

For Our Good

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Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0 : 00] Jesus, amen. Amen. You may be seated. Kids, you are dismissed to your King's Kids class. For him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, speaking of Jesus, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted in your struggle against sin.

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the agitation that addresses you as sons? My son, my daughter, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him, for the Lord disciplines the one he loves.

And chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

If you are left without discipline in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them. But he disciplines us for our good.

[1 : 40] That we may share his holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God. That no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by it many become defiled. That no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal.

For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. For he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. May God bless the hearing of his word.

Some of the most formative moments in parenting our children to train them, to form them, are in moments of crisis.

[2 : 55] Moments of hardship. Your child tries out for a play. Your child tries out for an orchestra, a band, or an athletic team, and they don't make the cut.

They're disappointed. And that is a parental training opportunity. To speak into their lives for their good.

Your child is being marginalized from a group at school or in the community because they don't fit in. It raises questions in them.

Their identity, who am I? It's a parenting training opportunity for their good. You get to speak into their life who they are.

Your child gets in trouble in school or with the police. They're facing really stiff consequences. They may be trying to ignore it, keep it away from their consciousness, or maybe they're just deathly afraid.

[3 : 55] It's a parenting training opportunity to train them in responsibility for their good. It might be the moment they need most for later in their life.

God brings hard things, hot things, heat into the lives of our children. And we as parents have the opportunity to make the most of that opportunity.

To form our children's characters. To ignore it would be to be unloving to our children. For those of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, by God's grace he brought us out of the domain of darkness.

And transferred us into the kingdom of the beloved son, the family of God. We are God's sons and daughters. And our loving father brings heat into our lives.

To form us. To grow us. To strengthen us. To help us to endure all the way to the end. To our very last breath.

[5 : 06] Holding fast to Christ. Our loving father disciplines us for our good. So this morning from Hebrews 12, I want to convince you of this. We must welcome God's loving discipline.

Because it's always for our good. I'll just say that again. We must welcome God's loving discipline. Because it's always for our good. So we're going to walk through this passage. I'm going to ask four questions. And answer them. Here are the four questions. What is God's discipline? Second question.

Why does God discipline us? Third question. How does God discipline us? Fourth question. How do we respond to God's discipline? We welcome God's discipline.

His loving discipline. Because it's always for our good. So let's start with this first question. What is God's discipline? And in one word, it's training. It's God training us.

[6 : 14] Did you notice when I was reading through this section how many times that word discipline or disciplines or disciplined shows up? It shows up nine times.

That's a lot. That kind of repetition is emphasizing the importance of God's loving discipline in our lives. But for many of us, when we hear the word discipline, we think strictly in terms of punishment. We think of when in terms of child raising, our child disobeys. They do something wrong. And we spank them. We give them a time out. Because we want to help them understand what they've done.

Bringing painful consequences for bad behavior. And that's part of parenting. It's a necessary part of parenting. But biblically speaking, that word discipline is broader than just punishment.

It includes it, but it's broader. It has the sense of training. In Ephesians 6, we're told to raise our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[7 : 19] The training and instruction of the Lord. We're to grow them up. We're to help them endure. And God uses discipline to help us endure.

It is for discipline that you must endure, verse 7. So let me help you see a connection here. If you turn back to Hebrews chapter 10, verse 32, we read this.

But recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with suffering. So the writer's looking back on an earlier period of the original audience and said, When you were converted, remember that time you were suffering and you endured it?

And then in verse 36 of chapter 10, he says, For you have need of endurance. Now. They had grown weary and fainthearted. They were tempted to walk away.

To drift. To fall away. He says, For you have need of endurance. This long obedience in the same direction. So that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.

[8 : 27] Holding fast to Christ all the way to your very last breath. And then in chapter 11, we have this hall of faith.

The who's who of the faith. 20 plus examples of men and women who endured by faith all the way to the end. Pursuing holiness. Trusting in God.

When we turn to chapter 12, we read this in verse 2. Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.

Despising the shame. Seated at the right hand of God. Verse 3. Consider him, Jesus, who endured from sinners such hostility against himself. So what is this discipline?

