

Enduring the Discipline as Sons

Hebrews 12:5-11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, May 28, 2023

Several of us had a unique opportunity this week to go over to the facility of Cooke's Presbyterian Church and do a video to send to our ministry partners to see if they'd be interested in giving financially, and also through their prayers to help us in pursuit of a building. You'll be seeing that video here soon; we're putting all the pieces of it together. But I tell you that because I learned a little bit about that property. The one thing is, it might be the oldest church in Chilliwack, which is quite a thing to say; there's a lot of churches around here. But it was established in 1888 as a mission to some of the migrant workers that were coming through, I think, during the gold rush. And so it has quite a history there.

Another thing I learned about them is they have a lot of old pictures in the building. And I don't know if you do this, but I love to go look at old pictures in a church building. And just to see some of the history and some of the legacy. And one thing I often wonder is, boy, what would it be like? I'm a pastor. What would it be like for someone to be looking at my picture on a wall in 100 years? Is it going to make them smile? Or is it going to make them frown? Chances are they probably won't even know who I was. But in light of what we're going to talk about this morning, one image I had, as I was looking at these pictures, black and white pictures, sort of the grey, brown tinged kind of pictures, is the image of a race, and how these people ran a race for good or bad. And as they ran their lap, and they carried the baton, and they came around to the next person, they handed it off and died. It was over. They had no more to run. They had so many days like we all do. And that was it. And then the next person carried the baton, and they ran their race. And they went through goods and bads, highs and lows, sunny days and rainy days. And they died; handed it off to the next one and so forth, and so on. And there were challenges in their race, and there were hardships, and there were trials. Some of those people had it pretty rough many years ago. Actually the first picture you see of Cooke's Presbyterian Church, there's nothing around it. It's a church building and just fields. And life was difficult.

And that brings us to our passage for this morning, if you would look in Hebrews 12. As has already been alluded to, we're going to talk about the discipline of God. And we're going to tie it into the race that we talked about last week. But let me just read it to you. We've already read it once; I just want it fresh in your minds. It says in chapter 12.

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.”

Let me have a word of prayer with you, and then let's talk about this passage together.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this text, our hearts are, they've got to be humbled a little bit. They need to be humbled a lot. Nobody runs this race perfectly. No one lives the Christian life in a blameless manner. And we're all being disciplined in some way by You. We can't approach this subject, Lord, without a tear in our eye.

Father, I don't know what everyone's going through, but I know many of our people are in pain this morning. And they've had a tough time and it can be discouraging. And so we want to approach this text with an open mind and an open heart, but we want to do it Lord to understand Your will in this. You have a purpose for all of this pain. It's not random. It's no accident. You're a perfect God with a perfect plan, implementing it in our lives in a perfect way. And we need to know that today. Lord, please open our eyes please. Please get our hearts into this text so that the text is in us and we're in it together. And then Christ may be glorified. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I don't have to tell you as you have read this twice, now, read it earlier and read it again, you can tell the author is talking about the topic of God's discipline. It's just written all across the page here. If you just look, it's seen nine times in this section. It's mentioned once in verse five, once in verse six, twice in verse seven, one time in verse eight, one time in verse nine, twice in verse 10. And then once again in verse 11. There's just discipline, discipline, discipline in here. Trials, trials, trials, and it's using powerful language to express this. It mentions shedding blood in verse four, that's pretty dramatic; fainting in verse five; it talks about being reproved in the same verse and scourged in the next; mentions endurance in verse seven; sorrow in verse 11, in order to show you that this is what the discipline of God is, like, it's hard. And this is not for the faint of heart. If you want a very calming soothing sermon this morning, this is just not it. This is a very convicting one.

And just to say some words about this, if you notice, this whole section starts off with the word “and” in verse five. You can see the word “and” there because it's carrying on the thought of the previous section. And that is that you are in a race. Verse one says, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us run with endurance, the race that is set before us.” What that means is that since we have a cloud of witnesses who have run the race before us in the Old Testament, this is what we are to do, we need to run. And since we have men like Abel, and Enoch, and Noah in Hebrews

11, that we spent months talking about, who have distinguished themselves as world class athletes and have set off down the track and gone at full speed with the wind blowing through their hair, and they've sat down in the stands now; you need to follow their example. You can't be lazy in the Christian life. You can't be flippant or apathetic about this. You can't just let go and let God and do nothing. You've got to approach this with earnestness and zeal like a runner. You can't be halfway in a race. We said that last time. You're either in or you're out. And you can't be partially in the stadium. You're either with it or you're not. And it's the same way with this.

