

# Do Not Grow Weary of Discipline

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of discipline in the Christian life, highlighting its role in growth, maturity, and sanctification.*

**Duration:** 1:32:11

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:1-2, Hebrews 12:5-6, Hebrews 12:11, Hebrews 12:14-17

**Topics:** "Drifting"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by asking the audience to imagine themselves in a European cathedral, surrounded by biblical figures like Moses and Abraham. The sermon then shifts to the topic of suffering, referencing passages from 1 Peter that emphasize the importance of judgment and the difficulty of salvation. The speaker shares a personal experience of pleading with God for a change in their own approach to others. Finally, the sermon explores the concept of discipline, highlighting the discipline of the cloud of witnesses, the runner, and ultimately, the self-discipline of Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Hebrews chapter 12, beginning in verse 1, and we'll read through verse 17. Therefore, seeing we also are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your minds.

You have not yet resisted to blood, striving against sin, and you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons. My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him. For whom the Lord loves, he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is he whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all are partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us and we paid them respect.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as they deemed best, but he for our prophet that we may be partakers of his holiness. Now,

no chastening seems to be joyous for the present, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be turned from the way, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Looking diligently, lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and by this many be defiled.

Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright for, you know, that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. May the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his words. Well, let's turn our hearts and seek this king together tonight.

Let's pray. Our holy God, we draw near to you through the way which you yourself have opened and not us. We have no ladder to climb up to you, no moral code to scrub ourselves clean with.

We have no excuses. For our sin of our nature or our choice, we have God so often failed to give you what you deserve. We have so often done those very things which you describe as being hateful to you.

And yet, God, you have sought out your enemies and you have provided us everything we need. We read these terrifying warnings in Hebrews and we feel it within ourselves, God, that we are the kind of people that need those warnings. We are the kind that are prone to drift.

We are the kind that are prone to become hard and not even know it. We are the kind to become dull of hearing and sluggish, and we are the kind who, if we're not careful. Would abuse grace and make it a reason for trampling the blood of Christ underfoot and choosing a life of sin.

But God, you have not left us the kind of people we are. Lord, you have given us your son, mighty Christ, we've just sung about him, the great sight of the God-man enthroned on high as our mediator, our priest, our brother and defender. Robed again in the glory that belonged to him before the foundation of the world, possessing all power and all authority to do all your good pleasure, Father, and to bring every one of his safely home.

Lord, you have given us yourself a father to train us and to discipline us. God, our weak faith. We thank you that you give us such wonderful pictures, savior, redeemer, king, priest, prophet and father.

Lord, we rest ourselves upon your sufficiency and we ask God that you would stir our hearts again tonight with the provision that you've given us so far above anything that any Old Testament saint ever had. And Lord, gratitude would grip us on the thought of having you, you. As our father and we brought from the courtroom into the family room, oh, God, we ask, may it stir us to not despise.

Those times when you discipline us and God to pick up our pace, looking at our brother and run the race to the glory of our savior. And Lord, it's in his name that we ask that you answer our prayers. Amen.

Careless readers and careless listeners hear things such as we have been looking at in the course of this week and are apprehensive that what is being taught means that salvation is not certain that a person can be saved and lost. And of course, that is the position of multitude. But it is certainly not what it's stated in Hebrew and not at all what any of us should believe.

These warning passages make it clear that repentance as a one-time event is not true repentance. True repentance is ongoing. Day in, day out, we live repentant lives.

If a person hangs the whole of their salvation hope upon repentance as something once done, forever accomplished, then indeed they're in for a tragic awakening when it will be too late to do anything differently. At the same time, these passages make it clear that faith is not a single moment of time when one hears truth and embraces it temporarily, but that saving faith is ongoing, as is true repentance. So what really we are faced with in these passages is that extremely large portion of the church that has hung their entire future upon a single act of repentance and a moment of faith.

And they are truly doomed. But all of you have been well taught by the grace of God in this church and know better. But these warning passages are still of incredible consequence because of the very reasons that we have looked at and will still look at as we continue.

Now, the heart of the passage that we have read tonight deals with the subject of discipline. Discipline is an essential part of the Christian life. The passage focuses both upon personal discipline and the discipline that the Lord himself brings upon the believer.

Both parts are of very great consequence. The personal aspect of discipline, I trust you have your text open, is spelled out in three particular ways. In verse one, first of all, we are reminded of the discipline of the cloud of witnesses.

