

## Jesus Is A **BETTER EXAMPLE** (Part 2)

Hebrews 12:1-17

It was Father's Day a few weeks back.

You probably *gave* or *received* a Father Day's card w/a 'thought' or 'poem' about Fatherhood. Imagine you're chatting on the topic of God as our Heavenly Father & someone says to you,

*Here's a Hallmark card with 'blanks'! How would you fill them in?:*

**"The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ those He LOVES,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ every SON whom He receives."**

What verbs would *you* put in the blanks?

I think many people would answer, "*the Lord PROTECTS those He loves"  
and PROVIDES for every son."*

"Protect & Provide" . . . isn't that the 'motto' of fatherhood?

Yet, this morning's text says something that, in our day & age, seems almost **shocking**:

*"the Lord DISCIPLINES those He loves"  
and CHASTISES every son."*

This seriously stops us in our tracks! – us – living in an era that touts:

- 'self-expression' as paramount!
- 'following your dreams' as the highest of all ethics! and
- 'instant gratification' as an 'inalienable right'!

Our Heavenly Father's **love** is so much Bigger & Better than leaving us in a place like that!

God knows that without DISCIPLINE, I am only interested in answers to life that put me at the centre of the universe, eating out of a bowl full of sugar!

We've all seen those kids in the grocery store, in 'the aisle' – you know the one, the aisle with the potato chips, the fizzy drinks, the chocolate bars, ending at the ice cream section – deliberately together in 1 aisle, to create "ground zero" where kid's appetites EXPLODE, in the hope that parents just give in to save face & prevent a "scene".

Little Bobby is screaming, *I want the BIG candy cane!*

The parent says, *"Look! Bobby, here's a little candy cane – a special fancy one!"*

Bobby is now down on the ground, flailing & pounding the floor, screaming louder!

*I deserve the BIG candy cane! I want, I want the BIG candy cane!*

*You're my little hero, Bobby, let's reward you with a whole bag of little candy canes!"*

Listening in on this increasingly common scenario, you're probably thinking,

*"Forget the little candy canes, I'll take the big one and put it to use as an ol' fashioned cane – applying the 'board of education' to the 'seat of learning'!"*

Not to the child...but to the parent who never *disciplines* his or her child.

These are the Parents & Kids who "grow up" – well *get older!* – and get sent to Schoolies by parents that *provide* all the booze & condoms, so their kids are supposedly 'safe'.

Since when is raising **moral 'ME-monsters'** "safe" for the world, safe for their souls?

WITHOUT the Discipline of a **loving** Heavenly Father, that's a picture of me. Of you. God wants better for us, better for His world, a world that puts:

- HOLINESS above 'happiness'
- CHARACTER above comfort

- ENDURANCE above indulgence
- God's UNSHAKEABLE kingdom above my SHABBY SUGAR-COATED kingdom.

And we need God's *loving* **DISCIPLINE** for this noble end.

This is the focus Hebrews 12, the word "discipline" occurs **9x** in verses 5-11!

BUT . . .

"Discipline" is a despised word these days, so we have an *uphill battle* to view it properly!

Please understand, like parental discipline, God's discipline is nuanced – it can be *financial, physical, circumstantial, internal or external*.

There's no '1 size fits all' passage to interpret all hardship/discipline through that 1 lens. My example of the child in the lolly aisle is about "corrective" discipline . . . getting the "off track" back on track.

But God's Discipline is more than *corrective* – it's also *preventative*, keeping us "on track", sparing us from **destruction** and sparing God's name from **dishonour**.

Whatever the *form* of discipline . . .

God always disciplines His children in love, conforming us to Christ-likeness & guiding us home to glory: the finish line of faith!

➔ to *refine/purify* our faith, God's love includes the discipline of external opposition, even persecution – which historically was the *primary hardship* the Hebrew Christians were facing. . . . and fairly soon, I think we might be too, so a very timely passage.

With so many guest speakers lately, I feel like we need an entire "season recap":

*'Previously on Hebrews.'*

But for the sake of time, we'll just remind ourselves of the "last episode": *Hebrews 11*

The "Hall of Faith", chapter 11 reminds us that Christians have many examples of faith, this cloud of witnesses to consider . They're *flawed* examples, who nonetheless *finished* the race of faith, proving that *flawed me & you* can finish, too! Chapter 11 connects 10 & 12, these examples of *enduring* faith, crossing the finish line.

