

Doctrine of Human Behavior and Consequence

Lesson 11 – The Discipline of the Lord

Hebrews 12:5-6 – 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.'

INTRODUCTION

In our journey through human behavior and its outcomes, we have seen how choices reflect the thoughts and values and lead to consequences, both natural and divine. Previous lessons explored the peaks of judgment in early history, the Law's role in restraining sin for Israel, wisdom's practical guidance, Christ's perfect example, and the apostles' commands for living out our identity in Him. Now we turn to discipline within the body of Christ. This is not about wrath or condemnation, as Romans 8:1 assures us there is none for those in Christ Jesus. Rather, discipline here focuses on training and instruction that shapes us toward maturity, helping us turn from sin and pursue righteousness.

The Greek term *παίδεια* (*paideia*) in our key verse carries the sense of child-training or education, much like a father guiding his son to grow strong and wise. For the original Hebrew Christian audience, facing trials and temptation to revert to old ways, the writer drew from Proverbs 3:11-12 to remind them that God's dealings demonstrate their sonship. Today, as members of the body, we see discipline not as punishment but as teaching rooted in grace. We will exposit key passages to understand what it is, how it works in our era compared to under the Law or during the Apostles' time, and what it is not.

WHAT DISCIPLINE IS: TRAINING THROUGH TEACHING

Scripture presents discipline as an educational process aimed at forming godly character. It is God's way of instructing His people to reject evil and choose good, aligning our behavior with our position in Christ.

Consider Titus 2:11-12: "For the saving grace of God has appeared to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age."

Here, *παίδεῖω* (*paideuō*), the verb form, means "instructing" or "training." Paul wrote to Titus on Crete, where new believers faced a culture of false teaching and feigned godliness. Paul emphasizes that it is grace itself trains us, understanding and focusing on the grace of God motivates the believer to want to please God. The believers on Crete needed this reminder that the grace of God, showing discipline as positive formation through what God has already provided.

Another clear example comes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Again, *παίδεια* (*paideia*)

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appears as "training." Paul instructed Timothy, overseeing a church in Ephesus riddled with false teachers, to rely on the Word for every aspect of growth. Reproof exposes error, correction straightens the path, and training builds skill in righteousness. This equips believers for service, making discipline a tool for usefulness in the body.

In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul reflects on Israel's history: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." The Corinthian church struggled with sin and possible integration with the Corinthian culture. The accounts were recorded "for our instruction" (that same *παίδευσις* - *paideusis* root) so we learn without repeating their failures. Discipline here is preventive teaching from the text, helping the body avoid what harms unity and witness.

HOW DISCIPLINE IS ACCOMPLISHED IN OUR TIME

Under grace, discipline centers on Scripture as the primary means God uses to teach the body. It is objective, accessible to all, and focused on building up rather than tearing down.

As we saw in 2 Timothy 3, the Word reprove, corrects, and trains. Timothy was to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2). Instruction (*διδασκαλία* (*didachē*)) pairs with patience, showing leaders use Scripture to guide gently. For us, this happens in teaching, personal study, or mutual encouragement, as Colossians 3:16 urges: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The Colossian believers, dealing with asceticism and mysticism, were to let Christ's word shape their life. This is a mental exercise, not a physical corporal discipline

Grace motivates this process, as Titus 2 shows. It trains us to live godly because we are already saved and have been given so much, not to earn favor. Natural consequences from poor choices (like strained relationships or lost opportunities) may draw attention to issues, but the text ties real change to learning from the Word. There is no evidence in the Epistles that God imposes supernatural physical repercussions on believers for sin; instead, He teaches through what is written.

DISCIPLINE UNDER THE LAW AND IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA

To grasp our era, we should contrast it with Israel's experience under the Law. Deuteronomy 8:5 describes God disciplining Israel "just as a man disciplines his son," including hardships like hunger and testing in the wilderness to humble them (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). For the nation, discipline often meant national consequences (famine, defeat, or exile) to curb idolatry, immorality, and violence. The original audience in Deuteronomy faced the promised land, needing to learn obedience for blessing. This was corporate and punitive, tied to the covenant's curses (Deuteronomy 28:15-68), demonstrating God's holiness to the world.

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In the apostolic era, we see specific instances where discipline involved direct intervention. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul decided to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This addressed a man in gross immorality, and Paul was taking action to teach him and the body a lesson. Similarly, in 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul handed over false teachers to Satan "so that they will be taught not to blaspheme." Taught (παίδεῦω paideuō) indicates learning through some form of Apostolic judgment. These acts reflect apostolic authority, as Paul defended his role amid critics. The churches in Corinth and Ephesus dealt with division and error, so these served as examples to protect the body. But no Epistles command later leaders or churches to replicate this; instead, they emphasize teaching and reproof with the Word.