That is tremendously consequential. Secondly, we are reminded of the discipline of the runner. How tremendously important in all genuine sporting events discipline is.

Our coach here, I'm sure, doesn't want to be coaching students who are completely devoid of discipline. He knows that undisciplined players are a liability and not an asset. So in a very significant way, personal discipline is mandatory for everyone who is involved in the life of Christ.

Without it, your life is a shambles. Your witness is detrimental to the cause of Christ and your own personal life is a series of ups and downs instead of a straightforward, ever ascending pattern. So number one, the discipline of the cloud of witnesses.

Number two, the discipline of the runner. And number three, the discipline of the Savior. Beautiful truth here about the self-discipline that Jesus Christ exercised and his self-discipline as well as the discipline of the cloud of witnesses should be for each of us a wonderful encouragement and help.

Then it moves to the discipline of God upon our lives and the very essential role that God's discipline plays in our lives. Now, unfortunately, the bulk of the church does not understand the discipline of God. Some of you came here from other churches.

Some of you are involved in other churches currently. Let's think just for a moment of other churches that still have prayer meetings, corporate prayer meetings. What is the most common request offered in these corporate prayer meetings? Well, the most common request is deliverance from the discipline of the Lord.

I have yet for the first time to hear a pastor who is leading the corporate prayer meeting of the church rebuke anyone for putting in a request for relief from the discipline of God. But they should. No prayer meeting ought ever to be tolerant of requests that the discipline of the Lord be suspended or that a person quickly escape from it.

And yet that's mostly what is happening. Some of you have heard the expression descriptive of a local church prayer meeting. I've had many pastors say to me, our prayer meeting is an organ recital.

And what they mean by that is the bulk of the prayer meetings, the bulk of the prayer requests, sometimes all of the prayer requests have to do with physical things, sickness. Please pray for Aunt Tilly. She fell and broke her thumb.

Please pray for Charles Jones. He's going into the hospital tomorrow for exploratory surgery. My aunt is very ill.

Please pray that she will be healed. The question is, where do these various afflictions come from? A number of years ago, at the time of my life when I was regularly in the South among Southern Baptist churches and many times every year involved in conferences on revival with Ron and Patricia Owens, the musicians, and Henry Blackaby, who at that time was the head of the Prayer and Spiritual Awakening Commission. We were together in a conference in Atlanta, and it just seemed as if every conversation that we overheard and every person who spoke to us directly was talking about spiritual warfare.

And they were blaming the devil for every adverse thing that happened in their life. And both Henry and I were deeply distressed, and we conferred together concerning how to head off that monstrous error. So the next public session, Dr. Blackaby got up and gave a powerful rebuke to people who were blaming Satan for every adversity in their life.

And he said to them, if you credit the devil with every adverse thing that happens to you, where does God have any opportunity to speak to you in the direct manner of discipline? Now, all of us need to have a fresh look at the place of God's discipline in our lives. And there are some here, no doubt, who have reason to repent of having violated God. By asking him to remove something that he deliberately sent for our good.

I stated in just giving you the overall summary of the plan for the week. On Sunday, at the church prayer meeting, which of course I've alluded to again this evening, that the church prayer meeting ought never to tolerate requests for deliverance as the first order. The prayer ought to be, Lord, don't remove this difficulty from me until I have learned what you intended me to learn from it.

And it ought to be a prayer of thanksgiving. Thank you, Lord, that you obviously care enough for me to bring this affliction into my life. And if indeed you have been guilty of asking for deliverance before you have learned the intended lesson, by God himself that is cause for true repentance.

So we have this lengthy section about the role of discipline as God sends it to our lives. Then the passage moves to verses 12 and 13, which we will be looking at after a while. Where there are times when there is an incredible need of renewal of strength in the facing of the disciplines that come to us.

The passage basically closes by returning again to the issue of self-discipline. And it uses an Old Testament character as a very profound illustration of an undisciplined person whose entire life was a throwaway life because he had no room in his life for personal discipline. That's the plan that we will follow this evening.

Before we focus upon the Hebrews passage, I want to take just a moment to ask you to turn to 1 Peter. Some of you have learned, I'm sure, that a major portion of 1 Peter is devoted to the subject of suffering. And indeed, it is a matter of extraordinarily great consequence.