It's God training us to endure. To strengthen our faith muscles. Instead of atrophying them. That we endure all the way to the end.

[9 : 27] Pursuing holiness. The writer of Hebrews puts Jesus to the forefront. As the ultimate example of endurance.

So that we don't grow weary and fainthearted. When you suffer hardship. Whether that's something within you or from out of you. You can be tempted to want to throw in the towel.

In verse 4, he says, In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood. The struggle against sin is the sin within us. When we are tempted to sin ourselves.

And then there's sin outside of us. When others are seeking to be hostile to us for following Jesus. And what he tells this church, this first century church, is that they had not yet resisted that to the point of shedding blood.

Nobody had died for being a follower of Jesus in this church at this point. He's saying, hey, you've got a real struggle. But you haven't gone the distance in terms of Jesus and some of the other

people from the hall of faith.

[10:41] And then in verse 5 and 6, he says, You have forgotten something. He poses that as a question.

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? What he's saying is, why are you surprised that you're suffering? Why are you surprised that you're experiencing hardship and pain?

And then he quotes Proverbs 3, 11 and 12. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.

So let's think in terms of training. My son, do not regard lightly the training of the Lord. His intentional seeking to help you endure by faith, nor be weary of being reproved, corrected by him. Don't grow fainthearted in that. For the Lord trains the one he loves and chastises. That's an interesting word. Underneath that word, it means to whip.

[11:53] And the idea there is corporal punishment, spanking. He spans every son whom he receives. He wants to grow us. Help us to endure, grow us in holiness.

The Lord disciplines us. So the connection that's being made here is what this church, this first century church was experiencing, the suffering at the hands of people who were seeking to hurt them.

They were being exploited. They were having their names dragged through the mud. We know this from chapter 10, verses 32, 33, and 34. They were being put in prison. They were having their property plundered.

And what we're being told here, and it requires a radical shift of thinking, don't be surprised by this. God is in it. Training you.

Growing you. Helping you. Because God uses all sorts of heat, all sorts of crisis, hardship, difficulty, sufferings, to train us, to grow us.

[13:05] You might be thinking, I didn't sign up for that. Yes, you did. When you became a Christian, when you were adopted by your loving Holy Father, you signed up for holiness training.

He loves you so much. This kind of thinking is a radical shift of thinking, isn't it? Hardship comes into your life.

Sometimes you want to blame God. Here's a story. When I was a seminary student, I was driving the car a lot, and I'd listen to Moody Radio. And one afternoon, I was driving home, and I heard an interview with a Vietnamese pastor.

And this pastor and his church at that time were suffering greatly in Vietnam. They had their building burned down. They were suffering threats. And at the end of the interview, the host asks this Vietnamese pastor, how can we pray for you?

How can the American church pray for you? And you know what this Vietnamese pastor said? Don't ask God to stop the persecution. And then he goes on to say, our suffering is as if God is tightening the string on a violin.

[14:32] And we, the Vietnamese church, gets to add tonal depth to the worship of God across the world.

So he was thinking of his suffering as God's training, growing, helping them endure. This Vietnamese pastor had not forgotten Proverbs 3, 11 and 12.

He was seeing that this pain was actually for their good and our good as the worldwide church. It's a radical shift of thinking. Do you have heat in your life? Are you facing hardship in your life? Difficulty? How are you interpreting that?

Have you forgotten you are sons and daughters? What is God's discipline? It's God training us. Second question.

[15:43] Why does God discipline? In two words. Love and holiness. That was three words. Love, holiness. Why would God bring heat into our lives?

Doesn't that seem mean? Why make us uncomfortable? Why stretch us? Why would he intentionally cause us pain?

In this passage, we are giving a two-fold answer. His motive is love. And his aim is holiness. Let's look at his loving motive.

Did you notice when I was reading that there was this reference to fathers and children all the way through? In fact, there's a comparison between earthly fathers and our heavenly father.

What's up with that? I mean, in verses 5 and 6, it's like, have you not forgotten that God addresses you as sons and daughters?

[16:49] Proverbs 3. And then he starts talking about, verses 7 and 8, that the argument is, what kind of father would God be if he didn't discipline us? The assumption is, fathers lovingly discipline their children.

