

Series: G-R-O-W-I-N-G in Christ
Message Title: Growing Through Injury—Chastening
Date: Sunday, May 7, 2017
Scripture: Hebrews 12:4-11
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

It can be difficult to walk and live by faith in a world filled with so many sights.

So much of life is naturally directed through our sight-lines. We even live by adages common to this natural world: *What you see is what you get!* and *Seeing is believing*.

In a world of many sights and attractions, we are called to live by a different sense; we are called to live by faith.

What is faith? "...illogical belief in the occurrence of the impossible" —H.L. Mencken

Yet, the critical issue in all matters of faith is the *object* of faith.

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1 ESV).

Hebrew 11:1 opens with a call to faith that is based on substance leading to assurance and evidence leading to conviction.

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6 ESV).

Starting with creation, we have living examples of faith in God and God’s response to faith.

Hebrew 11 gives us many examples and expressions of the life of faith. In particular, this passage speaks to those who have faced great adversity and affliction.

Faith overcomes. Faith endures.

“And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the

edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:32-40 ESV).

Faith was not “fulfilled” because the place is heaven. For those without Christ and without faith, all the fulfillment they will ever find is here and now. They will spend eternity unfulfilled, separated from God who alone fulfills.

“True biblical faith is sustained dependence and confident obedience to God’s Word in spite of circumstances or consequences.”

You cannot separate faith in God in Hebrews 11 and the faithfulness of God in Hebrews 12.

Now to our passage of study today:

“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. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘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.’ 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, 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" (Hebrews 12:3-11 ESV).

The writer uses all the previous examples, including the work of Christ for us to remind us that, as God's children living in this world, faith will enable us to overcome and to endure.

Jesus, the Son of God, suffered for us that we through His suffering may never suffer without confidence and hope.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 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, and is seated

at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted" (Hebrews 12:3-11 ESV).

What is this hope? That God's love will be seen and known in the places of our suffering. Suffering in our text today is identified as *chastening*.



A Word of Encouragement **Why Do We Receive Chastening?**

"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" (Hebrews 12:6-8 ESV).

Reminder: God deals with us as a Father deals with His children. God's work in our lives (in the hard spaces and places) is rooted in His love.

Throughout Scripture, God portrays Himself as a Father. Those who have received Jesus as Savior are His children.

“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12 ESV).

“... for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith” (Galatians 3:26 ESV).

God uses the analogy of father/son because we can understand it. He compares Himself to a loving Father who not only blesses, but disciplines His beloved children for their own good.

A loving father carefully watches his son, and when that son defies his orders and heads for danger, the father disciplines him to keep him safe. God does that with us. Yet, often we do not understand the concept of the love of God.

When you tell people God loves them, it makes them feel good. But while God’s love is unconditional, is not indulgent. We like the idea of a love that coddles and comforts us,

but we often struggle with the idea of a love that chastens and corrects us.

When we are hurting, it is difficult to reconcile the love of God with human affliction, suffering and pain. We struggle with a love that allows for suffering. This is why the writer of Hebrews wrote this letter to “exhort” them to “go on” in faith, even when life is hard and they are hurting.

Push through injury. “No pain, no gain” is so easy to say and yet so hard to really embrace. Yet, it is true. We like to cheer peak performance moments, but rarely do we see the dark, difficult and discouraging moments that got people there.

Here the writer is speaking to people who suffered loss of property, family, and community among fellow Jews because of their faith in Christ. He uses the examples of the faith of their forefathers and yet, points out the unfulfilled promises to challenge them to endure by faith.

The writer mentions the wisdom of Solomon. Remember this proverb?

“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom He loves, as a father the son in whom he delights” (Proverbs 3:11-12 ESV).

The psalmist offers an explanation—an illustration of great value, of parenting. Our Father.

God’s action on our behalf is not that of a judge, but a Father seeking well-being—something better for His children. He is a righteous Father and He seeks righteousness and holiness in us.

What does a parent do? A responsible parent tenderly, but tenaciously, risks confrontation and conflict with a child (injury) in order to bring about responsibility and maturity.

Undisciplined parents produce undisciplined and irresponsible children who create an unruly society. It is amazing to witness the extremes our world will go to in order to deal with symptomatic issues of our society when there is really one systemic problem—a lack of genuine love and responsible parenting.

Is is not the government, school or church's job to raise your children; it is the parent's job and it is a full time job! We all need God's grace, example and wisdom.

God's work in the lives of His children is always a work of love. Chastening is a matter of love.

There is a distinction between **punishment** and **discipline**.