In fact, I told you last week that when you read the Bible, you see a lot of images for what it means to be a Christian. And it doesn't just give you one; there's several. For example, the Bible says we're soldiers, which means that we don't serve Jesus in peacetime; we serve Him in war time on a battleground, not a playground. And it says we're sheep because Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He leads us into green pastures and beside quiet waters and restores our soul. And we're a family; we're part of God's household now. And when you're saved, your slaves of Christ; He is your master. And your citizens of heaven, and salt and light, and all these beautiful things. But now it says we're runners in a race, and runners work hard. If you don't believe me, just go home after church today and run somewhere. I mean, it wears you out.

But not only that, but let's tie it into this passage. Listen to this, verse five says this, in order to prepare you for the race, this is what God does. And you've got to understand this. This is how it connects; it comes together. The Lord disciplines you. Just like a coach would do, He puts you through hardship. And just like a trainer would do to prepare you for a race, He passes you through the fire of affliction. So you can cross the finish line and win the prize. He doesn't go easy on you; that won't help you. And He doesn't make things simple. What good would that do for a runner? On the contrary, He makes them very difficult. When I was reading this, I was putting this together in my mind I was getting the image of God taking you to a gym and making you hit the punching bag. And the Lord bringing you to the weight room and making you pump iron and getting you up at 5:30 in the morning before the sun comes up to tell you to hit the trail and do some drills and put in the effort because He loves you too much to leave you where you are. That's why the trials come in. That's why there's distress in your life.

It's really important to remember when you recall the background for this whole book. Because the book of Hebrews was written to the Jewish people who left Judaism for Christ, and their dead works of religion for the gospel. And when they did, the trials came in at a high level; things got hard. They were shunned by their community, they were disowned by their friends, they were thrown out of the synagogue, fired from their jobs, some of them were divorced from their spouses, tossed in the street. And now the author's writing this to say that's not random. That happens because God is training you up for something better. Every time you get fired from your job, God is training you. Every time, a stone is thrown in your direction by the Jews, He's using it to make you stronger. Every time you're pulled out of the synagogue, He's increasing your stamina for the race. So you can go the distance, so you can endure.

I mention that because I don't know what everybody's going through today, but I know some of you are suffering. We've had a tough month as a church. We made several trips to the hospital, I was just visiting one of our shut-ins this morning, we've gone to the emergency room to visit friends. Some members of our church have been through a tragedy, where they were just doing something normal and they got injured, and they wound up going to see the doctor and all that stuff just makes you wonder "why?". Why does God allow bad things to happen? Why does He allow these trials to come in? Does He care? Anybody ever ask that before? Are you a human being? We all have. And the answer is that yes, God cares. But He knows something. And that is that you don't grow during times of just prosperity. And you don't just mature in times of sunshine, He's got to bring in the rain. He brings in times of difficulty to make you more mature in Christ. You know, this is this is not an easy text to talk about, but the idea is that God does hurt us at times. And He purposely brings pain, which makes Him sound terrible. But the truth is, He's not if you see the bigger picture behind this. And the bigger picture is that God wants you to go to heaven. He's preparing you for eternity. He knows the race is short; it does not last long. You're down here for a few years around that track. And that's it. So if He has to make things miserable for you now to prepare you for that, so be it. What's a few miserable years in comparison to eternity, amen? I mean, listen, friends, you need the Father's discipline today. I need it. So does every single person on the planet who professes the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior; you can't run this race on your own. You don't have the power. You need to be trained up.

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at two ways to respond to the discipline of God. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for this morning. But in verses five through 11 of this chapter, we're going to look at two ways to respond to the discipline of God. And the first one is to stop forgetting about it.

So the first way to respond to the discipline of God here in this text, is to stop forgetting about it. Which means that when you struggle with the Lord's discipline because you find it difficult, the first thing you have to do, or the first thing he tells his audience to do, is to remember that this is not unusual. And God told you it would happen way back in the Bible. If you notice, the author begins verse five, with this phrase, "and you" which is in the second person plural. And that means all of you. Every single person who is being addressed in this chapter, and is running the race in verse one, and laying aside the encumbrances and putting away sin, and fixing their eyes on Jesus, and considering Him in verse three, so you won't grow weary and lose heart. Here's what he says now in verse five. You have forgotten the exhortation, which is addressed to you as sons.

