

“The Blessing of Discipline”
(Hebrews 12:3-14)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We saw a few weeks ago that the Lord has promised to guide us.
 - a. He promises to show us what we are to do.
 - b. And He promises to show us how to do it for His glory.

2. He tells us He will not only show us what to do, He will also give us the courage to do it.
 - a. He has graciously promised to protect us – which gives us the grounds for courage.
 - b. And He has promised to give us strength within by His Spirit – which helps us actually to apply His promise of protection.
 - c. Whatever God calls us to do, we don’t need to be afraid.
 - d. If we are, it’s only because we haven’t been able to trust the Lord as we should.

B. Preview.

1. Tonight, we’re returning to everyone’s favorite subject: discipline.
 - a. This might not be one of your favorites, but it should be.
 - b. Each promise He gives us is infinitely precious – this is no exception.
 - c. We’ve already seen that the Lord can use it to guide us when we choose to go down the wrong path.
 - d. But He uses it to bring other blessings as well.

2. Let’s consider three things:
 - a. What discipline is.
 - b. Why God disciplines.
 - c. And what you should do when you are disciplined.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let’s look at what discipline is.

1. It’s correction, not punishment.
 - a. Punishment has only retribution in view – you did what was wrong, now you get justice.
 - b. But discipline has correction in view – it’s meant to get you going the right way again, back into the path that honors God and that brings blessing to you.
 - c. Because it’s correction, it can come in many forms.
 - (i) It can be as mild as a prick to your conscience, such as what David experienced when he cut off the edge of Saul’s robe (1 Sam. 24:5).
 - (ii) Or it can be as severe as death, such as what was happening to some in the Corinthian church who were coming to the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:30).

- (iii) Since it's meant to correct you in some way, it should never be hard to discover what He's trying to teach you.
 - (iv) If we do have trouble figuring it out, it's probably because we don't want to acknowledge that we have committed that particular sin.
- d. Because it helps you overcome sin, you should welcome it.
2. Discipline is also a means of grace.
- a. Anything that helps you become more like Jesus is grace.
 - b. That's exactly what discipline does.
 - c. Because it does, again you should treasure it.
3. And it's a mark of grace – it's one way you can know that you're saved.
- a. Notice how many of His children the Lord disciplines? All of them. “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges *every* son whom He receives” (v. 6).
 - b. What if He doesn't discipline you? “But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons” (v. 8).
 - c. If discipline is a mark of sonship – of the fact you're saved – then how much should you bless the Lord for it?
 - d. Discipline is correction, a means of grace, and also a mark of grace.
- B. Second, let's look at why God disciplines.
1. First, because He loves you. “For those whom the Lord *loves* He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (v. 6).
- a. No parent who cares for his children would let them go down a path that could potentially injure or destroy them.
 - b. Neither will the Lord.
 - (i) He will first tell you the right way to go and what to avoid – He does this through His Word – adding incentives both to encourage good behavior and to discourage bad – don't we do the same as parents?
 - (ii) Sadly, this often isn't enough, and so He will apply stronger measures if you don't go the right way.
 - c. He does this because He loves you.
 - (i) You are His children.
 - (ii) He adopted you as His sons and daughters in His Son Jesus Christ.
 - (iii) He is committed to making sure you stay on the path of safety, on that path of blessing.
2. Second, He disciplines you because He wants to strengthen your resolve against sin, “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin” (v. 4).
- a. Sin is contrary to God's holy nature; it's rebellion; it's actually an expression of hatred against Him.

- b. Because of this, the author to the Hebrews tells you that it would be better for you to shed your blood – even to die – rather than sin (v. 4).
 - (i) This was written to those Jewish Christians who were tempted to go back to Judaism rather than face Roman persecution.
 - (ii) Which would be better?
 - (a) To sin by abandoning Jesus and the way of salvation by grace and so be lost?
 - (b) Or to stick to the right path, face the Roman persecution in the strength of Christ and so gain eternal glory?
 - (c) You should stay on the path and trust that the Lord’s way is best.

- c. That’s what Jesus did.
 - (i) He was tempted to save Himself from the cross.
 - (a) In His human nature, He wanted to live, not to suffer and die.
 - (b) He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” (Matt. 26:39).

 - (ii) But rather than abandon His mission to repair His Father’s honor and save His people, He resisted that temptation.
 - (a) “Yet not as I will, but as You will” (v. 39).
 - (b) And so He went to the cross and laid down His life.
 - (c) That’s what you must do as well – to suffer, even to die, rather than sin.

- d. The Puritans went a step further – they said it would not only be better to die than to sin, but to be cast into hell, rather than sin.
 - (i) They didn’t mean to be cast into hell because you deserved it, but that it would be better to die and submit to this suffering rather than to sin and deserve that suffering.
 - (ii) If resisting sin means you must enter hell, that would be far better than rebelling against God.
 - (iii) Hell is a natural evil, but sin is a moral evil, which is far worse.
 - (iv) God’s discipline is directed at helping you avoid and overcome sin.

- 3. And third, He disciplines you because He wants you to be holy, “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” (v. 10).
 - a. In a certain sense, you discipline your children so that they will do what you do – at least what you believe to be the good and right thing.
 - b. The Lord has the same goal in mind for you – that you would be like Him – that you would be perfectly holy – that you would be conformed to the image of His Son.
 - c. This is the goal of His work of redemption.
 - (i) The Father loved you and chose you to be holy.
 - (ii) And so He sent His Son into the world to fulfill His justice, that He might purchase the return of the Spirit.

- (iii) And having been purchased, He sent the Spirit into your heart that He might stamp His image of holiness on your life.
- (iv) And so it shouldn't be surprising that His correction would also be aimed in that direction.
 - (a) He wants you to walk with Him in holiness.
 - (b) And so He is willing to do what it takes for you to live that way.

C. Finally, what should you do when you are disciplined?

1. First, be thankful that He is disciplining you.
 - a. It confirms that He loves you.
 - b. It ensures that you will get back on the right path.
 - c. And it assures you that you will make it to heaven.
 - d. Again, this is what makes it to be so precious.

2. Second, don't take it too lightly or too heavily, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him" (v. 5).
 - a. Don't disregard it, on the one hand, or think it doesn't matter – it does.
 - (i) The Lord is addressing something in your life that needs correction.
 - (ii) If it's not corrected, He will bring stronger measures.

 - b. On the other hand, don't faint, or buckle under the pressure that the Lord has placed His finger on something you need to change.
 - (i) He does this because He loves you.
 - (ii) It's something you need to help you make it to heaven.

3. Third, repent of the sin for which He is disciplining you, "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed" (vv. 12-13).
 - a. Any sin will destroy you unless you let go of it.
 - b. And so you must turn from that sin and return to the straight path.
 - c. If you turn, then you will be well – you will have become that much more like the Lord in holiness.
 - d. But if you don't turn, the Lord will turn up the heat – He may take the limb that is lame and put it out of joint.
 - e. Don't forget this as well – the more you repent and do what you should, the less He will need to discipline you.
 - f. But when you can't quite find the strength to do this, be thankful that He is willing to help you through His fatherly discipline. Amen.