

How to Respond to God's Discipline

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~ Hebrews 12:12-17

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Review on discipline and hardship

For many preceding passage on discipline can be a difficult passage because many suffered from an abusive form of discipline or you do not even know who your father is. When this passage speaks of Discipline, it speaks from the perspective of a loving and caring father who has our very best interest at heart.

1. What it is and what it is not

- a. Discipline is not punishment
 - i. Discipline is the activity of training for the purpose of making someone better, obey or grow like in the case of our relationship with our Heavenly Father
- b. We need not to confuse the means God uses and the practice of training
 - i. There are different means of training
 - 1. Practicing a sport and going through different activities to become better at it
- c. Discipline can take many different forms. When it comes to God, He can use different means to train us so that we share in his holiness: sometimes he can use
 - 1. Strong punishment
 - a. Example from the Old Testament: from withdrawing his presence to sending them into exile and anything in between (crops)
 - b. Example from the New Testament: Ananias and Sapphira, the Lord's table
 - 2. Gentle correction: little slap on the hand,
 - 3. Words of instruction, encouragement, assurance, direction,
 - 4. Not every form of hardship is intentional. Some hardship or evil are allowed to take place and God can redeemed them to train us:
 - a. Using the hardship of life to make us grow (here he is using the persecution they were under).
 - b. There are things we can only learn through pain, suffering and hardship.
 - 5. The form and intensity depends on our level of stubbornness or responsiveness.

- d. Discipline is normal and to be expected in a Father/Son and daughter relationship.
 - i. Every children is in training and training sometimes requires correction, sometimes punishment, sometimes letting them learn through painful experience.
- 2. Discipline can take many forms: strong punishment, gentle correction and the using for our greater good of the hardship and difficulties of life as a way to produce growth and Holiness.
 - a. Directly inflicted by God or just the hardship of life (as a Christian, like it is with the persecution of the Hebrews or just life in general) God uses.
 - b. Old Testament: God's direct punishment ranged from withdrawing his presence up to trouble with cropped up to sending them into exile. It was meant to bring Israel to repentance so that they can partake and practice Holiness.
 - c. New Testament: Ananias and Sapphira, the Lord's Table, sometimes using the circumstances of life like here with reference to persecutions.
- 3. Hardship and Discipline has a purpose:
 - a. God's Discipline is not so much to punish you but to sanctify you, make you holy.
 - b. To produce a harvest of righteousness and peace for those
 - i. To lead us into freedom and a greater experience of God
 - ii. To produce growth and holiness
 - c. Growth does not happen in the comfort zone.
 - i. There are things we can only learn through pain, suffering and hardship
 - ii. We need to embrace hardship and let ourselves be stretched by it for growth to happen.
 - iii. Jesus Himself learnt obedience by what he suffered.
- 4. Discipline can lead to discouragement, hence the exhortation in v.12

How to respond to discipline? v.12 "therefore..."

- 1. V.13-17 are really the concluding comments to Hebrews 12:1-13. They pick on the race metaphor in v.12-13
- 2. So, in light of God's discipline, what should be our response?
- 3. Let yourself be trained by discipline
- 4. See hardship as God's discipline and training, not just punishment
- 5. v.10 the purpose of discipline: it's for our own good, to share in God's holiness

v.12 describe the picture of a runner who is losing steam during the race getting tired as a result of the long race and losing hope, ready to give up but not at the end yet: you are in need of encouragement, support, etc.

Pursuing the athlete metaphor to say

-when discipline and hardship comes your way, don't give up...

-now that you understand the purpose of hardship and discipline: buckle up, be determined, even embrace discipline, and participate in it.

V.12 strengthen your feeble arm....

1. Don't be discouraged, pick up your socks, embrace discipline
2. Receive discipline with dignity and honor, it is for your own good
3. Embrace hardship: we love our comfort and stay in the comfort zone, but God is about growth, and growth does not happen in the comfort zone.

V.13 Make level paths....for your feet....

1. A reference to Proverbs 4:26 A way of encouraging his reader to put their life in order morally speaking, avoid evil...

