

# (Hebrews - Part 42): Discipleship

by A.W. Tozer

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*Discipleship is a necessary and beautiful part of God's plan for our growth and maturation as Christians.*

**Duration:** 25:55

**Scripture:** Hebrews 2:10, Hebrews 12:5-9, Hebrews 12:11

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of discipleship and the discipline of the cross in preparing believers for heaven. He explains that God puts us under discipline to train us and prepare us for our future in heaven. The speaker highlights the need for believers to endure chastening and embrace discipleship as a necessary part of their journey. He contrasts the earthly realm, which he describes as a democracy of the mediocre, with the heavenly realm, where distinctions and crowns exist based on the preparation and discipleship undergone on earth. The sermon is based on the biblical text from Revelation and emphasizes the role of discipline in shaping believers for their eternal destiny.

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## Transcript

Now in the book of Hebrews, the book of Hebrews, the twelfth chapter, we're going slowly through this book, but we hope that those of you who've been hearing will have gotten some idea of what the Holy Spirit's trying to say unto the churches through the book of Hebrews. He says in verse five, Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto the children. My son, saith the Father, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

For whom the Lord loveth, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? Ye hear that, ye young fathers? What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? And if he be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then ye are bastards and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For verily they for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure. That is, it doesn't mean they enjoyed it, it just means it was what they felt they should do.

It seemed good to them to do it for the sake of the child. But God does it for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.

Nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. The two ministers here on the platform, possibly some in the audience, and I want to give you a text for your charge. Nevertheless, afterward.

I'm not preaching on that, but it's a marvelous text. Nevertheless, afterward. It isn't what there is now, but it is what's afterward.

Whatever it seems to be now, God's in it. Afterward, you will see the profit and the fruit. Now we have here in the passage I've read to you, the redeemed child in his father's house and in the school of Christ.

And here we see the son leading his younger brethren to glory. He's leading many sons unto glory, it tells us in Hebrews 2. And here we see the household. And it isn't the idealistic household the poets paint, it's a pretty practical household.

It's a household where there is a father with a rod and a smile, a smile all the time and a rod when he has to. And an older brother who has won in the race of life and conquered in the battle of life, and the father has placed the younger children under his care, and says, Now follow my son and keep your eyes on him, he's your teacher. And thus he has made us disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have said that this is the neglected doctrine. Nobody wants to hear anything about discipleship. The great emphasis now is not on being a disciple of Christ, but getting through by the skin of your teeth by believing in Christ.

Believe and have life, they tell us. And I think, of course, this is the most important message we can give to man. Believe on Jesus Christ and have eternal life.

This is the first and greatest message, the first I mean in importance, that is to be given to man. It's impossible to exaggerate the importance of this truth. Where salvation by faith is not known, religion becomes bondage to man, Christianity becomes legalism, and our Christian hope becomes a delusion.

And yet, in spite of the fact that it is vastly important and necessary as a base upon which all else is built, a point from which all else takes off, that is, faith in Christ for eternal life, in spite of that fact, it is an error to assume that to be saved is to be ready for heaven. Now I'm going to pause deliberately to let that soak in, for there won't be one of you, but what will be shocked by it? That is, as much as modern Christians can get shocked. We're blasé these days to a point where nothing can shock us.

But I say it is an error to assume that to be saved is to be ready for heaven. But somebody says, Mr. Tozer, how about the thief on the cross? Somebody else says, how about that man I led to the Lord in the hospital and twenty minutes later he died, but he died saying he was a Christian. Well, now I have no doubt that the Lord makes provision for those who may be saved in the last hour.

And it's necessary that I explain what I mean when I say that to be saved doesn't automatically make you ready for heaven. Let me illustrate the simplest and probably the nicest and best kind of illustration possible, and that is of the newborn baby. Through the kind grace of God and the built-in wisdom of nature, a baby waits until it's ready for an environment such as this world is, before it's born.

Previous to that time, it's in another kind of environment and isn't ready for this environment. But at a given time, it is all ready now for this environment, that this fourteen pounds to the square inch air pressure and so much humidity and a certain temperature and so much light and so much darkness and all that we

know as environment. It's now ready for it, so it is born.

Thus, it could be said it's ready to live in the world. So when a man is converted to Christ, saved by the skin of his teeth at the last second as the thief on the cross was, it can be said that he is ready for heaven. But on the other hand, do you really think a newborn baby is ready for this world? You know it isn't.

You know that it has to start as soon as it's been, whatever they do to them now. They used to salt them and put oil on them and wrap them in swaddling bands and I don't know what else, but they don't do that all now. They do it differently.

But whatever they do, it starts right there. From the first little whack it gets to make it cry and get its breath, right from there on for the next eighteen or twenty years, it's learning to live in the world. In one very limited biological sense, it's ready for the world when it's born.