Punishment has to do with vindication and retribution. God never deals with His children in this way because Jesus, our Brother, bore our punishment. The wrath of God was poured out on Christ for us.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1 ESV).

The Father does not condemn His children with wrath and punishment, yet He does chasten us in love.

Divine **discipline** is not the evidence of God's anger, but rather designed for our profit.

Discipline is always toward a good end—moral training that reflects maturity, character and virtue.

I have often tried to encourage parents to remember the goal is never to have good kids, but to raise responsible adults. To this end, God works in our lives to develop an enduring faith.

Why does a parent risk the disapproval with confrontational invocation of discipline? Love. God's actions toward us are ever driven and defined by His love. He loves us!

"If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8 ESV).

A Word of Explanation

What is the Objective of Chastening?

"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?... For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, 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" (Hebrews 12:7, 10-11 ESV).

God's work in our lives is to show grace, goodness and glory. God's purpose is unquestioned (see Hebrews 12:7), but what remains in question is the effectiveness of this in our lives.

God is always interested in more than our momentary circumstances; He is interested in our enduring character. He desires to shepherd your heart toward holiness and righteousness—things that become appetites in you, not just ambitions He has for you.

What are God's objectives in chastening?

> Corrective Discipline "...nor be weary when reproved by Him" (Hebrews 12:5 ESV). God is correcting our faults with the intent to restore us to a right state. This has to do with something wrong with us and in us. I think this is associated with corporal punishment. Why?

“Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him” (Proverbs 13:24 ESV).

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15 ESV).

“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol” (Proverbs 23:13-14 ESV).

“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15 ESV).

These can be unpalatable instructions in a world set against this model.

There are many reasons for reservations concerning this type of discipline: abuse, anger, aggression. But there is also the issue of undisciplined children that create uncivil societies. Sure, swift and steadfast discipline is needed in the early years of a child to teach compliance and consequence.

Corporal punishment is inflicting pain of consequence without inflicting injury, and it is mostly geared toward dangerous behavior.

Yet, God's "rod of correction" in our lives is His word:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV).

Bible reading and study may sting, but it causes us to examine ourselves! Chastening can be painful, rather than pleasant—something we don't like. But God loves us too much to let us persist in a way that is away from Him.

"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" (Hebrews 12:11 ESV).

God never moves to bring destructiveness against us, but rather to bring corrective repentance. The goal of discipline is to humble us and bring us to a place of

repentance. Repentance is not just a one-time thing when we believe in Jesus, but the life of a believer should be marked by a constant turning from our sin and self, and turning to Jesus Who is faithful!

> Protective Discipline

“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?” (Hebrews 12:9 ESV).

The Lord puts limits, restrictions on you. Guard your mouth, your eyes, your feet and your ears. Scripture is full of times when the Lord puts barriers into our lives to shelter us—to separate us from the things that corrupt us. Every parent knows that there are important restrictions. If you allow, permit or overexposure, you will see its effects of corruption in your children’s lives.

> Instructive Discipline

God uses the hard times of life to teach us about Himself—His love, faithfulness, goodness, righteousness.

God also uses the hard times of life to teach us about ourselves—our attitudes, weakness, dependence.

> Futurative Discipline

This is for a fulfillment yet to come—a glory to be revealed at a moment in time. “later”

“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” (Hebrews 12:11 ESV).

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12 ESV).

“But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him’—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10 ESV).

A Word of Exhortation
How Do You Respond to Chastening?

“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him’” (Hebrews 12:5 ESV).

“regard lightly”—to despise it rather than respect it. “...to make it of little account, to neglect to see to consider its real scope and end.” —Wescott

Sadly, many miss the work of grace in their lives by simply ignoring God’s work and His use of struggle. The book title, *Don’t Waste Your Sorrows*, captures the essence of this challenge.

“nor be weary” or “faint under it” Do not be discouraged or defeated by it.

“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” (Romans 12:11 ESV).

Chastening is not fun in the moment (“painful rather than pleasant”), but later, it yields fruit (pruning)!

“Though many positional benefits of the Christian life are ‘instant,’ the Bible repeatedly refers to the Christian experience as a long steady process requiring ‘endurance.’ Be wary of any group that promises ‘instant’ spirituality through some practice or experience, and instead gird your heart and mind for the long haul. It’s worth the trip.” —J. Dwight Pentecost

In the end, we need to go back to the beginning of the chapter because in the pains, struggles and hardships of life, we need a focal point.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 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, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV).

We need a place to “fix our eyes”. The exhortation, encouragement and explanation is clear—look to Jesus! He is the “founder and perfecter” and the “author and finisher”.

Jesus endured the cross and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus did this for us. Do not grow weary and faint hearted.