Hey, if our earthly fathers, then how much more will God? And then he makes this really interesting statement. If everyone else of God's children is being disciplined, but you're not, could it be because you're not a legitimate child?

The other side of that is this. If you are experiencing the discipline of God, you are a child of his. Verses 9 and 10, they get at this idea that, well, earthly fathers disciplined us for a short time as best as they knew how. I'm grateful for Steve Salvati's discipline in my life.

He did as best as he could. But our heavenly father, how much more is the argument? Our heavenly father, how much more will we subject ourselves to him?

[18:01] Because he disciplines us for the long haul, for our good. Here's what's behind this, these references to fathers and children.

It's verse 6. The Lord disciplines the one he loves. He loves you. Son of God, he loves you. Daughter of God, he loves you. And it's not just a rub your back love. He's going to love you into holiness.

In verse 10, we read, For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good.

That's his loving commitment. He loves us into goodness. And that goodness is not left for us to define, but he defines it to share his holiness.

[19:08] God in his love values your holiness more than your comfort. We know from 1 John that God is love.

And we know from our Bibles that the greatest demonstration of God's love towards us is in the giving of his son. And there was all sorts of pain in that. Jesus suffered the wrath of God. Terrible pain physically, spiritually, emotionally, for our good. And for the joy set before him, Jesus endured it. God loves you. He loves you so much.

He wants you to share in his holiness. Now let's turn to his holy aim. Verse 10. He defines for our good. In greater clarity, he says, To share that we may share his holiness.

We are to be holy as our God is holy. And he is actively training us to endure so that we become more and more holy all the way to our very last breath.

[20:26] The most basic sense of the word holiness is to be set apart. To be distinct from the world. And you can think about it along two lines.

In terms of moral purity, God is the ultimate standard of moral righteousness. He's morally perfect. Jesus, totally God, totally man, is God incarnate on the planet.

And if you look at his life in the gospels, he was morally sinless. All the way through. Morally perfect. That's the standard for us.

That's what we're being called to. But it's just not moral purity. It's relational peace. It's a holy peace. Peace within the triune Godhead.

God has eternally experienced peace. And then when God in his mercy rescued us through the blood of Jesus, adopting us as his own, he made peace with us.

[21:28] We've been justified by faith and therefore we have peace with God. God wants us to be like him in his holiness.

And that's not a downer. That is really good. God is full of joy. God is full of joy. The most joyful being of all experience in all of existence is the most holy.

In verse 11, he goes on to further describe this holiness, this good. And he describes it as this peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Why does God discipline us? He disciplines us out of his love for our holiness.

His motive is love. His aim is holiness. And he is seeking to yield this peaceful fruit of righteousness, this goodness, this holiness in us.

[22:42] All right. Some of you today are going to need to repent of something sinful. Because when hard things enter your life, instead of trusting in God's holy motive, you question it.

Why are you doing this to me? Why are you letting this happen? You're questioning God's character.

You've lost sight. You've forgotten that he's treating you as sons and daughters. That he loves you. That he brings hard things into your life. Because he loves you and wants to make you holy. When God brings the heat into your life, what question are you asking? Are you saying, why are you doing this?

Or are you asking, God, show me what you want to do. Have your way. The answer, why does God discipline us?

[24 : 03] It's because he loves us. The third question, how does God discipline us? In a word, painfully.

Verse 11. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. Okay, if you're a Christian in the room, I just want you to see the word in verse 11.

The word painful. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. If you're a child of God, you will experience pain as your heavenly father forms your character.

As he strengthens your endurance, you will experience pain. Why will you experience pain? Well, here's some reasons why. Because oftentimes, when God is at work in you, showing you areas of sin within you, you start to realize that you've been grieving God.

It's a kind of pain. And not only grieving God, you've been hurting others. It's a kind of a pain. It's the pain of embarrassment. It's the pain of causing people distress.

[25 : 20] That your sin distresses other people. That's painful. But what we learn from the Bible is that when that pain goes from being horizontal to going vertical, and you gain this godly sorrow over your pain, that leads to repentance.