If it isn't, it dies. But in a wider, social and broader human sense, it's not ready for the world until it's had its college education. So it is with the Christian.

To think that to be saved by converting, by believing on Jesus Christ, fits us for all the glories of heaven above is ridiculous. You might just as well pick up a little red squalling baby and put it in Ethan Baker's chair behind his leather desk in the Parliament Building, and think he was ready to be Prime Minister, as to think that a newly converted Christian, just born again, is ready to walk among the saints and angels and martyrs and heroes of the faith who have kept the faith and suffered and gone through fire and water and blood and tears. Ridiculous.

Between the time we are converted and the time we will be with our Lord, there is graciously given a period of discipleship, a period of getting ready, a period when God prepares us as the schools and the home and society prepares the child, the child that will learn. So we have the 12th chapter of Hebrews. If we were ready for heaven and ready for the future and ready for everything, the moment we are converted, we would instantly be taken to heaven with nothing in between.

But the truth is simply that we are not ready. Biologically, so to speak, we are ready and that we have eternal life, and so we go to heaven because we have eternal life, and I don't want to rob anybody of hope. But I say that for a new convert, converted a day or two days or a week, to close his eyes and trust and believe in Jesus and die, even though he goes to be with his Lord, to say that he can be up on the level with the heroes of the land then and the fiery furnace and the gallows and the martyrs who will burn at the stake, is to misunderstand the whole plan of God.

Full qualification for eternity is not instant and automatic and painless. That's why we are in the midst, we are in an evangelical circle. We preach a painless Christianity, an automatic readiness and an instant Christianity, to pour hot water on it and stir it twice and take a tract and go your way.

And, lo, that's Christianity. It isn't anything of the sort. It is merely the edges, the fringes of Christianity.

We must believe in Christ and be born again, or else we are, I say, in religious bondage and legalism or delusion or worse. But after we have been born again by believing on Christ and the wonder of regeneration has taken place in our lives, then comes a preparation, a preparation in the Father's house here on the earth, presided over by our elder brother, Jesus Christ, operating through the Holy Spirit and the scriptures and providences to chasten and help and rebuke and scourge and prepare us. I am glad that heaven is not going to be an equality of the commonplace, a democracy for the spiritually mediocre.

I believe in democracy, all right. I believe it is the best form of government hit upon yet, and I wouldn't want to see any of the democratic countries of which this is one change to any other form of government. But it is a long, long way from being perfect.

Let me talk about another country, since I don't know yours well enough to speak with any great authority. But let me tell you, in our little country to the south of us, men will spend their whole blessed year working, fishing, washing their car, looking at television, playing golf, and not even listen to the news, and not even read up enough to know the name of their Senator who represents them. And couldn't name, if they were shot against a wall, one member of the Cabinet.

And then when voting time comes, they square their shoulders, heave out their chest, and start for the polls, just as well prepared to vote as a Hottentot. That's democracy. It's not democracy as it ought to be, or as it can be, or could be, but democracy as it is, too often.

It's not true 100 percent, but it's true to a tragic degree. Men are totally unprepared to decide how things are to go. Thus we have a democracy of the mediocre, a paradise for the ordinary.

But heaven above is not going to be anything like that. Grace makes us equal before the law, but it doesn't obliterate distinctions. It doesn't put crowns on empty heads.

It doesn't guarantee rewards to the undeserving. God regards obedience and sacrifice and faithfulness and suffering and service and motives. He takes them all into account in preparing his people and in giving the rewards later at the consummation of all things.

Discipleship in the plan of God is a very necessary and beautiful and wonderful part of his scheme. And for his redeemed one, God has high plans. In keeping with his infinite Godhead and with his motives of love and goodness and his creative imagination, in keeping with the astonishing power that lies resident and latent in human nature, asleep by sin but to be awakened by the Holy Ghost in regeneration, God has marvelous plans for us each one.

But God prepares us here on this earth. The old Saints who used to get down and pray and would come out somewhere in their prayers, O God, we know that this world is but a dressing room for heaven. They weren't far off.

This is a dressing room for heaven. Down here the orchestra rehearses, but over there we give the concert. Here we make our clothing, for the Bride's garments are made by her own fingers, Revelation tells us.

But over yonder we'll wear the robe. God prepares us here on this earth by putting us under discipline to Christ and discipleship. And the disciple is one who is in training.

Notice the words, chastened, rebuked, scourged. These aren't pleasant words. Nobody wants to be chastened, nor rebuked, nor scourged.

Nobody wants it. That is, to be admonished, to be whipped, to be trained, to be educated and corrected and instructed and disciplined by punishment. Nobody wants it.

