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Why is it so painful?

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CORE VERSE

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

2 Corinthians 4:17

When we find ourselves in the midst of pain, we generally can't focus on anything else. Pain seems to consume our attention as if nothing else matters. But Paul, a man who experienced quite a bit of pain himself (2 Corinthians 11:23-28), reminds us here that pain is only temporary. Even if we lived our entire 80 to 90 years on earth in pain, it would still be a *light ... but for a moment* problem compared to the eternal glory and joy we will experience in heaven. God intends to use our pain for His glory as He makes us more like Christ.

USE THE SPACE BELOW TO HELP YOU REMEMBER THIS VERSE. FEEL FREE TO WRITE, DRAW OR DESIGN IN WAYS THAT MAKE SENSE TO YOU.

READ HEBREWS 12:3-11.

What's the difference between discipline and punishment? Some people use the words to mean the same thing, but we're going to use those two words to point to a difference in how God responds to human sin.

For our purposes, punishment is the payment for a sin. Punishment is using pain or some restriction to make a person pay the price for their wrong choice. So the state, for example, has decided that the price for stealing a car is, say, five years in prison. That's the punishment. Once you've done your time, the crime is paid for and you're free.

God has declared that the price for human sin—any sin—is death and separation from Him (Romans 6:23). That's the price Jesus paid with His own life for our sin (Galatians 3:13-14). He was punished and suffered God's judgment (Isaiah 53:5-6). All who do not receive God's grace will suffer the same punishment forever (Matthew 25:46).

But God won't punish His children in the same way. Our sin is already paid for. We don't have to pay the price for it because Jesus already did.

So that means that God will never bring any pain into our lives, right? Not so fast. That's where discipline comes in. For this discussion, discipline is different than punishment.

A good parent is not trying to make their child pay the fair price for disobeying or lying; a good parent uses discipline to try to get their child not to disobey or lie in the future. That parent uses some form of pain or restriction to shape their child, to motivate him or her to walk in a better direction for their own good.

Obviously, not all parents are good; our God is the only perfect father. This week's passage makes it clear that our good father will use pain—discipline—to shape us to be more and more like Jesus, to steer our lives in the direction that He wants us to go.

While some may find that idea shocking, God does sometimes make our lives harder because He loves us like a good Father (vv. 5-6). He is training us to trust Him more deeply, to go in the direction of Jesus, to walk in the path that will lead to *the peaceable fruit of righteousness* (v. 11) for us.

Is that unfair? The writer of Hebrews encourages us to remember that Jesus suffered far more than we ever will (v. 3). He was actually punished by God for our sin. We will never suffer as He did on the cross (v. 4).

Next, the author warns that someone who is never disciplined by God, never experiences any pain or discomfort or inconvenience in this life, might not be a legitimate child of God (v. 8). If we experience hard things as God's discipline, that is evidence that God loves us, that He is working on us to make us like Christ (v. 7).

We will all experience pain at some point in our lives. As Christians, we must learn to look through these painful experiences to see how our heavenly Father is using them to train and shape us to become the people He desires us to be. While we won't usually enjoy these moments of discipline, we must seek to persevere, learn, and grow from our pain in order that we may become more holy and complete like our Savior, Jesus Christ (vv. 10-11).

CORE CONCEPTS

Life involves painful experiences that instruct us.

SHAPE:
To make something fit the form of something else

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS

- WHICH PERSON IN THE BIBLE STANDS OUT TO YOU AS AN EXAMPLE OF GOD'S DISCIPLINE?
- HOW DOES DISCIPLINE DEMONSTRATE LOVE?
- WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THE PAINFUL EXPERIENCES IN YOUR LIFE?
- WRITE YOUR OWN QUESTION: