saints in Hebrews 5: "Though by this time they should be teachers, they needed someone to teach them the elementary principles again because they cannot chew meat; they need milk." How could you serve God in that way? You may come to the Jordan River but how do you get over?

There comes a burst of light from heaven, and it comes in so many different ways. It is very sovereign, but it comes as a burst of light from heaven, and then there is a consecration once again in your life.

Presenting Your Body as a Living Sacrifice

It is Romans 12:1-2 that says to present your bodies as a living sacrifice unto God, but this time it is a consecration with intelligence. This time you realize what you are consecrating and it is not your old flesh or your strong will that says, "I am going to try." You realize you have been crucified with Christ, and you offer the Lord His life in you as a vessel to serve. And as you present the members of your body as instruments of righteousness, God begins to do a new thing by His life in your life and you cross the Jordan. The Jordan is the end of yourself, and on the other side there is a service anointed by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and prompted by His life within. It is a whole other dimension. But it is also a constant reminder that as you get to the other side you still have to learn: I cannot but He can.

There was a wonderful brother by the name of Major Ian Thomas who shared this message on "Christ's life in exchange for our life." He was British and he was a major in the British army. He talked about the first time this became real to him. He was a youth worker at college, and he would go around and witness to everybody, but nobody ever got saved. They would have Intervarsity meetings, and a few kids would come. He tried to preach to them and nothing ever happened. One day he came across Galatians 2:20, and he said, "Lord, that's it; I quit." And the Lord said, "Good!" And he said, "What shall I do?" He said, "I want you to go to that meeting this afternoon, and I want you to speak." Major Thomas said, "I have nothing to say." And God said, "That is okay, I do." He said, "Well, I have nothing, but You have something, so I will go." And He went not knowing what he was going to say. The Lord took him to that place of not knowing what to do. He went to that meeting, opened his mouth and began to share, and people got saved. But it was not him; it was Christ. He continued with this thing of the Lord telling him to do

something and he would say, "Lord, I cannot." The Lord said, "But I can." He said, "Okay, I will go." It had to become real in his life that the Lord wanted to do things by His life and not by Ian Thomas' life. This is a discipline process that is involved. What a wonderful process it is, especially when we come into that freedom on the other side and recognize how wonderful it is, and how we can, as it were, live in the freedom of His life lived through us. This is what I John 2 calls when you become a young man from a little child, and why are you a young man? The Word of Christ dwells in you and you have overcome the evil one. Now you begin to see the real service of God.

Sojourners Who have Become Settlers

The third problem that needs discipline, and I will just mention this one and the next one in passing. But these become increasingly deeper and they have greater consequences. This one I will call the discipline needed for sojourners who have become settlers. We are sojourning through the wilderness, but somewhere along the line, we begin to say: "That looks pretty nice over there; I think I will settle there. It is like the two and a half tribes who stayed east of the Jordan. They went into the Promised Land with Joshua and the rest of the tribes and fought with them and won victories. But all the time they had their eyes on the prize—the green fields of Moab. It was pasture land that had already been made beautiful; they did not have to cultivate it. But they could not wait to get back home with their family. The two and half tribes went back and said, "We love the Lord, we serve the Lord, and we are all for the Lord, but we just want to live on the east of the Jordan. Well, there they were. They went to Moab, and they became semi-worldly, which is the first stage of becoming worldly. When the Assyrians came in and captured northern Israel, those two and a half tribes were the first ones to go into captivity. They had married with the Moabites and they worshiped Baal. They had fallen away and become worldly. By the time the Assyrians got hold of them they had lost their touch with heaven completely.

When you go back to the west side of the Jordan, they had to fight for testimony. It is sad that you have to fight for testimony. Perhaps it is like the people who Haggai was talking to: "Consider your ways; you have come back to Israel and you had to sacrifice to come back; but you have gotten distracted with building your own house." It is amazing how foolish Christians get. I think everybody here, who has been around for a while, could name brothers who we do not see anymore because they are too busy with the stuff over in Moab. Something has distracted them from the pilgrim way. Settling is so much easier than being a pilgrim.

Problems Cause Some to Quit Serving

There are usually two things that make someone settle. The first one is that problems come up. "I was serving well but difficulties came up, family problems, health problems, financial problems, and the thorny ground began to choke out the cares of life." The next thing you know you are stuck and no longer serving under heaven.