Now, why does he say that? Well, he says that because the Jews are suffering here. And they're going through a hard time like we just talked about, and it's causing them to wonder "why?". Why is God doing this to me? Does He even care anymore? And the author says you got to stop doing that because you know why this is happening? We talked about it before. The Lord is disciplining you. Jesus said, "In this world, you'll have tribulation." I mean, how vague is that? How could you not get that? And He said, "A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you." And how

could you ignore that the Lord is not pulling punches there. That's very direct. So He says here that you can't be surprised when this happens. It should not catch you off guard.

In order to help you see this here, he quotes from Proverbs 3:11-12. If you just want to write those verses down, that's what he's quoting in verses five and six. This is from Proverbs 3:11-12. And he says,

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.”

Now, when you read this part of the text, the key word there is the word “discipline” because that's the theme of the whole section. Remember, it's repeated nine times from verse five through verse 11. It's the Greek word *paideuō*, which comes from a word, *paidion*, which means child. This is referring to the discipline of a child, or the training or schooling of one. It was a pretty elaborate thing in the ancient world because everyone could not go to school back then. A lot of the people were illiterate; most of the schooling came for the wealthier families. And the way it works is when a child reached the proper age from a wealthy home, the father or guardian would pick him up in the home, take him to a classroom, and sit with him by the desk in order to make sure he learned his lessons and didn't slack off. Because when he did, these were brutal times. When he did, it was the job of the father or the guardian to swat him with a stick. Now how would you like school like that? That won't happen in Canada. When he lost focus in the work, they would hit him with something to get him back on track again. You guys have heard of the school of hard knocks, that was literally the school of hard knocks. And the idea here is that this is what God does through our suffering. He picks us up in the house, He takes us into the schoolroom, and swats us when we're lazy. Because we all know what it's like to be going about our business doing the same old routine stuff throughout the day until we get hit by a trial. And what does it do? It just knocks us upside the head, right? It makes you think about God again. That's kind of the image here.

Now the reason this is important is because the author is adding to the image of God being a coach now, because he says He's not just a coach or trainer; He's a parent, too. He's a father. And it shifts the focus from the racetrack to the home. And from the stadium where it's all about work and sweat and labor and toil, to the family where it's about grace. Because yes, the coach swats us now, and yes, He puts us through pain, but He doesn't do this in a cold manner. And He doesn't do it like someone who doesn't care. He does it like a father to a child. Isn't that encouraging? Don't you need to hear that this morning? Listen, I've had several coaches in my life who were hard on me, and I never appreciated a lot of it because I didn't think they cared. All I was just an athlete to them. But I had a dad who was hard on me too at times. He applied the rod of discipline to me, took me to the woodshed as we say in

Tennessee. And I appreciated him because he cared. You have a God who cares! Amen? You have a Lord who does these things out of grace and mercy.

In order to explain this, the author gives you two warnings here to introduce this subject, the author of Proverbs does. I'm not gonna say too much about them because he's just mentioning these in passing. But if you're wondering what this is referring to.

The first one is that you should not think lightly of this. You see the phrase in here. He says, "My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord." And that means don't shrug it off and say it's no big deal when it happens. And when trials come into your life and pain comes rushing in, you shouldn't tell yourself, "I hope it'll be over soon so I can go out and play. Get me out of the classroom, Lord. Make the schooling stop." You need to see it as more significant than that. I've been in a lot of hospital rooms. And I've talked to people who have said, "I would rather be at the lake." I get it. I would rather you be at the lake too. But you need to know something. There are lessons God is teaching you in the hospital right now you can't learn it the lake. And you've got to be serious about that.

Another warning here is that you should not faint when reproved by Him. And that refers to the act of giving up, throwing in the towel, saying, "God, I'm done with the race. This pain has become so unbearable; I quit. The hospital has been so rough on me, I'm just losing all interest." You can't be like that either. And here's why. This is why these warnings are given. Because verse six says, "For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines." And that means the reason you don't faint and give up when this is happening is because you know that He cares, and He doesn't discipline out of cruelty. He's not mean. He does it out of great affection like a father would. This is not clinical to God. You're not a lab rat. He's not up in heaven poking and prodding you and throwing down lightning bolts with no compassion. It's completely different from that. He does it almost with a tear in his eyes, is kind of the image here. No father just loves inflicting pain upon their child. You only do it because you think so much of him.