I'll read actually two passages, both brief. But look first, if you will, at 1 Peter chapter 4. Starting at verse 17, 1 Peter 4 at chapter 17. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God.

And if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous are saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God, entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what is right. Now, years ago, before we had the plenitude of modern translations, most of us had and were pretty well stuck with the King James Version. And I remember, as a young preacher, wrestling with this passage.

And I think I can cite it, at least, if not precisely, accurately, close to it. For in the King James it says, If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? And as a young man, preaching several times a week, I felt a call to preach upon that passage, and I struggled for a very long time trying to make sense of what is meant by the words, If the righteous are scarcely saved. Now, I was astute enough, at least, to know that it was not saying, If the unrighteous are scarcely saved, then where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? But it was saying, If the righteous are scarcely saved.

So I was trying to envision a salvation in which a person was barely or scarcely saved. And I couldn't help but feel that couldn't possibly be what it meant, because surely there's no shortage in the power of God to save thoroughly, abundantly, completely, to the utmost. And there I was, struggling with this issue.

Does that mean that you're saved by the skin of your teeth? That while you get to heaven, you just barely pass through the pearly gate? And what a relief it was for me to discover that what it was saying was, The righteous are saved with great difficulty. But what is that great difficulty that it is speaking of? The difficulty of salvation was what Christ accomplished. He's the one that paid the great price.

It doesn't cost me what it cost Christ to say. He had to endure the agonies of the cross. He had to bear the abandonment of the Father.

He's the one that paid the price. But in the context, it's clear there is the cost of suffering. Suffering for Christ's sake.

Suffering the disciplines that God himself brings upon us. Now, if believers are having great difficulty enduring the suffering that is part and parcel of sanctification, then the question is asked, what hope is there for the ungodly? And it's a powerful matter to meditate upon and to come to a clear understanding of it. Now, I mention that because the popular teaching of the day is that God loves us and he's not willing to let us suffer.

Now, the whole of that nonsensical movement, the prosperity gospel movement, is built upon the fundamental error that God loves us and is unwilling to let us suffer either in the realm of physical sickness or in the realm of shortage of money. Now, they are heretics, if ever the church has seen that. But nonetheless, although the majority of Christians reject the prosperity gospel, many have been influenced by the basic error that's within that movement, that God doesn't ever cause difficulty in our lives.

He's the one who always delivers us from difficulty. But we've got to be realistic. Discipline is required.

You must discipline yourself. I must discipline myself. God does discipline you.

God does discipline me. Discipline does not hint even that we are displeasing to God. The message of discipline is whom the Lord loves, he chastens.

If you are without discipline in your life, you have cause to wonder whether you really are loved by Christ. The presence of discipline in your life is indeed a wonderful encouragement. But turn back in 1 Peter to chapter 2, and let me call another brief passage to your attention.

Chapter 2, starting at verse 18. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but to those who are unreasonable, for this finds favor. If for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly, for what credit is there if when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and you suffer for it patiently enduring it, this finds favor with God.

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth while being reviled. He did not revile in return while suffering. He uttered no threats, but he kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously.

And he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by his wounds you were healed, for you were continually straying like sheep. But now you have returned to the shepherd and the guardian of your soul. It's a crystal clear passage.

There are times when we take a beating from others because we've earned it. Many times I've gone back to my hotel room after a meeting and groaned in my spirit because I realize that I may have spoken for an hour and 29 minutes and 30 seconds truth that I would gladly die for. And 30 seconds of blubber that undid the 129 and a half minutes by some stupid or foolish or erroneous or mean-spirited statement.

So when I take a beating for having said something out of order in a public meeting, what right do I have to complain? I earned it. You have earned, many, a beating from others. And then most of us are stalwart enough to accept the fact we did a dumb thing and we deserve a good licking for it.

So the question that is asked in that brief reading, what is the merit if when you deserve a beating you take it? It's when you don't deserve the beating and yet you get it. And you take it with good grace. And you smile.

And you make no response. You attack nobody in return. Then there's some merit in it.

But then at the heart of the passage that we've just read, you have been called for this purpose. All of us have been called to suffering. Now most all of us know that at the time we truly come to Christ in faith, we are babes.

And we know that it is our calling to grow up in the Christian life. We focused already this week on the passage talking about being on the bottle when we should be capable of handling solid meat. But it's very easy to overlook the fact that our greatest advancement in holiness is most likely to come when we suffer the most in the Christian life.