The Distraction of Success

The other distraction is even more difficult because it is the distraction of success, and success breeds commitment to success and more blessings and more blessings. And when you get blessed enough, you begin to feel free. You realize that you have been crucified with Christ and you are really free to do whatever you want. Paul says, "For liberty you have been called." You have been called to be set free. You need to maintain your freedom, but do not let your freedom be an occasion for the flesh.

It is amazing how the Lord has blessed the saints, given us relative financial freedom, given us a wonderful home and some basic things in our lives; such a blessing. What a tragedy it would be if those blessings became a distraction from serving the Lord. "Oh well, we serve the Lord but not with the touch of heaven. We just serve the Lord out of obligation." It has become foolishness, and unless the Father disciplines such a person, they may even come to the place where they despise their birthright. They may come short of the grace of God like Esau and despise their birthright because as it is true throughout the church of Laodicea, it is so comfortable here on earth; why would they want to think about heaven? What could be better than this? We get distracted by things and by success, and before you know it we are not living as pilgrims under that cloud and fire. We are just camping off to the side, and the Lord gets mad about this kind of thing. Even Jesus said, "No one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. That is a serious thing, and the Father speaks seriously about it. This kind of foolishness has to be driven out of the child of God before they despise their birthright.

The Father is More Concerned for Character than for Comfort

Hebrews 4:1 says, "Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it." Does it seem like you have come short of all that the Lord wants for your life? Have you taken a side detour? Then the Father in His love is going to begin designing circumstances that are going to put pressure on what was a wonderful life because God the Father is more concerned for character than for comfort. He is going to deal with us until we realize that our purpose and our calling in life is not to accumulate things, but to be stewards of everything He gives us including our time. Foolishness! Serving the Lord but foolishly getting distracted by things that will not matter in the long run; meanwhile it is robbing us from serving God. I wish brothers would repent and serve the Lord. Too many brothers are absolutely consumed with work even when they do not need to be, but they are addicted and it robs the kingdom of God, and the Lord will deal with us because He is a loving Father.

The Saints Who Knew the Lord but are Now in Rebellion and Sin

We come to the last one, and it is the most sober one. It is hard to describe, hard to relate, but obviously the writer of Hebrews brings it up several times. It is the saint who used to serve the Lord and used to know the Lord, tasted of the Lord in many wonderful ways, but is now in willful rebellion and willful sin.

Hebrews 10:26 – For if we go on sinning willfully (and here is the point) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31), but indeed these people in the end will fall into the hands of the living God. The thing we find in chapter 6 and chapter 10, is that those Christians who truly know the Lord, have served the Lord, they have tasted the Holy Spirit, they received gifts of the Holy Spirit, they tasted the age to come, they have seen something of heaven and the joy, the kingdom and the hope that lays before them. They know all of these things and have tasted the Word of God, yet they fall away.

They fall for many different reasons. Some would say they have gotten weary; they have been serving and now they are weary; their souls got short. A lot of times it actually is because they got offended. If you really serve the Lord long enough, our dear brother Devern Fronke said, “If there is any possible way you can be offended, you will be.” If you serve the Lord long enough, either the saints will offend you, the leaders will offend you, your own hopes will offend you, your ambitions were not met and you were offended or you may be offended by God because you served Him and He did such and such to you. And when somebody becomes offended, they fall away, and you know the passage in Hebrews 6. I do not believe this has to do with losing salvation; I used to actually believe that where it says, “no bringing back of repentance.” It is impossible to bring someone back to repentance. But here is what the writer is saying: “If you knowingly and willfully walk away from the Lord, there is nothing I can do about it. I can talk to you, and I will go to you and talk to you, but you have made up your mind. It is impossible, but He does not mean that it is impossible with God. God has a way of restoring His children. And one way or another, they will fall into the hands of the living God, and as the writer says, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” This is very serious business, but it seems like there were some saints there under the pressure of their persecution who were willing to chuck the whole thing and willingly, against their knowledge of God, walk out on the Lord. For these people, we have these most dreadful warnings that are issued from the Father who loves them so.

Trampling Underfoot the Son of God

In Hebrews 10:29-31 we have the most solemn warning to Christians in the Bible. “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’” The Lord will judge His people. “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

I believe the Lord loves us so much that when somebody goes far, far away, the Lord still knows where they are and He will still deal with them. Even if He has to do some tragic thing in their life, He will do it in order to save their spirit.