But we have only 1 Flawless example of Faith: **Jesus**

Upon Him alone we are to focus, to fix our eyes (12:1-2):

*"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us . . . **LOOKING TO JESUS**, the Founder & Perfecter of our faith, who for the **JOY** that was set before Him endured the cross"*

Verse 3 continues that 'focal point'

**CONSIDER HIM** who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, So that YOU may not grow weary or fainthearted!

The **KEY** to properly viewing God's **Discipline** is to keep Jesus in view!

As we turn to Chapter 12, "Part 2" of Jesus as a Better Example of Faith, here's our Main Idea:

God's *loving* **DISCIPLINE** helps us stay on track, and not stray off track. **ESTEEM** it!

Outline:

- PRIVILEGE of Discipline (12:2-8)
- PURPOSES of Discipline (12:9-10)
- PRODUCE of Discipline (12:11-17)

## PRIVILEGE OF DISCIPLINE (12:2-8)

View Discipline as a *Privilege*? Seriously? . . . Yes!

Notice the contrast of “focal points”, the contrasting uses of the verb “Look”:

“**LOOKING** to Jesus . . .” (v. 2)

“do not **ESTEEM** lightly [lit., **LOOK** lightly on] the discipline of the Lord” (v.5)

You’ve heard of “low self-esteem”.

Well, the writer is saying “low discipline-esteem” is a dangerous thing!

When those ancient Hebrew Christians *first* came to Christ, the Saviour filled their lives with hope & joy! So, too, with us! Jesus is Better!

But that initial rush gets assaulted by hardships. We can become distracted by suffering.

When take our eyes OFF Jesus, our faith becomes flawed . . . warped, wondering:

*Doesn't God **LOVE** me?*

*Those Hebrew Christians lost their place in the synagogue for following Jesus.*

*I simply mention, as a Christian, I'd like to keep the current definition of marriage, & I've lost my place among my all **uni friends** – and even **work** – they fired me! 1 guy even head-butted me!*

*My non-Christian **family** now look at me like I don't belong anymore, as if they've disowned me.*

*What kind of Father is God? Why isn't He protecting me when I stand up for Jesus?*

*Does He lack the **power**? Does He even **care**? Is following Jesus worth it?*

Fixating on hardships instead of Jesus can make us wobbly & weary in the race of faith.

This week, I think a few of you have had just about the hardest week *ever*.

So, the author asks the ancient church & us to refocus: what does following Jesus look like?

Verses 3-4,

*Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin, you have NOT YET resisted to the point of shedding **your blood**.*

Maybe you’ve lost your job, or are at risk of going to prison (back then & now, for “hate crimes” of quoting the Bible). Maybe even you’ve been *head-butted*, Tony Abbott style! But you’ve not been **martyred**, LIKE Jesus. Things could be far more difficult.

Know that God still loves you. And remember Jesus SYMPATHISES with us in our struggles, FULLY sympathises, yet without sin. Recall the question I posed back when we considered Jesus as our sympathetic high priest?<sup>1</sup>:

*Who is tempted **MORE**?*

*The person who is tempted and resists, tempted and then gives in?*

*Or the person who is tempted and resists, and tempted and resists, and tempted and resists and resists and resists, and never gives in?*

The one who never stops resisting is tempted *more*, tempted *longer*, tempted *deeper*.

No giving in, *no going numb*. Jesus endured temptation in *full* measure, just like He endured the cross, for us! WHAT an Example! A **Better Example** of Faith!

But the writer’s point is not *merely* ‘what does following Jesus look like?’

(answer: the discipline of enduring *sinful opposition*)

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<sup>1</sup> Posed by Don Carson, “The Book of Hebrews” (Part 3 or 4), Trinity International U., 2013. Quotation is paraphrased.

The writer goes further: what does following Jesus mean? What does God's *discipline* mean?

Answer: God's discipline is a sign of SONSHIP, of Adoption into God's family!

Follow the logic:

**Jesus** endured discipline – the discipline of *external sinful opposition*.

Jesus endured the *worst* of hardship – rejection & crucifixion – for us.

Yet, Jesus is The **BELOVED SON** of our Heavenly Father!

We must not doubt God's *love* because of *hardship*: we're in company with Jesus!