When we encounter some unexpected difficulty. If I may just speak in a personal vein for a moment. Maggie and I are blessed with only two children.

Our son whom some of you know who is a dear guy who works with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship who has a tremendous heart for Christ and his kingdom. Who has six children. Then we have a son, or daughter, excuse me who is severely handicapped.

She suffers from one of these incurable brain chemistry problems. While she's in her forties she acts like she's perhaps eight or nine years of age. She's a sweet girl.

She loves the Lord. But when she first began to provide evidence that there was something grievously wrong she made a number of very serious attempts at suicide. Those were hard to bear.

She was in high school at the time. She became very erratic in her attendance. She would go off to school on time but she wouldn't show up.

So she was called in for counseling. The conclusion was your father is a religious fanatic and the best thing that could happen would be for you to be removed from the home and placed with the normal people. Which was something of a difficulty for us to bear.

Then one day she simply disappeared and we hadn't the faintest notion where she was. Whether she was dead or alive. The police were searching for her.

Her mother was in a constant flood of tears. Both of us were in great agony. Eventually she was found and returned home safely.

Then a Christian man in the public health department looked into her situation and realized the nature of her disease. That she was a schizophrenic and that her only hope was to be on medication throughout her life. It was a terribly hard blow.

Some of you have gone through similar things. Some of you may yet face, in your children or in your grandchildren, some of these diseases come on at the age of 15 to 16. Some of you may be facing that.

But I mentioned that to say that without any question one of the most profound seasons of personal growth in holiness came to me as a result of our daughter's illness. I had never been aware of the fact. But I was very hard on others.

You may still think I am. But if you had known me then you would know what I'm talking about. I had perfect health.

And if I had any physical problems at all, I refused to pay any attention to them. I went on about my daily labors and had total intolerance for anybody who allowed themselves to be troubled by any difficulty whatsoever. But as a result of what happened with our daughter, I began to realize something of the hardness with which I had dealt with other people.

And I began to plead with God for an inner change that would not take away the directness of the approach or the plainness of speech but that would soften me internally so that I spoke in love even if some were offended. Soon after this event of her disappearance, I had a pastor's meeting where I was to speak about an hour and a half to two hours from our home and had to be there at six in the morning which meant I had to leave home quite early. I made the trip.

I arrived at the meeting place. There were a lot of pastors there. Not one of them even came and shook my hand.

They were all in little huddles and I felt quite absurd having made the trip and having encountered such a raw unfriendliness. After a while they called for breakfast and they rushed to the table and left me standing there. So I found an empty seat with empty seats surrounding me and sat down.

About a half an hour into the meal, the door slammed. A man raised him, sat down beside me and he said to me, put out his hand, shook my hand, told me his name. He said, I'm so sorry.

I meant to be here early. Something happened last night I'm sure you couldn't understand but our daughter ran away from home. We've been up all night.

The police have been searching for her. They just found her. I'm so sorry to be late and that it was appropriate to make a response.

And I was able to say to him with genuine integrity I understand better than you realize. Then the time came to stand before this group of pastors and to open both the word and my heart. They had treated me in a very unfriendly fashion but when I stood before them I was moved tremendously with compassion, thinking how many of these men are faced with difficulties equal to that of the man who came late? And how many of them this morning need to hear a tender word of appeal? I'm simply reporting God brings into our lives very severe difficulties.

We can grow angry with God. We can feel as if God has abandoned us and doesn't really care or we can rejoice that he loves us sufficiently to allow the truly difficult things to happen in our lives so that we might make profound advancements in the life of holiness. I believe the Hebrews warning number 5 is intended to help us instead of inching along forward in the Christian life to adopt a whole new viewpoint of both self-discipline and the discipline that God sends so that we might rise up like men and women of God and begin to shake this earth by the profoundness of our commitment to Christ, the depth of our confidence in him and the yearning compassion of our heart to see the world impacted by the Gospel.

So with those words as introduction let's come along now to the passage in front of us in Hebrews chapter 12 and to give focus to it. As I indicated, clearly the passage begins in three realms of self-discipline so Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1, therefore we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Now most of you I hope recognize that those words are the summary of the lessons that we are to have learned from the 11th chapter and perhaps you have already done this but if you have not, use your imagination a wee bit.