Neglecting so great a Salvation

Hebrews 12:25: "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven."

The ones who will be unreached through human help can still be touched by the Father who loves His children.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? The Lord's discipline is to convince us of one thing: there is only the way forward, so be faithful. There is no other way if you want to be with Him. If we want to know the God of discipline, God our Father, we already know Him as the God of grace and mercy. Every discipline He does with grace and mercy, but He is also a holy God, and He wants us to be sons. He is looking out for the interest of His own Son, and He wants us to become sons. Even His wrath is jealous love, and He is convincing us to follow the Lord.

Our Kingdom Inheritance

How important is your inheritance to you? You have a kingdom inheritance, but how important is it to you? I know this is a very difficult somber message to give. I think it needs to be said at least one time. The church is playing this game in which everybody is going to make it; everybody is a winner. You do not have to do anything; just be saved and be as worldly as you want because we are all going to get the same prize in the end. But that is not in the Bible. The Bible says that when His kingdom comes, those who endured by abiding under (that is what endure means in Greek) the Lord. When the kingdom comes, you will be so blessed. He will say, "Come and join in the inheritance. You have been faithful in the little things, now you will be faithful in much. Come into the blessing of the Lord." But there will be people whose whole life was meant to perform and to be and to serve in a certain way, and they will be left on the outside. There is nothing that would cause remorse more in my life than if I could not be part of the kingdom when the Lord Jesus comes back. I was born for that kingdom; that is my inheritance, and I do not want to lose it. So I want to keep pressing on to Jesus; do you? Is that what you want to do? It is yours; it is already yours.

Entrance into the Kingdom

In II Peter 1:10-11 it is cast in a positive way. "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

This says, "Keep growing, and when Jesus comes, you will be ready." Our brother has told us to consider our ways and there have been a couple of warnings already. He said, "What if the Lord Jesus came back right now?" We have some people who have been Christians for more than fifty, sixty, seventy, many years, and we have some brand new Christians here this week. Will the Lord just take those old ones? No, He looks for the person who is standing under the light and saying, "Thy will be done." He is looking for

those who are hearing the Lord speaking today, they are studying the Word as they are serving the Lord, they are growing in the Lord, they are learning faith, they are learning knowledge, they are learning endurance.

Peter says, "If you are growing in these graces as the Lord gives them to you, you are partaking of His nature." And when He comes, whether you are a brand new Christian or a Christian for many years, it is the one who is walking and still serving when He comes who is an overcomer. Those are the ones who will be received into His kingdom. So are you on the way? Or are you stymied and stuck? The discipline of the Father says, "Get unstuck." Now there are some disciplines in your life which are necessary, and I want you growing in such a way that you will be part of the kingdom even as He has destined that you should be.

What a wonderful kingdom we have to look forward to! It is coming very soon. Are you on the way going through the wilderness with your High Priest and Apostle? Are you listening to the Father when He talks to you? Have you been reproofed? Do you take reproof? You will find that reproof always comes with love. Are you under discipline? Has He got you under a discipline for some reason? It is a wonderful place to be, isn't it? When you are under discipline, you know that He is pleased with you even while you are under discipline. The Father loves us. The Father of mercies, the Father of all grace, comes and says, "Son, do not take lightly my discipline, and do not faint when I reprove you. For whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges everyone who is a son." Are you a son? Is that your destiny? Then you will not only meet Jesus the Apostle and High Priest, but you will meet the Father. It is all part of the process of being placed as a son.

Let's pray:

Dear Father in heaven, we are so thankful that You come to us and speak a word that is strong and true. We pray that You will speak to our hearts in such a way that will enable us to grow into sonship. Do take away from those sensitive spirits any sense of condemnation, any sense that they have been thrown out; but rather draw us by the presence of Jesus. We want to run after Jesus. We know we need a lot of discipline in our lives, but Lord, we want to hear and obey in this day. We want to be those who are able to eat meat and discern righteousness and do that which is right. We want to be correctable and understand that there is much, much more to learn of living in this eternal kingdom soon to come. So Lord, do teach us, do have mercy on us. Lead every one of us into this glorious kingdom that is our destiny. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.