When he mentions the love of God here, this is a reference to what you would call the special love of God or the particular love of God. There's a common grace, that God shows all mankind. It's summarized in Matthew 5:45, where it says, "He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." And that means God takes care of both good and bad, sinners and saints. He lets all of them enjoy nature and His goodness outwardly to them. But that's not what this is referring to. This is talking about the special redemptive love of God He has for his children. Where He predestined you from before the foundation of the world in order to call you, and redeem you, and justify you, and adopt you into His family. Because God's discipline is an outflow of that. It's an aspect of this tender mercy towards you.

We could say it like this, you look around the room, we have a lot of young families in the church. We have throughout most of our history. And I bet every parent in this room knows what it's like to go down to the nursery after the service and pick your kids up. Because when you do that, you love all the kids in there, don't you? You should. They're wonderful. They're all precious; they're beautiful. But there is

something different about your own kids, amen? Because you have a special love for them. You look at them with a particular affection because they're the ones you're going to bring home with you. You don't bring every one of those kids home. You'll go to jail if you do that; don't do that. And they're the ones you're going to provide for. They're the ones that have your last name, and they're the ones you're going to discipline when they need it. So when they pick up something that they shouldn't in their hands, you stop them. And when they try to put something into their mouth that will harm them you say "No." And when they walk out toward the street where the cars are going by driving 60 miles an hour, you would move heaven and earth to make them quit. Because you can't help it. There's something in you compelling you to do that; you love them. It's that way with God.

In fact, the last part of the section here shows you how zealous God is for this when it says in verse six that He scourges every son whom He receives. Now that's a serious thing to say. If you pull out any Greek dictionary lexicon, this is a term that will send shivers down your spine because the word "scourge" means to flog someone with a whip or strike them with a rod to the point that they bleed. This is not a swat on the hands. It's not a slap on the wrist. It's almost like a full on beating to the point that it leaves scars. And the reason God does this and disciplines us to this extent is because He knows sometimes you don't learn a lesson with just a swat on the wrist. And there are days you don't get the picture with just a slap on the arm. He's got to take it further. He's got to push it to a higher degree. So you'll get the picture and learn the lesson.

This text says here that He does this for every son because there's no exceptions to this. No matter who you are, if you're saved, you will be scourged. And if you are a child of God, you will go through this process at times. You can expect it, you can read back through this list, and every one of these things will happen to you. You'll be disciplined, you'll be reproved, you'll face His correction.

It also says this happens for all that He receives. And that means that this doesn't happen just to those God rejects and pushes away, it happens to those He brings to Himself. Because when He brings you in, the pain process starts.

But going back to what we said earlier in verse five, the main point behind this whole section is that you guys are forgetting this now. He's telling these Jews after as he goes through all this, "You're acting like you don't even know why the bad things are happening." And there's no excuse for that. There's no reason. If you remember, when they were saved, they were shunned and shamed and avoided by members of their community. They're disowned and disassociated. Some of them in their home growing up, the family would hold a funeral for them to say, "You're dead to me now. You chose Christ over Judaism. I'm through with you." And it made these people wonder "why?" They thought the Christian life would be easier. They thought it would be simple. The author says, "It won't, and you should have known better. I've already told you that. Stop being so naive."

One of the Reformers once said, “They gave your Saviour a crown of thorns. Do you think they'll give you a crown of roses? You think you're gonna go to heaven on a feather bed? Let me tell you, you will not.”

And I'll tell you all this because I think a lot of us would be in the same boat as the Jews, right? I don't know if every Christian has a good understanding of the doctrine of suffering today. It's so difficult. When pain comes into our lives, we wonder why. “What's going on? Why would God allow this?” There's even a branch of theology right now that teaches something called the prosperity gospel, which says that if you believe in Jesus, He'll make things prosperous for you. You can name it and claim it. You can speak a word of faith on your problems, and they'll go away because it'll give you your best life. Now, the problem with that is that this text says sometimes God gives you your worst life now. And some days He makes things harder because He cares. He wants to stop you from running out in the street.

It's been said, “One way to find out what's in a rag is to squeeze it because it shows you what was in there in the first place.” And sometimes that happens in the spiritual realm. God squeezes us like a towel in order to show you what's in your soul, so He can minister to it. In fact, when you read this text, some have wondered and asked the question, “What's this saying? How bad is it going to get for me? How much pain does God put us through?” And the answer is, well, how much pain do you need? That's how much He gives you. How much will it take for you to get the lesson that He's trying to impart in your life? That's how much you will endure. Just like a coach would do. He gives you the right amount of training but no more and no less. And just like a parent would do. He inflicts the proper amount of discipline, but He never goes over that. He always shows restraint. You can draw comfort from that. One commentator said we're simply not in a position to know how much suffering is required to accomplish all of God's will for our lives. We have no idea.

