

Grateful for Discipline?

11th Sun. after Pent. – 08/24/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Hebrews 12:4-29 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 6, **“The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.”**

Introduction

✧ We’re going to begin with a little bit of your participation today. Don’t worry, all you have to be able to do is raise your hand. So, this first question is just a quick test: “How many of you are able to raise your hand?”

✧ Now for the real questions: 1) How many of you have ever felt like you were disciplined unfairly?

2) Whether your discipline was Timeout, being grounded, losing some kind of privileges, being spanked or maybe even enduring some kind of legal action (since I know that a few of us here fit into that category); did any of you actually enjoy being disciplined? So most of us have never said these words, “Thank you Mom/Dad/teacher/etc. for giving me this punishment”, right?

3) But at the same time, how many of you think that you ever learned something from those times that you were disciplined (besides how not to get caught the next time)?

Here’s the last question for now, 4) Is there anyone here who struggles with sin?

➔ Okay, then this text before us today in Hebrews, chapter 12 is for you; for all of us! Because it begins in verse four by saying, “In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” Now, many of us have “shed blood” before, whether it was in an accident, a surgery, a fight or maybe even in defense of someone or some belief. But I think the preacher here in his sermon to the Hebrews is correct, the majority of us have not resisted falling to temptation or sin to the point that our very lives have been on the line.

➔ So, what does that mean? It means we all still have a way to go in how we are living out our Christian faith. Though we sincerely want to faithfully follow God and His will for our lives, we all still fall short. Our commitment and internal strength is still lacking. That’s the reality of our ongoing struggle with sin.

I. God’s reason for Discipline

✧ Beyond that, this word we have from God today seeks to remind us of a critical truth that we, in our self-centered focus, so easily forget. Verse five asks, “Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?” It’s in Proverbs 3:11-12 that says, “My son, do not despise Yahweh’s discipline or be weary of His reproof, for Yahweh reproves him whom He loves, as a father the son in whom He delights.”

➔ Now there are three different Greek words that our text uses to highlight the different types of discipline that we rightly receive from God. The first is *pīdēa* (παιδεία) which describes the needed training, education, correction and “discipline” – both on the intellectual and the right vs. wrong side of things.

➔ The second word, translated in verse five as “reproved” is *elengkō* (ἐλέγχω) that carries the more legal idea of convicting us or declaring the fact that we are actually guilty of doing, saying or thinking something that is wrong in God’s eyes.

➔ And the third word in verse six, translated often as “chastise”, is *mawstigōō* (μαστιγώω) which speaks of the physical punishment, whipping, flogging or scourging that someone endures because of the sin they’ve committed. Today, outside of the Roman culture of our text, this would be any type of physical suffering or difficulty that comes directly as a consequence of a sinful action. For example, you hit someone in the head and you break your hand or you run off

the road because of your reckless driving and you endure physical injuries in the ensuing wreck or you willfully disobey your parent and you receive a spanking in response.

- ✘ All of these together, as verse seven says, are what we “endure” from God in response to our sinful ways. Why? because He “is treating you as sons.” “For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”, God asks. There is none!

➔ Real quick – don’t feel like God is leaving any of you out here ladies. God is including you also when He’s talking here of His “sons”. It’s just that this text was written in a time and culture where the sons were the ones who inherited their father’s estate, while the women were taken care of through their husband’s inheritance. And since God’s point – that we’ll get to in a bit, is about keeping us in His family for eternity, then our place as heirs of His love and grace fits here under the designation of “sons.”

- ✘ It’s not uncommon that people misinterpret or even disregard what God wants to teach us here because of the experiences they’ve had with their own earthly fathers. In fact, they – really all of us you could say – have some serious “daddy issues.”

➔ Look, I’m a dad, just as many of you here today are also parents. And there is no such thing as a perfect father or mother here in this life. That means that the discipline we’ve received and/or handed out has not always been fair or appropriate or given entirely in love. Likewise, there have been times that you and I got away with things when we should have been punished in some way.

➔ And these inconsistencies – maybe even abuses that we’ve experienced in discipline, give the devil the perfect opportunity to make us think or say that “God is no different in the discipline that He hands out upon those who are His “sons” (and daughters); that God too is imperfect and corrupt when He disciplines.”

- ✘ But verse nine helps us get past these “daddy issues” so that we can see our heavenly Father’s true intent. If we are all honest with ourselves, even when our earthly fathers might have been inconsistent in disciplining us, still the fact that they cared enough about us to correct and teach us what is right and what is wrong did lead us to “respect them” for doing so. “Shall we not much more” than “be subject to the Father of spirits and life?” In other words, the earthly respect and honor that we have for our earthly fathers, whatever that looks like, should lead us to understand how much greater we must respect and honor God who is our Creator and loving Father for all of eternity!