That leads to holiness. Another reason why this can be painful is because some of our sinful patterns in our life, we think are going to be painful to give up.

Now, we think, oh no, I can't live without that. For some reason, they register as lost.

Now, let's be very sober-minded here. Addictions. Addiction to pornography. Addiction to alcohol. Addictions to gambling. Addictions to different kinds of drugs.

Addictions to gambling. There will be pain and coming off of these sinful patterns. But to think that that's not worth it.

[26 : 38] God is holy and he loves you and he wants to pull these things, pull you out of these things. The pain will be worth it. another reason why things can be painful is this because the consequences of past sinful choices can have ongoing and present painful effects just think about if you were a younger person and you were making foolish sinful financial decisions and now you continue to reap what you sowed 10 years ago, 20 years ago.

That can be painful. But God is in it, using it to train you. One other reason is because suffering for Christ can be painful.

Again, this church that the author is writing to, they were being publicly humiliated. There were people being put in prison.

They were having their properties plundered. That would have been very difficult. It would have been very painful. The worst that we tend to experience here now in the United States is we get looked over for a job because we're too honest.

People talk about us behind our backs. We get canceled on social media. Like that's the worst thing.

[28 : 16] You know what? We haven't resisted to the point of shedding blood yet, brothers and sisters. It's going to be painful.

God's discipline is painful. But God is loving. He's using it all to train us to endure unto holiness. To hold fast to Christ all the way to the end, to our very last breath. God gets some of his best holiness training done when we're in crisis.

When we're experiencing the heat. Pain has a way of getting our attention, doesn't it?

Pain has a way of softening our hearts. Hardship has a way of giving us ears to hear, of posturing our hearts. It was Billy Graham who said that the same sun that melts the butter hardens the clay.

[29 : 21] When heat comes into your life, it can tenderize you. Depending on how you respond. But it's not just the heat of sinful choices or our sinful choices or the sinful choices of others.

Natural disasters are heat. God wants to train us in that. The heat of aging and ailing bodies. God is training in that for us.

The heat of a tragic death. God is training in that for us. The heat of relational conflict. God has training in that for us. He is using all things because he is a sovereign God in the details.

Behind all this is the belief that God is in the details. Working all things out for the good of those who love him. Been called according to his purpose.

And that purpose is Christ likeness. Romans 8, 28 and 29. How does God discipline us? He uses pain.

[30 : 30] Hardship. Difficulty. Have you heard the expression? No pain, no gain? When I was a young man lifting weights. No pain, no gain! I look back on that disbelief now.

But God's training of us to strengthen our faith muscles. He will bring pain to bring about holy gain. It's because he loves us.

In the moment, no discipline. It's seen as, experience is painful. But let me just be clear.

To be a child of God is not all pain. It's not incessant pain. We have seasons, wonderful seasons of relational peace and healthy bodies.

And we're not experiencing persecution from others. But let's just be clear. Those are seasons. What I love about my Bible is it's so realistic.

[31 : 34] It explains reality the best. Did you see the word later? For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant.

But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it. Later. You know what? Many of us want that later to be like 10 minutes later.

But the reality is this. God is at work for your good. And that later may be later in the afternoon. It yields a peaceful fruit of righteousness. It may be later in the week or weeks or months or years.

Remember the book of Judges? The cycle? God would raise up a judge. There would be peace brought to Israel. And that judge would die. And then Israel would go back to their sinfulness.

And then God would raise up an oppressor. That was God's heat. That was God's loving discipline of his people. And sometimes it took decades for Israel to come to a point of saying, Lord, deliver us.

[32 : 42] God is patient and he's loving and he's on a timeline for our good. So we'll have seasons of peace and sometimes we'll have seasons of pain but God is using it all for our good.

We welcome God's discipline because it's always for our good. There are two passages I want you to look at maybe later today or in the week just so that you know that what I'm telling you is not just limited to the book of Hebrews.

Look up Romans 5, 2-5. Look up James 1, 2-4. When we are told that we welcome hardship and suffering because it produces in us endurance and in the end steadfastness and in the end holiness.

He brings heat and pain for our good. Last question is how do we respond to God's discipline? in a word humbly.

