

The inspired writer of Hebrews has been giving us motivations for persevering in the faith, even when it’s difficult. He has cited the O.T. saints (12:1) and our Savior Jesus Himself (12:2) as examples. He now describes for us the sovereign hand of God the Father in difficulties, using them for His loving purpose for His children.

Prepare Yourself (12:4)

12:4 *You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin...*

- This isn’t just our personal inner struggle “against sin,” but against the “sinners” referenced in 12:3. The struggle of the recipients of the letter had already been described in 10:32-34.¹
- The threat which concerns the inspired writer is that persecution will cause some who confess to be believers to abandon the true, scriptural faith. Jesus described this threat. In His parable of the sower, He describes “a man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when afflictions or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away” (Matthew 13:20,21// Mark 4:16,17).
- This threat is real today. Some have lost their property.² The more open and honest you are about biblical beliefs, the more likely it is these days that you will be “made a public spectacle through reproaches” (Hebrews 10:33). READ 2 Timothy 3:12.

God Uses Even Persecution for Our Ultimate Good

- “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result” (Genesis 50:20). God uses everything in our lives,

¹ We do have inner warfare with sin, as well (1 Peter 2:11).

² I’m thinking of the business-owners who have been fined by city and state government for holding to the truth of the Bible concerning sexuality/gender issues. Governmental punishment using economic consequences is what is described in Revelation 13:17.

even the actions of the ungodly against us, to mold us into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28-39).³

Those Whom He Loves (12:5,6)

12:5...and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons [in Proverbs 3:11,12],

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
Nor faint when you are reproved by Him;

12:6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,
And He scourges [same as 11:36] every son whom He receives.”

- The forgetting of the truth of Scripture is a danger to the soul, especially in times of difficulty.
- “...is addressed” is present tense. Scripture speaks presently to believers because the Spirit Who inspired it addresses us in it now (see also 3:7). Earlier it was written, “the word of God is living and active” (4:12).
- The writer teaches us that the O.T. Scriptures (Proverbs in this specific case) are written “to you as sons,” that is, to New Testament believers in Jesus Christ.
- “Do not regard lightly” and “nor faint” are the only two commands in today’s text. All of our failures in difficulties fall under these two categories.
 - To “regard lightly” the discipline the Lord brings to us in persecutions is to see them as something less than the Lord’s hand. We “regard lightly” the Lord’s work when we are not purposeful in seeking to grow in the faith through them. We “regard lightly” when we see them as merely accidents, bad luck, or merely the acts of sinful humanity against us.
 - We “faint” under the Lord’s discipline when we fall into despair. We “faint” when we fail to see

³ “As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so after a more special manner it taketh care of His church, and disposeth of all things to the good thereof” (1689 Baptist Confession, 5.7).

discipline as something meant to make us stronger in the race (12:1,12,13). We “faint” in our faith that He is our Father when we see discipline as evil or wrathful. We “faint” when we allow difficult circumstances to cause us to abandon our duty as Christians (10:25,26). We “faint” when we regard God as being mistaken by having us in these difficulties.

- “Discipline” is the theme throughout this passage (7 times in today’s text). The glorified Jesus, in His letter to the church in Laodicea, says, “those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19).
- What is this “discipline”? It is a correction for the purpose of instructing. It is not punishment.
- “Discipline” (παιδεία) comes from the same word-family as the word for “children” (παῖδιον, 2:13). The idea of “discipline,” therefore, could easily (and maybe more clearly) be described as “child-training.”

No Discipline, No Sonship (12:7,8)

12:7 *It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*
12:8 *But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

Analogy: Earthly Fathers and the Father (12:9,10)

12:9 *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?* 12:10 *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.*

- God ordained earthly fathers in creation so that we would learn from the very beginning of our lives how to

relate to Him.⁴ The devil knows this, and moves in societies to destroy the order of the family and the idea of fatherhood, damaging people’s ability to relate to God as Father. Human failures in fatherhood do not negate the God-ordained role of fathers and the ultimate purpose of that role.

- The “so that” connects God’s acts in our lives with His purpose for our lives. His purpose is that “we may share in His holiness.” We should read this in connection with 12:14, where we are told to “pursue...the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”⁵
- God is holy. It is God’s fundamental purpose for His people that they be holy as He is holy (Leviticus 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:26; 1 Peter 1:15,16). READ Ephesians 1:3,4; 5:25-27).
- The Scripture’s promises of God’s dwelling with us and adopting us as children ought to motivate us to pursue holiness (2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1).

The Goal of Discipline (12:11)

12:11 *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

- Jesus promised us pruning for greater fruitfulness (John 15:2b).
- This “peaceful fruit” is part of the command of 12:14.
- “...righteousness.” The O.T. saints are said to have “by faith...performed acts of righteousness” (11:33). The standard is “the word of righteousness” (5:13).

⁴ Matthew 6:9//Luke 11:2; John 1:12,13; Romans 8:14-16; Galatians 4:6,7; 1 Peter 1:17.

⁵ In the original Greek the words “holiness” (ἁγιότης) and “sanctification” (ἁγιασμός) are part of the same word-family. “Sanctification” is the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of every believer making him or her holy as He is holy.