How to achieve that? How to strengthen yourself? Make level paths How to participate in it? How to be proactive in holiness and sanctification, and perhaps avoid certain form of Discipline? Peace and holiness...

How can we learn to share in God's holiness and somehow avoid the worst of God's discipline like being sent in the corner?

Make every effort to live in peace with all men, and to be holy!

We see here in there in the New Testament some passages that summarize the laws and the prophet. This is one of them → The 10 commands in a nutshell

1. To live in Peace with all men: your relationship w/ others in general is to be marked by peace:
 - a. Not harming other people, be considerate of their wellbeing, living in harmony rather than in conflict and taking care of conflict as best you can.... We are not good at that....
2. And to be holy: your relationship with sin & God is to be marked by holiness. Sin and God are mutually exclusive
 - a. Our Holiness is of first importance... Be Holy for I am Holy: Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7, 1Peter 1:16
 - i. God is far more concerned with our holiness than with anything else.
 - ii. Why? Because like in the Old Testament it was a mark of distinction between his people and the pagans around. Same thing today.
 1. Holiness, along with love is the cornerstone of our testimony in the world

2. In my humble opinion, Holiness is one of the reason we have a reputation issue in the world and is one of the two reasons with faith why the church is weak in power today.
- iii. Vision 2025 begins with Holiness
- iv. Holiness is the purpose of redemption, not just for salvation and reconciliation.
 1. It took Holiness so that the deity dwell among his people and for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us...because the deity does not dwell in an unclean temple and or vessel.
 2. The whole sacrificial system was for producing Holiness so that people can approach God and be in his presence.
 - a. But it was only providing
- v. The whole book of Hebrews is all about Holiness. This is critical and key to all that is discussed
 1. The Old Testament laws, sacrificial system, the blood sacrifice, the priesthood, the Day of Atonement, etc...
 - a. All designed to impart Holiness or maintain Holiness.
 - b. But only tempo: because was only a shadow of the real thing that was to come in Jesus
 - c. The blood of goats and bulls; and all the rest were only external regulations that could not clear the conscience of the World (He 9:9)
- b. What is Holiness?
 - i. A heart separation from sin by saying no to sin and temptation in the form of thoughts or suggestions. It is the result of being cleaned by the blood.
 - ii. It is not self-righteousness or legalism.
- c. How do you obtain it?
 - i. Certainly not by self-righteousness and legalism. This is the product of human effort, not the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit cleansing us through the blood of Jesus.
 1. Holiness happens at our new birth. When we become a Christians, we become sanctified, we are saints.
 2. It also happens when we confess our sins as per 1John 1:9.
 - iii. It can also be maintained by saying no to sin and yes to grace
 1. Story of Peter, John 13:10.
 - iv. We can also grow in holiness with the continual practice of confessing what the Holy Spirit convicts us of and by mortifying the sinful nature in us.
- d. Why Holiness?
 - i. Leads to more freedom and a greater experience of the person of God.
 - ii. Because a clean vessel is what he can pour Himself into.

- iii. Life purposely without holiness will bring God's discipline in your life.
- e. Added comment "without which no one will see the Lord?"
- f. What does he mean? Experientially or positional? Matthew 5:8, Psalms 24:3f, Psalms 15.
- g. In order to pursue peace and holiness, author will focus on 4 things to avoid because they defile us: (1) missing the Grace of God (2) living with bitterness (3) sexual immorality (4) godlessness.