➔ He is not the power-hungry dictator and judge that so many people think He is. In fact, even when He disciplines us as His children, we still never receive anywhere near what we deserve. It’s not loving correction that we deserve, but outright wrath and punishment, both in this lifetime and for all eternity.

- ✘ That’s what those receive who reject the Father’s correction and discipline in unbelief; who think that all people are “good at their core”; that they are not sinful from birth as Scripture says. In fact, verse eight says, that’s why it seems in this world like things go so much better for them. “If you are left without discipline ... then you are illegitimate children and not sons.” Believe me friends, their punishment will come at the end – eternal separation from God; unending “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is how Jesus describes it six times in Matthew (8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

➔ But that’s not us, is it folks? Jeremiah teaches us the proper perspective toward all of this when he teaches the people to say, “Correct me, O Yahweh, but in justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing” (Jer. 10:24).

➔ And, Psalm 119:71 says, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn [God’s] statutes.” In fact, that’s the reason God expresses His love to us through discipline, because as verse 10 in our text tells us, “[God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.” That’s His desire; His goal for us all.

II. The discipline Jesus received.

✘ Whoa! It’s a massive turn that God makes there in that verse. Taking us from one who is disciplined to now sharing in His holiness! How can that even be possible? How can someone as unholy and saturated with sin as I am ever actually share in God’s absolutely pure holiness?

➔ There’s only one way. We’ll never deserve it nor can we ever earn it. It has to be given to us through some kind of miraculous action on the part of God. He’s the only one that can make anything holy; that can give anyone even one drop of His perfect holiness.

✘ And that is exactly what He did through the discipline and punishment and wrath that He meted out against His only-begotten Son, Jesus.

➔ The severity of our constant, severe and repetitive sin deserves not just simple correction but outright punishment – the *mawstigōō* (μαστιγώω) kind we talked about earlier that includes flogging and death. As Paul writes in Romans 6:23, “the wages of sin is death” ... “but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

➔ Jesus is the only One who perfectly struggled against and resisted sin to the point of shedding His blood in our place; so that we might truly “share [God’s] holiness.” It’s absolutely the most miraculous of things that He did and endured “for our good”. He actually took all of the guilt for our sin upon Himself so that when His Father looked at Jesus, nailed and bleeding there on the cross, He saw you and me and all people in all of our gruesomeness. And by necessity God then unleashed His righteous wrath against Jesus there. Our sin had to be punished. Our guilt had to be paid for – that’s what justice required.

✘ But the Father and the Son did it all so that through the blood of Jesus, shed on that cross, the old covenant of the law might be fulfilled and the new covenant of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus might be put in place for eternity.

➔ Just as Hebrews 9:22 says, “...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” So, as we’re told in 1 John 1:7, “...the blood of Jesus [God’s] Son cleanses us from all sin.”

➔ That’s the miraculous gift right there; the gift of perfect cleansing through the blood of Jesus shed in our place.

III. Jesus’ Blood Makes Us God’s Sons

✘ In fact, it is in our baptism that God makes the connection between Jesus and you; between Jesus and me. 1 Peter 3:21 tells us that “Baptism...now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” His victory over sin and death is now given freely to us through the water and word of our baptism.

➔ And it’s there in that gift from God that Titus 3:5-8 says, “...by the washing of regeneration” we are “justified (declared innocent now) by His grace” and we “become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

✘ You get what all of that adds up to? Because Jesus shed His blood in our place, we through baptism and the faith that it gives to us ... we are purified of sin and we are adopted by God as His “sons”; making it possible for us to share in Christ’s righteousness right now today and forevermore before God’s eternal throne of grace.

➔ But don't just believe me, listen to God's own word in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake [God] made Him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

- ✘ Verse 23 in our text says, that this truth brings us now and forever "to the assembly of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." Jesus is designated as the "Firstborn"; the only-begotten Son of God. But because we are now washed in His blood, we are blessed to be "assembled" with Him before God, our loving Father in heaven, even now as we come before Him in Word and Sacrament right now to worship Him and receive His gifts of grace.

Conclusion

- ✘ What tremendous love God shows us today in correcting us; in disciplining us through His Word and even as we still struggle here with temptation and sin. Now we see the difference that His loving discipline makes for us in eternity.
 - ➔ It keeps us in His family of faith. It keeps us in His loving grace, where we are forgiven and covered by the blood of Jesus today and forever. So, yes, as verse 28 says, "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken."
 - ➔ Let us be grateful, dear Christians for the discipline God has given us in His love; the correction that is "for our good" (v.10); and for our salvation in Jesus! Amen.