Some people want to say that “If I were God, I would solve all the world's problems and the issue of suffering once and for all.” But the truth is that you're not God; you don't know what the world needs. He is, and so you just have to learn how to trust Him in this.

In fact, this is something that you find out in the Bible when you read the book of Job, remember him? Job suffered a lot. So if you want a practical example of what this is talking about, just go home after the service and read that book. Because when you do you find it's one of the longer books in the Old Testament, and it's on the subject of trials, or one man's trials. Because in the book, Job loses his family, his livelihood, and his health in the first few verses; that all takes place in the first couple of seconds. And after that, his wife tells him to curse God and die, which makes things worse. That's not encouraging. Then his friends come along, and they tell him, “It's all your fault.” That's not any better. And then God appears to him at the end of the book, and He basically tells Job, “You've got to stop questioning Me. You have to learn how to trust.” And that's how it ends. But it happened because the Lord was testing his faith, or He was allowing the devil to test his faith; you see that kind of in the

beginning. But He wanted to help him like a trainer would. He was building up Job's spiritual muscles, and strengthening his legs so he could run faster and push harder and go further down the track. I don't know about you, but when I read Job, and I put it together with Hebrews 12, I get the image in my mind of Job running and coming up to mile marker 20. And he's tired. And the Lord is slapping him on the back saying, "Come on, man. Let's get going. Don't mess around. You're in a race. This is not a picnic; you're in a war. This is not a game. You're gonna fall from time to time; things are gonna get tough. You're gonna break bones, but you can't quit. It's not an option for you."

If you want to write this other verse down, James 1:2-3 says, "Consider it all joy, brethren, when you encounter various trials." That's how the book of James starts. And I would say that's an odd verse in my fallen thinking. Because why does he say, "Consider it all joy when you face trials."? I don't consider my trials joy. Do you like your trials? But he says this, he says, "Because 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." In other words, the reason you have joy in trials is because God is using it to perfect you. And that's a good thing. Anything God uses to perfect you as good. Doesn't matter what it is. Sickness is a blessing if it leads you closer to God. Trials are a grace if they make you more like Him. Tribulations are a mercy if it gets the sin out of your life. And you need to learn to see it that way.

That brings us to another reason; or another way we should respond to the discipline of God in this passage. The first one is don't forget about it. The author puts this in here as kind of a confrontation or kind of a jab at you to say the reason some of your suffering is so hard is because you've gotten soft. And you've forgotten the Christian life is a war zone. It's not a party zone. It's not meant to be easy for you; you're in a race, and it's a race to the death. You're in a fight and it's a fight to the finish.

It brings you to a second way to respond to this, and that is to understand the reasons for it. So the first one is stop forgetting about it. Secondly, understand the reasons for it. Which means you need to wrap your mind around the theology of this and dig deeper. You can't just say, "Oh yeah, God is disciplining me. I know that. Let's just move on." No, you need to stop for a moment, and really think about what this is saying. And in order to help you do that, the author gives you six reasons why the Lord disciplines His children. That's in verses seven through 11. We're gonna look at these one at a time.

The first one is to produce endurance in you. If you look in verse seven, it says, "It is for discipline that you endure." Which means this is why the Father puts pain in your life, and this is why He makes the race so hard at times; and that is to make you stronger. Gives you stamina. Help you go all the way to the finish line, no pain, no gain. You don't get a crown without a cross. There's no path of victory without the path of suffering. Just like a runner has to eat right, drink right, and exercise right, and get up at 5:30 in the morning to hit the track and run and sprint and do the workout, it's the same way for you as believers. The Lord gives you trials for this purpose. Because understand this, He gives you this much hardship so you can endure that much hardship later. And He gives you little problems in life, so you can navigate bigger ones and do more for His name.

I told you last time someone asked me the other day, “Pastor Jeremy, how do we get our church ready for the trouble that's going to come from the government.” Because we know it's probably coming someday; things aren't getting better. And I said, “You prepare by going through trials now because if you can handle trials now; you can handle trials then. But if you can't, then you won't. It's not rocket science here. Some people think the way to get ready for persecution in Canada is to stay at home in front of their computer and write angry words over email. It's not. The way to do it is to get out of your house, serve the Lord, go where His people are, make your life a blessing to others, and that gets you ready for it. You can't expect to wake up one day and just be a different person. You can't handle things incorrectly now and hope that one day things will just change. You have to get in the habit of training yourself to endure. And that's why the Lord is putting these difficulties in your life.