This is basically what the writers presses home in verses 5-7

*Have you **forgotten** the exhortation that addresses you as sons? [quoting Proverbs 3]:*

*"My son, do not lightly esteem the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reprov'd by Him.*

*For the Lord disciplines the one He LOVES,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.*

*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children.*

*For what children are not disciplined by their father?*

A father who truly loves his children wants them to come to maturity & reach their potential.

So, discipline is a reminder that we **ARE** God's beloved children!

It's like a *DNA test*, "proof of paternity", that God is our father.

Verse 8 effectively says the same thing in reverse:

*"if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children  
and not sons".*

Illustrating this point, John Perkins writes an insightful but *tragic* recounting of his own abandonment by his father, not long after his mother died.

One day Dad told little Jonny he was being brought to his Auntie's house, to be raised by her. His father said farewell and started walking away from Auntie's house, but Jonny ran after him. Dad gave Jonny a quick spank, and brought him back. This scenario repeated numerous times, until his Aunty finally clutched Jonny so tightly he could not break free for the chase. Grown up John Perkins writes in reflection,

*I looked back & Daddy was gone, and with him went my joy in belonging, in being loved. I cried all the way back to the house, holding tightly to Auntie with one hand and carrying my heart with the other. I never found out what Daddy was thinking the day he left me . . . But I do know that when he chastised me for following him that afternoon, he was admitting we had a relationship."<sup>2</sup>*

So tragic! But so insightful.

God's Discipline is a **PRIVILEGE**, a sign of Sonship. Esteem it highly! Don't grow weary. Keep your chin up & keep your eyes on Jesus the *Beloved Son* who endured discipline.

This leads to the next point . . . **why** does God discipline us? . . .

## **PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE (12:9-10)**

Proper discipline is always **INSTRUCTIVE**, because the verb 'disciplined' is the usual term describing an 'instructor/teacher', esp. of morals & manners – primary of which are **parents**.

While verse 7 hints at discipline building endurance,

Verses 9-10 are more explicit about God's purposes in discipline:

<sup>2</sup> John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Ventura: Regal, 1976), p. 31.

*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?  
For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them,  
but He [our Heavenly Father] disciplines us for our **GOOD** that we may share His **HOLINESS***

The "much more" reasoning is from the 'lesser' to the 'greater'.

*Our earthly fathers discipline us "as it seemed best to them" [not perfectly, as dads & kids know!]  
but He [our Heavenly Father] disciplines us for our **GOOD** – perfectly, always  
that we may share His **HOLINESS**.*

Since God is all-wise, all-knowing and never errs, this should encourage us to receive his loving discipline and "live" (v.9) – eternal life with God *and* fullness of "life" now . . . which above all, is *Holiness. Set-apartness. Christ-likeness.*

The Purpose of being conformed to the image of Christ is always a **GOOD** purpose!

### **Purpose 1**

Sometimes Discipline is **CORRECTIVE** – and that's **good** for the wayward or the lazy!  
To get us back on track

The psalmist wrote,

*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word...  
It was **GOOD** for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn your decrees." (Psalm 119:67, 71)*

I want to emphasise this: because Jesus *fully paid* for the sins of believers,  
God's discipline of His **children** is never retribution; it is NEVER about God's wrath.  
His discipline is always loving, always about the refinement & growth of His children.

When describing God's severe discipline/chastisement of the Corinthians for turning the Lord's supper into a gluttonous drunk-fest, Paul highlights God's good purpose in discipline:

*"we are **DISCIPLINED** so that  
we may NOT be condemned along with the world." ( 1 Cor 11:32)*

*"There is **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)*  
God's children are not condemned, but chastised for our **GOOD**.

The Corinthians chastisement was severe! Some were ill, others, God 'called home' .  
Still, *"to live is Christ but to die is gain"*.

So this was for the ultimate good of God's children, and to protect the glory of His name.

And not just "those Corinthians". Often times – too often – we need corrective discipline!  
With the general state of the Western church today, overlooking almost every sin under the sun, sometimes endorsing the abominable ones, frankly, the Western church should be expecting the Refiner's fire, because there's plenty of *dross* to be removed!

Instead of a *sonship* mindset, *servant* mindset, *soldier* mindset, many have a shopper mindset!

[satire from home hunter shows that'd be funnier if not so true: "**Church Hunters**" {CLIP}]

J.I. Packer puts it well:

*The Bible does not allow us to suppose that because 'God is love',  
that we may look to Him to confer **Happiness** upon people who will not seek **Holiness**.*

Without God's corrective discipline many would remain not only immature but filthy.