"See to it" → make sure, make it a priority

In order to achieve peace and holiness, one needs to

1. "See to it that no one misses the Grace of God"! We need to Partake in the grace of God.
 - a. Holiness does not happen by practicing legalism and self-righteousness
 - i. It happens by grasping the Grace of God.
 - ii. We need to develop a grace mindset, learning to accept the Grace of God and learn to live by it. This is a learning process depending of the kind of envy you grew up in.
 - iii. Sometimes we miss/deprive the Grace of God because we are harder with ourselves than God is with us. We do not let ourselves off the hook because of a mistake we have committed. We do not let go of guilt as a way to punish ourselves and atone for our mistake.
 - iv. Sometimes we miss/deprive the Grace of God because we do not think we deserve it. We have a low view of ourselves and think we are not worthy.
 1. In one sense we are not, but this is what Grace is all about...that although we do not deserve it, God is willing to grant it to us. This is what and why Grace is so amazing and counter-intuitive.
 - v. Sometimes we miss the Grace of God because we do not see our need for it and do not understand our own conditions like the Pharisee in Luke 18. Because we are confident in our self-righteousness and look down on others. Some think we can achieve Holiness by practicing legalism and self-righteousness like the Pharisee in Luke 18 versus the publican.
 - b. You need to grasp your condition and Grace of God. You got to see your need and grab it in order to receive forgiveness and overcome sin, brokenness and trauma...see to it that no one misses the Grace of God.
2. See to it that no roots of bitterness grows up and cause trouble. Get rid of bitterness and unforgiveness → that is another thing that defiles us
 - a. Bitterness is like a weed...if you do not take care of it, it will grow up, and cause trouble and defile many.
 - b. It all start with an unresolved conflict, a hurt! When left unresolved and unforgiven, a situation/our hurt/unresolved anger turn into bitterness → resentment → hatred → then it turns into all kinds of other sins like gossip, slander, division, even murder.

- i. As the author is saying, it causes trouble and defile many because it does not stay with the one person that was hurt.
 - c. Bitterness can also be the result of trauma from the environment you grew up in.
 - d. No matter what the cause, it is devastating within families and church families
 - i. I have seen people and family not talking to one another for decades because of bitterness, unforgiveness and unresolved conflicts.
 - e. Bitterness does not only defile us morally, but it also affect our mental health.
 - i. Also affect our health in general according to science. How about that?
 - f. Some people do not forgive because they think this is a way to get a revenge but at the end of the day you only end up hurting Yourself, and poisoning you
 - i. Other do not forgive because they think they will have to be reconciled or trust that person again.
 - ii. Forgiveness should normally entail reconciliation and trust but does not necessarily entail. It depends of a number of factors.
 - g. Living with unforgiveness: there are people I know that have a hard time forgiving.
 - h. Unresolved conflict, hurt and resulting bitterness is one of the main reason many leave or abandon the church.
 - i. If you have been hurt, you will have to come to process your hurt and the resulting emotions
 - ii. If you have hurt someone, go out for a coffee and resolve the issue
 - i. Our relationship with others is a testimony of our relationship with God and our grasp of the concept of the Grace of God
- 3. Get rid of sexual immorality ...”that no one is sexual immoral...with your mind and body.
 - a. One of the most powerful sin on earth...
 - b. Sexual immorality takes many different forms and you do not need to be physically involved to commit sexual immorality.
 - i. Jesus said that sexual immorality starts in our hearts and imagination: at that moment, we have a choice to make whether we will pursue it or not.
 - ii. Then, it can happen visually, online. I do not think I need to elaborate too much on this.
 - c. Sexual immorality has always been a huge temptation for many. Sexual intimacy is the ultimate pleasure experience provided by God with the confine of marriage, but why wait is the question for many...
 - d. Sexual immorality immorality can take many forms.
 - e. In our culture, the boundaries of sexual immorality is pushed and redefined constantly.
 - f. Sexual immorality starts in the heart with impure thoughts
- 4. Get rid of godlessness
 - a. The example to avoid was the one of Esau.

- i. Profane and secular
 - 1. living as if there is no God, not living in light of God and accountability to God and the world to come
 - 2. or no regards for the things of God,
- ii. Was also irreverent. Did not honor tradition, was condescending towards it.
- iii. Live for the present moment, his decision were dictated by his present needs, his appetite.
 - 1. No regard for the long term, just instant gratifications
- iv. Totally in line with a post-modern lifestyle...living in the moment for the moment without regards for the future.
- v. When he realized what he did, it was too late
- b. Application: we can act or become profane like Essau when we devalue the things of God or certain spiritual practices and activities for some reasons.
 - i. Reading the Scriptures
 - ii. Devotions
 - iii. Attending the assembly