It leads to a second reason for the discipline here, and that is to prove sonship. It produces endurance; it proves sonship. Verse seven goes on to say, “It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons.” Now, not the kids who live next door, or the babies in the nursery that you just see on Sunday morning and leave there. God deals with you as if you're His own family. And how do you know? Because it says, “For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which we've all become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

And a key word you should see here is the word “illegitimate.” It's a term that refers to a child born out of wedlock. Just like it is today, in the first century, a lot of kids were conceived that way. And when it happened, it was often terrible for the child because he would not receive anything from the father. The dad would just ignore him and toss him out on the street. The Romans actually had a practice related to this called *patria potestas* whereby when a son was born in Rome, they would place it at the father's feet, and if the dad walked over it, that meant that he didn't want him. And the child would be given up for adoption or sold into slavery. But if the father stopped and bent down to pick the child up, that meant that he wanted him, and from that point on, it was his duty to raise the child and teach him and do all the things of discipline that we've been talking about because the child was his. And what this means practically is that this is how you have assurance of salvation. God is disciplining you. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

And this is how you know you're a Christian, you go through seasons of pain. We get this backwards. We think if someone is having a hard life, it's proof they're not saved. And we think if their suffering it's a sign that God doesn't want to have anything to do with them. It's just the opposite. Some of the godliest people I've ever met were those who suffered horrifically. Things were just awful for them. They didn't have a big house. They didn't have a lot of money. They didn't even have good health. But you know what they had. They had a close relationship with God. They had a nearness to Him that was born through the fires of adversity because God pulled out the whip and flogged them. He pulled off the

stick and disciplined, and it hurt. But it caused them to pray and read their Bibles and have a tenderness toward Him that could not be produced any other way. We have to learn how to see it this way.

It leads to a third reason why the Lord disciplines us here, and that is because it instills respect. We're just going to go through some of these pretty quickly because I want you to see how they come together at the end. But verse nine says, "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline to us, and we respected them."

And that's another lesson from the lens of parenthood because when you have a parent who trains you up this way, you respect them. You think highly of them. You sit up straight when they walk in the room. You get your act together when they come around. You say, "Yes, sir." and "No, sir." "Yes, ma'am." And "No, ma'am." We've all known parents who did not discipline their children, and what did they do? They acted the other way. They were disrespectful. They didn't say "Yes, sir. No, sir." They didn't sit up straight when they walked in the room. They acted almost like little devils. We've also known parents who were very diligent in the discipline and trained them up in love. And what did the kids do? They honoured them. There was a great fondness there because they appreciated what the parents did. That's the image here.

When trials come, we all hate them at the time, don't we? And when pain rushes in, we all find it miserable. But thankfully, you can look back years later and say, "Thank you, God for what You did there. Thank you, Lord, for Your kindness." And you respect Him.

I'll tell you one thing trials teach you, they teach you that there is a God, and you are not Him. I was talking with a neighbor the other day. He's a professing Christian. And he said several years ago, he was trying to get a job in another country, and he failed. And it was really frustrating for him because he worked really hard at this. He went to school and whatnot. But afterwards, he was so glad that happened because he met a woman in Chilliwack, and they got married, started a family together, and he's so happy. But he said, "It never would have happened if God didn't let me fail." Aren't you glad He does that sometimes? Aren't you grateful God didn't give you that job in that town and that career? Aren't you thankful that He didn't give you that house in that neighborhood and let you earn millions of dollars and be rich. Instead, He gave you a wife. He gave you a husband. He brought beautiful children into your life. That's better by far. Amen? You need to respect Him for that.

A fourth reason here is that it creates submission. The Father's discipline provides endurance. It proves sonship. It instills respect. And it creates submission, which you find at the end of verse nine, when it says, "Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?" Which could be translated, "Shall we not much rather submit" Bow the knee, be humble. That's what suffering does. God gives you suffering to make you bow the knee before His throne.

Now many of us have good theology in this area because we understand mentally that God is sovereign. And we know theoretically in our heads that He has known us and chosen us and predestined us so that everything that happens comes from His hand. But the problem is it doesn't go from the head to the heart; we have a hard time submitting to that. We don't want to bow the knee. When trials come, we don't want to say, "Okay." When suffering starts, we don't want to tell God, "All right." When the pain sets in, we don't want to say, "You know what's best; I don't." Instead we want to buck up against it.