Imagine us now, instead of this auditorium, imagine that we're gathered together in one of these huge European cathedrals and there are several layers of balconies in this cathedral but at the very top there is a balcony that goes around the entire auditorium and as you study the faces in that uppermost balcony you say to yourself, that looks like why I believe it is it must be, there's Moses I wonder if that's not Abraham I never saw Noah but surely that looks like Noah and you realize that all around you in that uppermost gallery is this incredible cloud of witnesses and they are telling us that the life of faith is worth the cost of the journey.

They're bearing witness to the fact that faith does indeed mean salvation.

All of those mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 paid an awful price put yourself in Noah's shoes can you imagine living in Noah's day and receiving a command from the Lord to build an ark and you're in the middle of a dry plain and nowhere anywhere around you is enough water to float a canoe let alone an ark

and yet it is your command to build the ark by precise instructions and so you get busy and your neighbors and your supposed friends come around and ask and what do you think you're doing and they smile but as this huge boat begins to take shape their smiles turn to laughter of scorn and verbal ridicule you are made to look like an absolute idiot you gotta be out of your mind you'll never float that thing this is ridiculous how can you be such an idiot and for 120 years you labor on you

try to bear witness to your neighbors but they just laugh at you it cost Noah to be in that gallery of witnesses testifying to us tonight that self-discipline is important and does carry with it a very great reward you know as well as I do that it takes an immense amount of self-discipline to stick with the task of that magnitude and to accomplish it against such mean-spirited and violent taunting and jeer and we know about Abraham how he was called to leave his home and to go to a place where he knew not we know something of the difficulties that he encountered and then having at last received the son of promise he is commanded to take that son Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice and we have a pretty good ability to imagine how that cost Abraham and the incredible strain upon his

confidence in God and yet is it not both remarkable and wonderful that he went through with that command and did precisely what was told and is now in the gallery of witnesses how many of us have the level of self-discipline that Abraham had well you see the point is that's what God is calling each of us to don't for one moment think the life of faith is a breeze a matter of ease no it is a life of incredible difficulty it is costly but when you have met Christ and have fallen in love with him no price is too great to pay or if you will think about Moses found in that basket among the rushes in the river brought into Pharaoh's household and then through a call of God upon his life he leaves the luxurious life of the palace he leaves the riches and the fame and the pleasures of Egypt and

he follows Christ he meets the commands that God gives him and by self-discipline now he was not perfect in self-discipline perfection is not the issue pressing forward time after time no matter how high the difficulty no matter how low the circumstances of your life on and on and on you go and when you fall flat on your face because you are disciplined you immediately get up brush yourself off and get moving again but all around us are countless Christians who fall and remain there in self-loathing and criticism and feel sorry for themselves and raise questions about God how would he let these awful circumstances occur you could work your way through the entirety of Hebrews chapter 11 and face the issues that each of the persons named there faced and come away with the same conviction

these words must be noted in Hebrews chapter 11 what more shall I say verse 32 time would fail me if I tell of Gideon Barak Samson Jephthah David Samuel and the prophets who by faith conquered kingdoms performed gifts of righteousness obtained promises shot the mouths of lions quenched the power of fire escaped the edge of the sword from weakness were made strong became mighty in war put foreign armies to flight women received back their dead by resurrection and others were tortured not accepting their release in order that they might attain a better resurrection and others experienced mockings and scourgings also chains and imprisonment they were stoned they were sawn in two I mean sawn in two can you imagine now a big saw placed at the center of the top of your head and your body cut in

two right down the center every person mentioned in Hebrews 11 exercised self discipline to talk about being a serious Christian and not to learn self discipline and to stick with it is to speak in a nonsensical fashion so the cloud of witnesses the second part as I pointed out to you the runner let us verse 1 again also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us surely a powerful picture of self discipline how could anybody hope to win a

race who allowed themselves to grow flabby who did not diligently prepare themselves for that race who thought that the great value of a race was to enter what an absurd thought no the value of a race is to win and if you can't win at least to finish and if you end up

as the last one to finish it's still better than starting and stopping the self discipline of the Christian life calls for the forceful action that it takes to be successful in sports two things are specifically called for of the runner to lay aside every encumbrance some of us don't get very far in the race of life because there are so many encumbrances in our life we're willing to serve Christ providing we don't have to sacrifice this or forsake that as I mentioned the other day often persons obedience is conditional obedience I'll do it if but no if you're going to run the Christian race if you're going to be a winner then you're going to have to lay aside everything that will slow you down everything that will keep you from finishing well an attachment to earthly goods may be a