It is also important to balance out the faulty, reductionist 'prosperity' preaching common today, which erroneously teaches discipline is *only* corrective. Such that if you're not *healthy & wealthy*, you must have "unconfessed sin" in your life. Really?

Like Jesus? Who as **sinless** – so His discipline was not "corrective" in any way.  
 Yet Jesus said, "*the foxes have holes & the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay down his head.*"  
 Jesus who was mocked, falsely accused & crucified!

What about Paul?, who said,

*Five times I received 39 lashes...Three times I was shipwrecked...once stoned & left for dead ...frequently on journeys in danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles . . . in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, in cold and exposure. (2 Cor 11)*

Paul shared this to prove he was an apostle of Jesus, **not** that he had "unconfessed sin"!

God's discipline is *corrective* for the wayward & the lazy.

## **Purpose 2**

But for the weary, discipline is **PREVENTATIVE** – prodding to get us *prepared* for battle, prompting us to grow and toughen up, to keep us "on track".

A clear example of PREVENTATIVE discipline is God giving Paul a "thorn in the flesh":

*"to keep me from becoming conceited due to these extraordinary revelations,  
 I was given a thorn in my flesh . . . (2 Cor 12:7)*

Whether the "thorn" is a person opposing Paul or a physical ailment, that's not the point.

The point is God's purpose for the discipline: to prevent Paul from becoming proud.

*Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.*

*But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness."*

*Therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

The Discipline of opposition shapes us into Christ-likeness, paradoxically 'strengthens us into weakness' – to trust not in our power but in the power of Christ.

Given pastor John MacArthur's influence in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall, we had a number of pastors from Russian & Ukrainian churches visit us at Bible College.

The pastors led 'underground' churches – that is, churches not government-sanctioned, and so persecuted by both the government & the sanctioned Russian Orthodox Church.

We heard story after story about these refined, purified congregations, putting Western churches to shame.

- Divorce rates in the church *inconceivably low* by Western standards. 1 in 75 years!!
- How they counted the cost for their faith, living simply for the kingdom – my professor visiting Ukraine to teach at a Bible College arrived on Friday night to start lecturing Monday. The College gave him food for the weekend: *a tomato & block of cheese!* Poor but dedicated, these pastoral students kept flocking in, hungry for God's truth, these graduates kept multiplying! The gospel was spreading like wildfire.

Their doctrine and their living was purified, **holy** . . . thanks to opposition.

Whether corrective **or** preventative discipline, both *refine & motivate* towards holy action.

**Q:** If a Hallmark card had 'blanks' about *God's discipline in your life now*, what areas would you 'fill in' about the need to grow in holiness? Where do you need to get back on track? Stay on track?

In your race of faith, I plead with you to take 1 action step in right direction: toward *holiness!* One step leads to another. Even small victories can lead to big wins in holiness.

*Shoe Dog* is the aptly titled book by the founder of *Nike* shoes, Phil Knight. In it, Knight describes the company's obsession with developing lighter & lighter running shoes. He walks the reader through the mathematics: Shaving just 1 ounce (or 28g) off the weight of shoes, saves 25kg in a 1500m race! With 880 steps/strides, removing 28g/step, relieves 25kg in accumulated leg load!<sup>3</sup>

In the spiritual race, God is saying we need discipline to (back to 12:1)  
*lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*"

God's Discipline can help reveal where we need to 'excess weight', spiritually speaking.

### 'PRODUCE' (FRUIT) OF DISCIPLINE (12:11-17)

The writer shifts from **Family**, back to **Footrace**, with some **Fruit** ('Produce') thrown in. He likes mixing metaphors! Hebrews 12:11

*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.*

(Greek: ***gymnasium***, exercising)

We could call this section, "*NO PAIN, NO GAIN*".

In the gym, there's pain when you feel the bicep-burn, the lactic acid lead-legs. Muscles **only** build up/strengthen when exercise *strains* muscle fibres to the point of slightly *tearing* them.

Strained muscle fibres then fuse together to form new muscle strands that are larger and stronger, so they can handle even more strain next time, to increase capacities.

But it takes TIME for muscles to heal, rebuild. The gain comes later, AFTER the training.