And the idea here is that sometimes God in His mercy turns the fire of adversity up even hotter, so you'll stop that sinful attitude. So that we would be subject to this Father of spirits and live which means that He does this so you won't continue to sin and die. He wants you to submit to the Father and live and go to heaven. You can't go to heaven if you resist God. And you can't be saved if you will not submit; so He cracks the whip to make you do it.

It brings you to a fifth reason why this happens, and that is, so you may share in His holiness. We'll get to the first part of verse 10 in just a moment but let me read the second part to you. It says, "But He disciplines us for our good, so we may share His holiness."

And just to get to the point on this one, one pastor said, "The verse gives the image of God administering the rod of discipline, and holiness flows down through the rod into us. And He strikes you with the bar of correction, and His purity goes through the bar and passes into your soul. So that you can share it with Him because God is holy, and He wants you to be holy. And God is pure, and He desires you to live that way. So He hits you with this pain to make it happen." Sounds harsh, but remember, God never strikes you carelessly. And He never does it in a hasty manner. He does all things well. Because how much pain does God put you through? Well, no more or no less. He always does it in the right manner, which is what the first part of the verse is kind of alluding to when it says, "For they [our earthly fathers] disciplined us for a short time, as seemed best to them."

And the image there is that our earthly parents corrected us as best they could, but they failed in some of it because they're earthly; they're human. Sometimes they were too strict in the discipline; sometimes too lenient; went too far; lost their temper. God didn't do that. Every time He brings a trial into your life, it makes you holy, if you're his child. Be encouraged by that. Nothing falls through the cracks of His sovereignty.

And this brings us to a sixth reason why the Lord disciplines us as His children, and that is because the discipline yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in us. Verse 11 says, "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." Or the fruit that comes out of a peaceful, righteous heart, that is some translators render in different ways here, because God's affliction does this; it creates peace. We're often in a hurry when something bad happens, and what does it do? It calms us down for a moment. And we're often running here, there and everywhere, like a chicken with a head cut off until tragedy strikes.

And how do we respond? It often makes us pause and take stock of what's important. And as it does that, it gives us rest. I've talked to some of the people that have been in the hospital recently, and they said it calmed them down. I didn't tell them it was because of the medication they were on. But no, in a spiritual way, it does, if you respond the right way. That's the fruit that he bears with this.

If you notice, the verse says, this happens as a result of his training. "Yet to those who had been trained up in it." And that gives you the image of going back to the image of a runner and a coach. The author's dropped that for a little while, but now he's picking it back up again, to remind you why the Lord allows this to happen. And that is to prepare you for the race. And this is all being done to make you run faster and go farther and do more for His name, so you can cross the finish line and get the prize. That's what the troubles are here for. That's why life is hard for you. Good coaches are not soft on their athletes. Bad coaches are soft on their athletes. Good coaches are tough. They want you to win.

Let me just pause here for a moment, so we can summarize all of this because this is where our text for this morning ends. We'll pick back up in verse 12 next time, but the author ends by telling you why your life is so challenging, and that's because the Lord is disciplining you to do these things. And that is to produce endurance in you, improve sonship, just going back over this list here. He wants to instill respect in you and create submission. He wants you to share in His holiness and develop the peaceful fruit of righteousness because you're His sons. And He wants you to grow. You're His children and He wants you to mature. He loves you too much to leave you right where you are right now.

Because really the facts behind all this, is that one day you're going to die; and when you do, the race will be over. This race has a beginning, and it has an end. It begins at the new birth in the moment of your conversion. That's when you repent, and you do a 180; and you go from the broad road to the narrow road, and from the darkness to the light. And you start running in the right direction toward God. But that race is not going to go on indefinitely in this world. One day, you'll die, or the Lord will return to take you home. And at that moment, you're going to stand before the Lord of all the arena and the great King of the earth, Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 says "He will judge you for the deeds which were done through the body in accordance with what you have done, whether good or bad." And that's a way of saying that one day Jesus will review your performance as a runner, not to send you to hell, that's already been taken care of at the cross. And He's not going to judge you to condemn you, that's already been paid for. But He will go through your life, and have you give an account of it. And the idea here is that the Father is disciplining you to get you ready for that day. He's bringing you all the pain and shame and misery and hardship into your life, so you can stand before Jesus and not be ashamed. So you can face the Judge and hear him say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant, come enjoy your master's happiness."

It's a serious text, but there is joy at the end of it. There's hope; it's in Him.