problem a devotion to tennis or golf might be an encumbrance for you no one else is in a position to tell you what encumbrances stand in your way of success in running the race of the Christian life the issue is will you lay aside every encumbrance and to talk about being a serious Christian and to be unwilling to get rid of the liabilities in your life is absurd now why are people willing to sacrifice greatly in order to win a race well for far lesser reasons than the Christian has for laying aside encumbrances I personally cannot think of anything more desirable and pleasurable than bringing glory to the Savior if by God's grace I can finish the race of my life my great goal is not heaven frankly I'm not even interested in streets of gold I fall down on cement I fell down in our

warehouse a couple of weeks ago and lay sprawled out on the floor saying I wonder if I'll even be able to get up and then managed finally to do so and was glad that nothing was broken but I had some mighty big bruises walking on streets of gold does not excite me I know God could make non-slip gold if he chose but still I don't find that any great incentive but the possibility of seeing a smile on my Savior's face of hearing Him say well done makes me want to lay aside every encumbrance that hinders me from running the race and the call is also to lay aside the sins that easily beset us there are besetting sins there are multitudes of Christians who make no progress because they do not have the discipline necessary to lay aside the sins that beset them the third portion of this

self-discipline passage has to do with Christ starting at verse 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and the perfecter of faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross despised the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God for consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself so that you may not grow weary and lose heart it's wonderful to have the example of Moses and Noah and Abraham and that other wonderful assortment of witnesses in that cloud but better than all of those is Christ Himself if you're struggling with the issue of self-discipline focus your eyes on Christ do you think it was easy for Christ have you really considered what it cost Him to provide salvation for you some very powerful statements are in the portion we

just read He endured the cross He despised the shame I have met many people over the years who have simply given up because living for Christ brought shame to them I was reading this week a brief piece about a church where the communists took over there were approximately 100 believers supposedly in this church when the communists took over 90 out of 100 denounced Christ and that's not extraordinary that's about the way you expect to see some they can't endure either their cross or the embarrassment and shame of following Christ but as I said if you're struggling with self-discipline take some time to sit down and to study what Christ endured He endured such hostility of sinners against Himself that would

break our hearts if we really felt the depth of the hostility that He endured but He

won He was successful He did accomplish the will and the purpose of God He did not fail so you see we have three perfectly lovely things set in front of us I want to review them because even if you make it to heaven and you get there and you bring no fruits with you if nobody's life has been deeply touched and transformed by your life I know that it wouldn't be safe to say that you'll be sorrowful in heaven but it seems to me every one of us will want to arrive in heaven and hear the words well done and you'll not hear those words by living easily by acting carelessly it is those who have learned to endure those who have practiced self-discipline who truly do win the race of life let's move then to the area about the discipline of God in our life now let's just face the reality if you do

not discipline yourself you're not likely to experience very much of the discipline of God it's those who have become very earnest in self-discipline whom God then begins to shape and affect profoundly with his discipline but we're looking now at verses 4 to 11 and they begin with this important statement you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood in your striving against sin now I can say without any fear of contradiction there's not one person in the room who has shed their blood in their resistance against Satan we wouldn't be here if we had I mean it's speaking of death for Christ's sake but let me put to you the question how willing are you to suffer for Christ's sake is your commitment to Christ of such a nature that you would willingly die for him we meet people

who say that they're living for Christ and everything about them raises questions and makes you wonder do they even know who Christ is what could they possibly mean by saying I am living for Christ now some of us have had very real difficulty but none of us has given his blood but we remember don't we that Christ shed not only his blood on the cross but he shed his blood in the agony of his prayer in the garden if there's some point in your life when you're getting discouraged when you think the Christian life is too hard remind yourself of the Savior this passage is here to teach us that Christianity was not designed by God as a life of ease and pleasure but as a life of discipline and suffering so that the whole world could be awakened to its need when we are unwilling to discipline

ourselves we have virtually no impact upon others many times in my life when I've gone to a place to preach where I've never been before and I've taken in the back door onto the platform and I sit down on the platform and I look around and I see a huge percentage of the congregation is grossly overweight I don't know the pastor never met any of the people I just make the observation that a large percentage of the people are grossly overweight which proves almost always that they are lacking in self-discipline so I say to myself when I meet the pastor and his wife it will be either one or both of those who are grossly overweight and invariably it's true some pastors are so fat they can barely waddle the Bible has more to say about eating than about drinking self-discipline impacts every