*The Lord told a man he had work for him to do, and showed him a boulder in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to push against the boulder with all his might. This the man accepted and faithfully obeyed, day after day, month after month.*

*Until he became exasperated and said, "Lord, I have laboured long & hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet, I have not even budged that boulder by half a millimetre. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"*

The Lord responded compassionately,  
*"When I asked you to serve Me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the boulder with all of your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push.*

*Now you come to Me, thinking that you have failed. Look at yourself. Your arms are muscular, your back chiselled, your legs massive and your hands are callused. Through **OPPOSITION** you have **GROWN** much, & so have your capacities to serve.*

That's the harvest of righteousness: *enduring through **OPPOSITION** you have **GROWN** much.*

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<sup>3</sup> Insight from Tim Challies, "Lay Aside Your Cheap Running Shoes", 5 December 2016.

Think about your own life...When has your faith in God really deepened?

Most likely you'll find your **greatest growth** spurts in the faith occurred amidst the discipline of hardship and opposition.

In the 1980s, I was a baby Christian, 3-months in the faith, when I started university at a brazenly anti-Judeo/Christian university. Berkeley was at the vanguard of the new "politically correct" movement. Because I started attending *Campus Crusade for Christ*, on campus I was personally blamed for all the atrocities of The Crusades. I was called a fool by lecturers for believing in a Creator. And I'll never forget the poster in my dormitory, accusing certain leaders in history & their followers for all the world's problems – and the worst "offender" had his picture on the poster: **Jesus!** This text was beneath his image.

*"Why is your Saviour a dead European male capitalist?"*

Jesus, *dead*? Uh uh!

Jesus, a *capitalist*? That's a bit of a stretch.

Jesus, a European!? Now that takes guts to put in print!

Accurate or not, all this *opposition* was pretty PAINFUL – in my dorm, on campus, in the classroom – sometimes it churned my gut and spun my brain.

But the opposition compelled me, a baby Christian, to my **knees**, compelled me to search the **Scriptures**, and compelled me to seek the counsel of **older, wiser** Christians.

And my faith **GREW!**

I was thankful for small victories, such as learning that evils done in The Crusades were the very evils Jesus condemned not endorsed! But I was much *more thankful* the 'big win': my faith was being strengthened by this opposition, as I started learning how to follow Jesus in word & deed, and also in engaging a hostile world as He did, questioning people's assumptions and persuading them to seek truth, seek Christ, the Way the Truth & the Life. As time went on, I could start to **taste** the 'peaceful harvest of righteousness.'

If God is *proactive* towards us with instructive discipline, maybe we should be, too.

This is J. Warner Wallace's thinking, anyway, as he describes an expectation of opposition

*There's a difference between TEACHING and TRAINING.*

*Training is teaching in preparation for a battle.*

*Boxers train for upcoming fights. But boxers often get fat and lazy until the next fight is scheduled.*

*Once the date has been signed, fighters begin to train in earnest. Why? Because they know that they are going to get in the ring and face an aggressive opponent.*

He then comments, while our teaching is often excellent,

*"we need to make changes not in our **CLASSES** but with our **CALENDAR**.*

*It's time to start scheduling battles so our 'teaching' becomes 'training'."*

Like what YAG (Young Adults Group) have recently done:

scheduled in a time to actually share Jesus to a lost world

which has motivated their *training* to share Jesus.

**Q1:** What sort of "Training" do you need for your faith?

**Q2:** What can you mark on your calendar to **prompt** that training, to *invite discipline* in anticipation of potential opposition?

Maybe it's sharing your faith?...at work/on campus/in the neighbourhood?

**Mark your calendar** with a meal or time slot to introduce someone to Jesus, and suddenly Adult SS next term – *How To Effectively Talk about Jesus* – becomes training!

Maybe it's more friendly opposition, 'friendly fire': your children!

Say you've want to lead Family Devotions, but haven't been disciplined to start.

**Set your Calendar** to lock in your first night of devotions, and you'll strive to get ready, trained for the noble endeavour. Regardless of what you read of which parents you seek wise advice from, Teaching will transform into Training.

WHATEVER the Training you need, be **PATIENT, ENDURE**. Fruit takes a while to 'cultivate.' Don't forget verse 11 says, "**later** discipline yields the fruit"

The fruit itself is beautiful:

- Righteousness (holiness in practice).
- Peace, *Shalom* . . . restoring wholeness, picking up the pieces, healing of wounds.