I told you what it was like to go through that old church here in Chilliwack and look at those pictures on the walls. And wonder what would it be like for someone to look at my picture someday? Will it bring them encouragement or discouragement? Will the thought of my race be a curse or a blessing, and the answer is going to be found in how you run. Run well; it's a blessing. Don't run well, and it won't be. And the point here is that God is allowing these things to cross your path, so you won't waste your life that way. He wants you to make it count.

You know, like some of you, I was blessed to grow up in a home where my parents disciplined me. And they were pretty strict about it. I didn't get away with much because I grew up in a small town. And if you know what it's like growing up in a small town, I mean, anytime you do something wrong, your parents know. In fact, sometimes the neighbors would discipline me in the small town in Tennessee, and then send me home and I'd get disciplined again. I was like, "What? We already took care of this." That won't happen anymore either, will it? In one particular summer, the summer of my fourth grade year, I was being a difficult kid. My parents got a lot of phone calls. And they tell me the story of the time my mom called my dad at work, and she said, "Your son is being," I knew it was bad when told my dad "It's your son." Not mine; "Your son is being a little hooligan right now." I don't know if that translates into B.C. language. It's not in a dictionary, I don't think. But she called me a hooligan. And she said, "He's going to war with me, and I want you to know, he's not going to win. I'm going to whack the hooligan out of him." And I can honestly say, I'm 42 right now, I was nine years old at the time, she did. And that one conversation changed the course of my life as a child because I don't know where I would have ended up if she didn't do that. I could have fallen into sin. I had friends who got hooked on drugs. Some of them went to jail and died at a young age simply because my parents said, "I will not let that happen."

And friends, let me tell you something, you need to hear this this morning. If you're a Christian, God will not let you win against Him. He's not going to let you sin to the point you lose your salvation. He's not going to allow you to do anything that will jeopardize your eternal soul. He won't let you fall that way. Instead, He's going to whack the hooligan out of you. And I can tell you there are going to be times when you are not going to like it. I did not like what happened after that phone call. It was a rough summer. There were times I didn't care for my parents very much. They inflicted so much pain upon me. But looking back now, that's been so long ago, I wouldn't change a minute of it. You have to learn how to look at the discipline of God that way.

Let's be honest, nobody likes to hear sermons like this. It's hard to be told that God is going to discipline you and inflict pain. And He's not going to give you your best life now. But it makes it a little easier if you remember that God is preparing you for something greater. He's not just thinking about these 60, 70, 80 years. He's not just dwelling on this one or two or three laps around the track. He's looking at the finish line; you have to do that too.

Next week, we're going to look at the next passage in Hebrews where it says, "Therefore strengthen the hands that are weak, and the knees that are feeble." And that's an interesting verse in verse 12 because how many of you have had weak hands and feeble knees in the race? We all have, right? How many of you have gotten tired in the Christian life? It happens all the time. And the truth is, you don't have to give up hope and that there is an answer. And we're going to talk about that next time.

For now, in my studies this week, I came across the time someone was watching the Jamaican runner, Usain Bolt practice in a stadium next to his coach, and he asked him, he said, "What makes that man so fast?" He's the fastest man in the world. "What's the secret?" And the coach said, "The secret is that he's doing that while you're doing this." He said, "He's out there running and sweating and straining, and you're sitting right here drinking a coke." And he's right. You can't honour God by just sitting. You've got to run, and the Father disciplines you to make that happen. He reproves you to do it. He scourges you, flogs you, instructs, corrects, teaches, confronts, trains, equips, He takes you out to the woodshed, but He does it all for your good.

Let me pray that the Lord would help us to take these things to heart this morning.

Heavenly Father, thank You for things in the Word that are like this. For passages in Scripture that I guess in sometimes in our sinful flesh, we would hope we would never have to think through because all of us would like to have an easy life, just in our sinfulness. We would want things just to go smoothly all the time. But Lord, thank You for this word that reminds us that the challenges in life and the storms are given by Your mercy. May we see that today, Lord.

I do pray for our church family as I know many people here are going through ups and downs and hardships. It's been said, "If they're not in a trial, they'll be going into one or their coming out of one." Lord, would You help them remember Your hand of grace in the midst of this?

Thank You for being our Father. Thank You that You want to be close to us. All these things that happen are not being done by a Lord that is distant and angry at believers. It's being done out of love.

Lord, would You be glorified as we take these things to heart. And as we come to some more passages in Hebrews that talk about weariness, Lord, may we learn good lessons from those as well, that the weary person would be built up. That those who are tired would be given strength. That Christ may be glorified and be all in all. We pray this in His name for His glory. Amen.