area of life it impacts our work schedule some are lazy and don't put in an honest day's work some are zealots at work and where twelve hours would be enough they have to put in sixteen it doesn't matter whether it's work or play whether it's food or drink all of us are called to be disciplined Christ was disciplined and those that Christ loves He disciplines so we haven't yet striven to the shedding of blood have we forgotten the exhortation verse five which addresses you as sons my son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor faint when you are proved by Him for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and discourages every son whom He receives let me ask you kindly but firmly when you suffer do you treat it with thanksgiving if you lost your job in this recent financial

distress did you praise the Lord if you're on the verge of bankruptcy have you praised the Lord if you've discovered that you have cancer have you praised the Lord do you believe come now let's be honest do you believe that whom the Lord loves He disciplines or like Israel of old do you murmur do you complain do you wish that you were back in Egypt do you think that God is unkind that He proves that He doesn't love you by the discipline that He brings into our lives we are commanded not to regard lightly the discipline of the Lord we are instructed do not faint when you are reproved by Him it is crystal clear discipline is evidence of His love now phenomenal change occurs in the Christian life when they accept the fact that discipline is evidence of God's love long ago when Maggie and I

lived in California I went often on preaching missions to the United Kingdom and Maggie stayed home out of the blue one day my father who lived in New York State called and he said to me I understand you're on your way to Britain again I said yes he said are you taking Maggie with you no I said quite impossible what do you mean it's impossible I said dad you know we have young children she can't just go off and leave them he said I'm telling you to take your wife well I said thanks dad but it can't happen no he said I mean it you take your wife and I said what do we do with the children he said mom and I are coming out and we'll look after the children well good wonderful we'll make arrangements for Maggie to go now all the time we were in Britain every day Maggie was saying I can't wait

to get home time after time she said oh it'll be so good to have those kids run up and hug me and welcome me home when we came home the kids saw her and said oh hi mom and went off about what they were doing and she was crushed then finally it came out they said mom you didn't need to come home we were having a wonderful time well what do you mean by that well what we found out was they were getting away with murder my parents found it much easier to let them misbehave than to listen to them howl if they got a licking so the question arose who loved the children most my parents who let them run wild or my wife and I who kept them in a very straight and narrow channel well on the surface it might appear that those who do not discipline are more loving the truth of the matter is those who

don't discipline love themselves not their children and the same thing must be faced with God because God truly loves us he disciplines us and God has means of discipline that no parent has available to them God's discipline can indeed be very very thorough so we are commanded to rejoice and to accept as absolutely wonderful the fact that God himself loves us so the presence of discipline in the life is evidence of God's love and the absence of discipline evidence that God doesn't see any point of dealing with us that's pretty sad when God sees that it wouldn't do any good to discipline you and elect your role and to be yourself and to do as you please oh how wonderful it is to be a subject of God's discipline and isn't it marvelous that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives and God

can make our lives gloriously fruitful and God can enable us year after year until finally they totter us into the grave to bring him glory but he will not do so unless we first learn to cherish his discipline and with that discipline ourselves I want to just pause for a moment and ask you to think of the incredibly wonderful things God can do with your life if you are self-disciplined and you enjoy and thank him for the discipline he brings into your life and if you cease altogether asking for deliverance from discipline and turn your prayer to say Lord I want to know exactly what you wish me to learn from this discipline and I want to learn it as quickly as possible and as thoroughly as possible and I plead with you don't take the discipline away until I've learned everything I'm

supposed to learn this is in many ways the most urgent of the warnings because this is where so many multitudes fall short many of you have been sensitive about not drifting about not hardening your heart

about not being dull of hearing and sluggish but have you ever become truly serious about discipline I plead with you for the glory of Christ for the good of humanity for the blessedness of accomplishing Christ's will to welcome discipline well verse 12 it's obvious as verse 11 points out discipline for the moment does not seem to be joyful and it's quite clear according to verse 10 that sometimes we fall short and it's also clear that the discipline of God is related to the discipline of parents now I don't know about you but I look back over the discipline that my parents brought into