What a harvest!

Discipline produces a harvest of righteousness & peace for those who submit to its training, not for those who fight against it.

The health product commercials lie:

*FAB-ABS* do NOT come "in just 6 minutes a day"!

If takes lifestyle change, diet change, and ongoing discipline, diligence.

So, be Patient, but also be **DILIGENT**

Verses 13-14 are the exhortation of a rather intense sounding track coach:

*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 (RUN AFTER/PURSUE) **peace** with everyone, and the **holiness** without which no one will see the Lord.

You can see this is not "optional", a la "Church Hunter" style! This is a **mandate**.

Nor is it *passive* ('avoid conflict'); it's *proactive* – pursue peace, strive for holiness.

Following Jesus, gradually being conformed to His holiness, is *evidence* that we are 'on track' to "see the Lord" at the end of the race.

Flowing on grammatically from the main verb strive/pursue in v.14, are a string of "see to it" supporting verbs, beginning in v.15:

- **See to it** that no one "*Fails to obtain/Falls short the grace of God*" – is the same caution as chapter 4.  
It's not enough to Exit Egypt; you must Enter the Promised Land.
- **See to it** that "*no root of bitterness*" grows up to cause many trouble & defilement – That's a quote from the OT book of Deuteronomy (29:18), a *relevant* verse dealing with idolatry and apostasy from the faith that was causing others to stumble.

Some among the original recipients of the Book of Hebrews were jettisoning their confession of Christ, and causing other's to stumble. Today it's the same.

*Sin, is like a contagious disease. It can quickly spread throughout a whole church – a diseased root, bearing bitter and poisonous fruit.*<sup>4</sup>

Please listen – if you're **struggling** in the faith, the 'weak & wandering' need to be around believers who are 'staying strong' & 'staying straight.'

(v. 13, *strengthening weak knees, making straight paths*)

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<sup>4</sup> George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIVAC.

Please do not commiserate with the miserable & antagonistic!  
 Seek mature believers to encourage you in the race!  
 What a delight for them to encourage you.

Finally, verses 16-17 . . .

• **See to it** that that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau . . .

The author's focus on the SONSHIP theme returns with Esau, the son of Jacob.

Esau's misplaced values led to him to give up his inheritance for a meal — **instant gratification** for physical hunger pangs.

See him there? Kicking & screaming in the soup aisle: "*I want my lentil stew!*"

He gave away his inheritance as the firstborn son!

Later weeping & pleading with his father to reverse the situation, it was too late.

*The author of Hebrews wishes to drive home the point that only tears and rejection await those who **sell out** the inheritance that God promises to His children in Jesus.<sup>5</sup>*

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and the inheritance He won for us & shares with us . . . despite how gruelling the race of faith is!

**Wrapping up**, I do not know what trials each of you are going through this morning. Some of you may feel wearied & wobbly in the race, like a marathoner nearing the end.

But I do know that lifting arms & strengthening knees demands a renewal of hope:

understanding the **Privilege** of God's discipline, God's **Purposes** in discipline and *tasting* the beautiful **Produce** of that discipline!

And Reinvigorating those undergoing spiritual exertion & exhaustion always starts with taking our focus **OFF** of our hardships, and **Fix** our eyes on Jesus.

To help us regain focus on Jesus & God's wise orchestration of the Discipline, I close with some thoughts from Don Carson about God's, then a brief illustrative video clip:

*Through any hardship, God is doubtless doing many things, perhaps thousands of things . . . even if we can only detect 2 or 3 or a handful. A godly woman in her middle years is diagnosed with stage-four breast cancer. What is God doing? My little brain can imagine several possibilities.*

- *God may be preparing her for eternity: it is a great grace to know when you are going to die, and prepare for it.*
- *He may use her testimony about the joy of the Lord even in the midst of suffering to call another of her children into vocational ministry.*
- *He may be using her as a way to teach people in her church what it looks like to "die well," anticipating several other deaths in the next two years.*
- *He may be shocking her 20-something son, who is living his life indifferent to the gospel, to prod him into self-examination and repentance.*
- *Her funeral may be the means by which several of her unconverted relatives, for whom she has been praying, will come to faith — conversions for which she would happily give her life.*

*I've barely started a list of possible things God may be doing... Sometimes we have to cover our mouths & confess, in faith, that we cannot possibly grasp ALL that God is doing through hardship.<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIVAC.