We humble ourselves. In verse 11 we read this for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

[34 : 10] To those who've welcomed it. to those who have subjected themselves to the will of God their father. To those who have humbled themselves.

I've been trying to convince you that we welcome God's loving discipline. We welcome it. We welcome the momentary pain because we are convinced that holiness is better than comfort.

And this those who've been trained by it there's another word in the passage. It's in verse 9 that gets at the heart of this. Besides this we've had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.

Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live to submit ourselves to him and live to thrive?

In verse 36 we read for you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. This is just different ways of talking about humbling yourself under God's mighty hand.

[35 : 20] Surrendering your will to his. Welcoming his holy and sometimes painful work. It's where we are consenting to what he's doing.

Where we yield to him. Trusting in his character. Here's what that sounds like. God brings heat into your life. Maybe your first impulse is to react in unbelief.

Why are you doing this? But then you come to your senses and you say father would you have your way in me? I don't I don't know why all this is happening other than I trust in your character.

I trust that you are loving. I trust that you want to produce holiness in me. So God would you use these circumstances in my life to make me more like Christ.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. I want to recommend a book for you. It's this little book by David Mathis.

[36 : 28] It's called Humbled. Many of you have read it. Listen to the subtitle. Welcoming the uncomfortable work of God.

There are 11 copies of this at the Connect desk. Grab one on your way out. This will help you welcome God's loving discipline.

See it for what it is. To make the most of it. Imagine this.

You're a dad with a 10 year old son. He steals \$20 from your wallet. You've got it on video. Two responses.

You tell me which one is the humble response. response one. You bring your son into your bedroom. You're like son. I got you on video. Your son says that's not me.

[37 : 39] He looks like me but that's not me. Did you talk to Scott? My older brother? He looks like me. Maybe it was him. And he starts digging himself further and further into the pit.

Right? And you're going to have to respond to that wisely as a mom or dad to have an appropriate consequence. But is he humbling himself?

No. Second response. You show your son the video. First thing he says, that was me. I haven't been able to sleep, dad.

I've been wanting to tell you but I've been afraid. I've been afraid of what you would do. In fact, I know I deserve to be spanked. Here's the \$20. You spank him.

Tears are shed. And then he says to you, thanks dad for helping me. I know it's wrong to steal. I know it grieves God, it hurts others, and that includes myself.

[38 : 47] 30 years later, he says, dad, you know what? I haven't stolen since.

I learned a lesson that day. Which one humbled themselves? The second, he took responsibility for what they had done, and they allowed the discipline to run its course and to train him to be holy.

The rest of the passage in verses 12 through 17 shows us what it looks like to run the race that God marked out for us, to pursue holiness, to run it in peace and in holiness, both in terms of relational peace, in terms of sexual purity, let's apply it like this.

Are you experiencing heat? Are you experiencing hardship? How are you interpreting that? Is that just the universe run amok?

Could it be that your heavenly father is behind it for your good? Yes! He's sovereign over all things and he is loving you unto holiness and so if you're experiencing heat personally, what you do is you humble yourself.

[40 : 25] You say, God, use this for my good and that's not letting other people off the hook. That's you saying, God, do your work in me.

Not blaming others that you start with yourself but then do you know someone who's experiencing God's heat? Are you living life with people who are experiencing God's heat?

Yes! You know how you can help them? You help them by pointing them to the throne of grace. By saying you need to cry out to God, help you in your time of need.

Welcome his work. I'm with you. I'll walk with you. Let's do this together. How do you respond to God's loving discipline?

We humble ourselves. We welcome it. Some of the most formative moments for us will be when God brings the heat. Why does what is God's discipline?

[41 : 28] It's training. Training in holiness. Why does God discipline? He loves us. He wants us to be holy. How does God discipline us? He uses pain. And how do we respond?

In humility. We welcome God's loving discipline because it's always for our good. Let's pray together. God in heaven, forgive us for questioning your motives, for arching our back when you are seeking to do us good through hard things.

God, would you have your way in us grace? And would you help us, one another, to obtain the grace of God that we would help each other not miss out on what you're doing in our lives.

God, would you help us to endure and to make us holy for the glory of your name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.