But it's here. Is it here because God doesn't love us? No, it's here because he does. It's here because God knows that even after we're converted and have a new nature planted within us, we are still more or less

sons and daughters of the wild ass's colt, as Job would put it.

That there is a wild, unfeigned spirit within us that has to be disciplined and brought into line and taught. There is basic ignorance in us amounting to genius that God has to instruct. There is pig-headedness that has to break and tame and discipline.

There is laziness in us that God has to stir up. There is self-love that God has to crucify. Then he has to teach us to obey, that thing that our Father refused to do.

In sin and fail and in Adam's fall, we sin at all. And we've got all that is in disposition to obey. I've said in a previous sermon once, I remember, that I come from a family where obedience, that is, my father's family, where they consider obedience to be for weaklings and sissies.

My father was such an independent man, and so completely independent was he, that when he left the farm and got a job in a rubber factory, he considered himself insulted if a foreman told him what to do. He didn't want to be bossed around by an informant. Who was that fellow to tell him? He was being paid to do certain work and didn't want to know what was.

I don't excuse that, I just say that's an extreme case of the independence and individualism gone wild. But we have it in the modern day, untamed, unbroken colts of the pasture field. We call them Christians.

They don't like a pastor, they run across the street and join another church. If they don't like something he does, they go two blocks down and join another, and if they don't like that, they go across the street and rent an old barber shop and start one of their own. The result is we have untamed, unbroken colts of the pasture that have never known the field of the yoke or the harness.

Or, if I were to use a more biblical image, we have sheep that know not the Master's voice, and are victims of the voices of strangers who only want the wool. Our Lord calls us to discipleship, to the discipline of the cross. If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and come.

But you know it isn't so hard, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. But he calls us to the text. I have simply skirted around the edges and tried to give you the philosophy underlying it all, but actually here is what it says.

It says, The Lord chasteneth and scourges every son that he receives. And if ye endure chastening, then God deals with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? I can look back in my childhood and remember things that I did that I got corrected for, and they did me good, and I wonder what I would have done if I hadn't.

I remember I had a younger sister, Mildred, four years younger than I, and she was a wildcat if ever one existed. She is a wonderful Christian woman now and has been for years, and we tease each other about those days. But it wasn't like the Handler would just slap her down, it was the easiest and the quickest and the most downright.

I remember Mother called me in one time, and she was a meek little woman, just about the size of this little lady the same. But she looked fierce at that time, and she said, Son, if you ever slap your sister Mildred again, you didn't have to tell me what. Do you know I never did? Never again.

Right down to this hour. I have no reason for doing it now. But I just learned something there.

I learned something. I'd seen her use it. Any of you old-fashioned people know what a potstick is, or don't they call it that here? It's a wooden spoon you use for stirring stuff, keeping it from burning.

We used it to make all sorts of things my mother did. She'd wash it off and hang it up, usually stained with berries, about that long and rather thin, but heavy enough. And that was Mother's disciplinary rod.

Thy rod and thy staff, they comforted us. And when Mother knew that she couldn't get us to listen any other way, she reached for this. And as I recall, that was about all we needed.

She wasn't rough, but we knew that we didn't care exactly to come in contact with that thing in the hands of an angry little woman. Now, in our Father's house, God has his rod, and certainly that's bad figure speech, and I only dragged it in there. It has the same meaning in the shepherd as it does in a household.

It doesn't have the same meaning on me. But if we be without chastisement, whereof all our partakers, then we are not true children of the Father, we are just changelings, nobody claims us, no Father looking after us, nobody wants that. So he said, if you want the Father to own you as his child and look after you as his child, you yield his discipline.

Then he explains how we have fathers of our flesh. Then he explains again that no chastening ever seems to be joyous but grievous. We had a dear old preacher down in the States years ago, he's in Heaven now, his name was Buddy Robinson, some of you may have heard of him.

Everybody called him Buddy, one of the great preachers of his day and one of the great Saints of his day. He said that his mother was one of the most patriotic women that he ever knew. He said that when he did something wrong, his mother took him over her knee and he saw stars.

He said not only that, when she was finished he was red, white and blue. That kind of discipline can be overdone, but it did something for Buddy all right. He became one of the world's greatest preachers.

Nobody likes it when you are seeing the stars, but afterward, nevertheless, it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. It's wonderful to think of the peaceable fruit of righteousness. We have been tamed and disciplined and brought into line with the eternal truth of God, and yet does that mean break your spirit and humble you and give you a hangdog look? No.

It means to discipline you into line with the mighty power that flows out from the throne of God. It means to bring you into harmony with God the Father and with the Holy Ghost, so that power is yours, moral power, spiritual power, usefulness in this world and in the world to come. Discipleship is a forgotten doctrine, but it's too bad, and I pray that it may be resurrected again, that the people of God may learn that their children in their father's house are learning down here how to live over there.

Amen.

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