<sup>6</sup> Don Carson, *The Gospel Coalition*, an excerpt from his great answer to a question about suffering and Hebrews 12:6-7, "How Do We Know If God Is Disciplining Us?": <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-does-god-discipline-christians>.

I appreciate that so much, because we've seen God work in each of those precise ways, often at the same time. It's just easier to "see it" when it's happening to others!

Here is just 1 perfect illustration of that "20-something son" . . .

{**CLIP** – praying Mum's cancer leads son out of atheism to Jesus}

How God is good to use cancer to such a glorious purpose! (and more purposes beyond what we can grasp).

When our ears become somewhat deaf to the language of God, His **DISCIPLINE** is like a spiritual hearing-aid. As C. S. Lewis famously put it

*"We can rest contentedly in our sins and our stupidities. But pain insists upon being attended to. God **whispers** to us in our pleasure, **speaks** in our conscience, but **shouts** in our PAINS: it is His MEGAPHONE to rouse a deaf world."*

Maybe some of us here this morning need a similar "wake up" call, to realise you're NOT "on track" at all. You're not heading to heaven, because you don't trust in Jesus. You're not loving Him, following Him.

Others, who are Christians, might have gotten yourself "side tracked".

Regardless of which,

*Our self-examination ought to be honest, and any repentance should be forthright.*

*The **REMEDY** is always the same: flee to the Cross and trust our good & gracious & holy God.*

*He is trustworthy; we know that, because He sent His Son to suffer on our behalf.<sup>7</sup>*

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank You for loving us enough not to leave us to our own whims & desires, but that You pursue Christ-likeness in us, and You prioritise character – the true need of a child of God to weather the storms of life & faith.

So, teach us, Lord, an additional "Lord's Prayer",

NOT "If God really loved me, He wouldn't be doing this to me . . . ."

BUT "Since God really loves me and wants me to be Christ-like, His discipline is an ongoing principle in my life that I welcome and esteem."

Lord, may the pain of the cross be woven into a crown, as we endure for Your glory and our good.

Bring a great "harvest of holiness" from Your discipline, we pray. Amen.

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<sup>7</sup> Carson, *The Gospel Coalition*, "How Do We Know If God Is Disciplining Us?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

***Jesus is a Better Example of Faith (Part 2)***

Hebrews 12:1-17

Main Idea:

God's loving **DISCIPLINE** helps us *stay on track*, and not *stray off track*. **ESTEEM** it!

• **PRIVILEGE** of Discipline (12:2-8)

1] Before the sermon, how would you have filled in the blanks in the hypothetical Hallmark card?:

“The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ those He LOVES,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ every SON whom He receives.”

2] How is God's Discipline a sign of our sonship & His Fatherhood?

• **PURPOSES** of Discipline (12:9-10)

3] What happens when parents provide everything a child desires? [what do children usually desire?]  
What's the outcome/what does the character of such a child look like?

4]] Regard God's intentions/purposes in Discipline, what is always the same? (see Heb 12:10)

5a] In your own words, define the **Corrective** Discipline of God.

b] Where do we see examples of God's corrective discipline in Scripture?

c] Why is it important to know God's discipline is not *always/only* corrective?  
Without knowing this, what happens to our faith & focus?

6a] In your own words, define the **Preventative** Discipline of God.

b] Where do we see examples of God's preventative discipline in Scripture?

• **PRODUCE** of Discipline (12:11-17)

7] Is discipline meant to 'feel good'?

How do muscles grow/build-up in capacity?

8a] Why do we need to be patient with discipline? When does the harvest/"fruit" come?

b] What happens to the "time-line" if we resist discipline, instead of submitting to it?

9] Where have you seen spiritual "growth spurts" in your life of faith? *Easy* times or *tough* times?  
Why? Discuss the circumstances & outcomes.

10] If a Hallmark card had 'blanks' about *God's discipline in your life now*, what areas would you 'fill in' about the need to grow in holiness? Where do you need to get back on track? Stay on track?  
(in other words, in your life, where do you need to "**see to it...**", 12:14-17)

11] What sort of "Training" do you need to grow in your faith & spiritual capacities?

12] What can you "mark on your calendar" to **prompt** that training,  
to *invite discipline* in anticipation of potential opposition?