In 1 Corinthians 11:30-32, some faced weakness, sickness, or death for abusing the Lord's Supper. This was descriptive for that church's situation and announced by Paul as the communicator of what was happening. But again, there is no instruction or information that this is how God continues in our current time.

WHAT DISCIPLINE IS NOT

Discipline in the body is not supernatural punishment imposed by God on believers for sin. The Epistles lack evidence for this; Romans 6:14 states, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Under the Law, consequences were direct and national, but grace shifts to teaching. It is not arbitrary hardship interpreted as divine spanking; Hebrews 12 encourages viewing endurance as a demonstration of sonship, but we have to be careful with our understanding. To understand this further, let's examine Hebrews 12:5-11 in detail.

The writer addressed Jewish believers tempted to abandon faith amid suffering, perhaps from Roman persecution or social exclusion. He quotes Proverbs 3:11-12: "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives." The term for discipline (παίδεια paideia) emphasizes training, as in educating a child. Reprov'd (ἐλέγχω elegchō) means to convict or expose, often through truth that corrects gently. The writer applies this Old Testament wisdom to their situation, urging them not to dismiss difficult lessons because they demonstrate God's fatherly care.

Verse 7 states, "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?" Endure (ὑπομένω hupomenō) implies persevering through trials, tying back to the faith lessons in chapter 11. The comparison to earthly fathers (verse 9) highlights respect for human discipline, which is temporary and imperfect: "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?" God's version aims at life eternal and abundant, not mere survival.

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Verse 10 clarifies the purpose: "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." Holiness (ἀγιότης *hagiotēs*) refers to being set apart like God, a key theme for these readers who knew Levitical purity laws. Discipline produces this sharing, not through inflicted pain but through growth.

Finally, 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." Trained (γυμνάζω *gumnazō*) evokes athletic preparation, yielding fruit like a harvest. Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη *dikaiosunē*) is practical right living, peaceful because it aligns with God's ways.

This passage does not prescribe identifying specific trials as divine punishment; it encourages interpreting endurance as training. Scourges (μαστιγῶω *mastigoo*) from the quote implies painful correction, but in context, it is metaphorical, much like Scripture's reproof can sting without being physical. The writer does not cite church-age examples of supernatural repercussions, focusing instead on the educational value: discipline demonstrates love and leads to Godly righteous behavior. For us, this means hardships may teach, but the text points to the Word as the objective means, not assuming every difficulty is God-imposed discipline.

Nor is it church leaders wielding apostolic power like handing over to Satan. Instructions to Timothy and Titus focus on sound teaching, reproving, and confrontation (and for some, expulsion). Every aspect of this discipline, is designed to bring the believer back, not punish.

Discipline is not legalistic rule-keeping; Galatians 5:18 reminds, "But if you are led in spirit, you are not under the Law." The Galatians fought legalism, so Paul pointed to living in the spirit to overcome flesh.

TIMELESS PRINCIPLES

Several truths apply across time. First, discipline roots in God's love, training us as sons to share His holiness (Hebrews 12:10). Second, Scripture is the main tool, reproving, correcting, and equipping (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Third, grace motivates change, instructing us to live godly (Titus 2:12). Fourth, examples from the past teach us to avoid sin (1 Corinthians 10:11). Finally, natural consequences may alert us, but true discipline comes through the Word's objective truth.

CONCLUSION

Discipline in the body of Christ centers on teaching through Scripture, guided by grace to forsake evil and do good. Unlike the Law's punitive lessons for Israel or the apostles' specific interventions, our era emphasizes the Word's role in building maturity. As we let it dwell richly in us, we grow equipped for every good work, displaying behavior that honors our Father. In the next lesson, we explore eschatological motivations for conduct.

Divine Discipline: Training for Spiritual Maturity

Context Summary: Under the current age of grace, divine discipline is paideia—the educational training of a child. It is a grace-motivated process using Scripture to form godly character and steer believers toward righteousness and maturity.

The Nature of Divine Discipline



Paideia: Education, Not Wrath
Discipline is the process of child-training aimed at forming character, not a display of condemnation.

Grace as the Primary Instructor
The saving grace of God trains believers to deny ungodliness and live righteously.





Evidence of Sonship
Enduring trials serves as a reminder of God's fatherly love and the believer's status as a son.

How Discipline is Accomplished



Transformation through the Word
Scripture is the primary tool for reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.



Mental Exercise Over Physical Penalty
Modern discipline is an objective mental exercise involving study rather than supernatural physical repercussions.



The Result is Peaceful Fruit
Being trained by discipline yields a harvest of practical right living and holiness.

Purpose: To contrast how God's dealings with His people have shifted across different biblical eras.

Era	Primary Method	Nature of Discipline
The Law 	National Consequences	Punitive, corporate, and tied to covenant curses.
Apostolic 	Apostolic Authority	Specific interventions to protect the early body.
Church Age 	Scripture & Grace	Educational, objective, and focused on individual maturity.