my life I remember that sometimes I objected strenuously but I can tell you honestly I'm deeply grateful that my parents loved me enough to discipline me I know that there were times when my parents disciplined me for their good just as they didn't discipline their grandchildren for their good but I also know that by and large their discipline was out of love I also know that sometimes I was disciplined unfairly my older sister came home one day and said she had heard me swearing and I got a terrible licking for it but it wasn't true there wasn't a shred of truth to it but I got the beating nonetheless and I resented it at the moment but quickly I learned to be grateful that my parents loved me and even though they were not perfect in their discipline they were sweet spirited and earnest

but God has never disciplined me unjustly or you and God has never once disciplined any of us for his good but for ours so then we are instructed if out of sheer weariness your hands are hanging down can't you almost get the picture that's presented here you've been in this long trial and you're just barely able to drag your feet along and you can hardly lift your hand even to your waist but there's a command here that we need to pay attention to verse 12 therefore strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed yes we all grow weary but take heart there's purpose in all that transpires strengthen your hand reset your resolve make it clear to God I'm ready

for any amount of discipline because I want to be like Christ I want to accomplish your purpose I want to live all out for your glory but then the passage draws to a conclusion with a series of immensely consequential statements verse 14 the heart of verse 14 is make war with sin not with people listen to what it says pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord now when somebody is afflicting you it's very easy in your heart at least if not outwardly to make war with them I've been in situations where it was hard I've had accusations hurled against me and I got so hot under the collar I wrote a scathing letter to some people and I was going to fix things with them but somehow I had enough grace to put it in a drawer and I said I'll re-read it

tomorrow when I re-read it on the tomorrow I said one place for this letter that's the fire when you get heated up when your animosity is aroused set your heart to make peace and not trouble learn to rejoice in your affliction the second part verse 15 see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God if there's been any backsliding in your life correct it right now I am done with backsliding I am not willing to fall short of the glory of God deal with it and deal with it forcibly and permanently and let it be at its end if there's any root of bitterness now obviously a great deal of the bitterness that arises in our heart arises because we think people are dealing with us unjustly now my wife wasn't bitter but one of the most alarming things that happened in our marriage was when in

great indignation my wife said to me one day I'm people too and at first I whatever and then it dawned on me I was treating her like a non-person as if my view was all that mattered and I had to deeply repent and all of us get into situations where we are trampled upon and where others do in some fashion or another bruise us so see to it that no root of bitterness springs up you know some of us have the tendency when

we're hurt simply to hide it and to pretend nothing is wrong but that hurt is inward and it festers and it balloons and it becomes extraordinarily dangerous don't allow even the slightest root of bitterness to spring up for it does cause trouble and it is the result or it has the result of defiling many most of the church splits where I have been called in to try and bring

peace have come because some root of bitterness was allowed to fester and grow until the whole church was disrupted by the evil but let's close with the powerful illustration which appears at the end verse 16 and 17 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau who sold his own birthright for a single meal for you know that even afterwards when he desired to inherit the blessing he was rejected for he found no place of repentance though he sought for it with tears what a tragedy it would be if as you approached the end of your life you realized that you had been like Esau now Esau allowed a root of bitterness he was very angry with his brother for having gained the birthright now he threw the birthright away because of his lack of self-discipline he comes home from a hunting trip

he's hungry and like a perfect idiot he's willing to throw away everything that really matters for the sake of the moment and to have a meal then he's angry but many of us have found ourselves moving in that kind of a direction when out of desire to have an immediate want satisfied we do something as stupid as throwing away our birthright then that festers and grows in us and we're full of angry the whole of our life is cast away in foolishness then finally we come to the point where we say this is all wrong I should not have let this happen I must come to repentance but we've been so deeply embedded in the sin no way of repentance can be found this is a serious warning friend here is a wonderful passage I believe every one of us will be incredibly improved if we set our hearts to

discipline ourselves and to enjoy the discipline of the Lord and if we will remind ourselves of the stupid error that Esau made it will help us not to repeat his ridiculous action the world in desperate need of disciplined men and women how old does a person have to be to start the life of discipline? 8? 9? surely by 12 every young person in the room could be clearly a disciplined person by the time they were 12 and think now oh dear friends think now what would happen if a dozen young people here tonight became disciplined Christians and began to enjoy the discipline of the Lord and began to grow and to soar with power and with love for Christ and dedication for a lost world may it prove true for the glory of Christ forever.

Amen.

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