



Don't Give Up on God's Grace

Hebrews / Hebrews 12:3-17

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ 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.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives."

⁷ 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? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ 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? ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Believers must keep their eyes on Jesus. At the beginning of chapter 12 in Hebrews we were told to keep our eyes on Jesus as we run the course that is set before us. This includes times of great struggle.

Sometimes even believers who trust in Jesus Christ get discouraged when they face difficult times. In addition to the struggles that everyone faces, believers may feel the pressure of going in a different direction than the rest of the world. They know they should stand up for what is right. But if they stand up for what is right, they may face criticism and possibly rejection. On the other hand, if they keep quiet, and appear to agree with everyone else, they feel guilty because they know they haven't stood up for what is right. Just thinking about situations like these can be very stressful for believers.

The great temptation every believer faces is to just quit. But if we do that, then we will be turning our back on Jesus, rejecting Him, all He promised, His love for us, and His sacrifices given for our benefit.

The early Christians, who first received the letter written to the Hebrews, faced far more serious opposition than you or I are likely to experience. Some of the people who had been part of their fellowship had given up on faith in Jesus Christ for the kind of reasons just explained. These concerns are still with us today and we can benefit from the wisdom found in Hebrews 12:3-17 just as the original recipients did:

These concerns are addressed in the passage we will study today:

- Why Not Just Quit?
- Why Does God Discipline His People?
- What Is the End-Goal of God's Discipline?

Why Not Just Quit?

³Consider him who endured from sinners such **hostility** against himself, so that you may not grow **weary** or fainthearted. ⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And 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.

⁶For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives."

How can a believer distinguish whether God is punishing them for disobedience or disciplining them so that they will grow to be more like Jesus?

- The truth is both types of discipline can feel very much the same.
 - An athlete is disciplined by painful training to improve performance.
 - A disobedient believer can be punished by God so that they will learn to be more obedient and learn to grow more deeply in love with Him.
 - The result of both types of discipline is the same: grow in love for God and in obedience to Him.
- How do you handle anger directed at yourself?
 - Human **hostility**
 - Romans and Jewish leaders intended Jesus' crucifixion to end His life, but God used it to produce eternal life for all who will believe.
 - God is in control of what appears to be disaster, but He uses every event to produce His plans.
 - God's **discipline** - Proverbs 3:11-12 "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."
 - Don't regard it lightly.
 - Know that God loves those He disciplines.
 - Don't grow **weary** when disciplined (Don't give in to the temptation to give up).
 - Hardship will verify God's love for His people.
 - God uses discipline to guide and train His people.
 - Believers must seek to learn the lessons of God's discipline, not **despise** them (being angry with God, as stated in Proverbs) or **regard** them **lightly** (consider them to be of no importance, as stated in Hebrews).

- Believers must understand that God’s discipline is not abusive.
 - Often word “discipline” is misused in this world when abuse is what is actually being given out.
 - When Jesus was crucified, He endured abuse from humans God the Father intended as the path that would lead to salvation for all who would believe in Him.
 - God can use everything we face to teach us about His grace:
 - If we survive the lesson, we will see that God has delivered us once again.
 - Assuming we have believed in Jesus, if we die we, will be in God’s presence.
 - Eventually, everyone who is in Christ will receive blessings from God, even though it may not look that way.
- Believers must not grow weary when learning painful lessons, or they will fail to grow closer to the Lord. Suggestions for staying spiritually awake when learning a lesson from God are:
 - Ask God for strength to get through the difficult time (But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”, Luke 21:36, ESV).
 - Ask God to show you in His Word what He wants you to learn clear to you (Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105, ESV)
 - Remember that God loves you, and that He will be with you even when He disciplines you. (For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord., Romans 8:38&39, ESV).

Why Does God Discipline His People?

⁷ 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? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ 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? ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.**

- God can take painful experiences and use them to teach His people lessons.
 - If you deny that God can use your painful experiences, then you are denying that God is your Heavenly Father and that He has unfailing love for you.
 - Our understanding of the discipline we received from our earthly fathers might be able to help us understand a little more about God’s discipline. On the other hand, the discipline we received may not have been a good example of discipline motivated by love. God’s discipline is always motivated by His love for us. When God disciplines us He isn’t giving up on us, He’s doing what is necessary to draw us closer to Himself.
- When we first receive discipline we experience only its pain, but in time we receive the **“peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”**
 - After effective discipline there should be a visible change in the character, called **“the fruit.”** These will be actions that are more righteous than before the discipline was applied.

- By the transformation of being made new in Jesus Christ, we become people who do what is righteous.
 - Sometimes God pulls the rug out from underneath us so that we will learn to trust only in Him. Sometimes He removes what we love more than Him so that we will learn to love Him most of all.
- The writer of Hebrews tells us about the process God uses to transform believers: the blood of Christ and believer's experiences. Both are used to produce the fruit of righteousness in the believer.
- Remember some of your most painful experiences teach you what you need to learn to become more like Jesus who suffered on the cross for every believer.

What Is the End-Goal of God's Discipline?

¹²Therefore **lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees**, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴Strive for peace with everyone, and for the **holiness without which no one will see the Lord**. ¹⁵See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears

- We are told to "**lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees**". Think of an athlete in training whose muscles ache to the point of cramping up. The coach tells the athlete to do some stretches, and to walk it off. Like an athlete in training believers need to keep going when it hurts.
- Holiness is a minimal requirement needed to see God. Believers need "**holiness without which no one will see the Lord.**"
- Esau is given as an example of what believers should not do. Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of food (Hebrews 12:17), but Moses traded the splendor of Pharaoh's palace for the disgrace of Christ (Hebrews 11:26). Believers must be careful that they do not reject the blessing Christ offers. If they do, like Esau, they may find the will have no opportunity to receive that blessing again. God may not give them another chance.

Esau was more concerned about satisfying his physical hunger than he was in the future. Most certainly Esau could have fixed his own food, but he had so little concern for the things of God that he threw God's blessing away and could never get it back.

Jesus provides a very different example. When men were killing Him, He forgave them (And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34, ESV). If we are to be like Jesus, it is our calling to forgive others in the same way that He did.

When we are suffering, we are often tempted to do what Esau did. But unlike Esau, we have a Savior who has shown us that even our own death cannot separate us from His love and His blessings. Holiness through Jesus Christ is our goal. He's done the work to make things possible. We need to trust Him to save us, and to see us through to the end. He will do it, but we need to keep trusting Him each step of the way.

We must avoid making short-sighted decisions, similar to the disastrous decision Esau made. Keep Jesus always in sight, with your spiritual eyes. Remember what Jesus did. Remember what He has promised.

All of the difficulties we face we can be understood as being sent by God to make us better and stronger in our faith. These painful lessons will make us more and more like Jesus.

Jesus assured His followers that He would be with them until the end (Matthew 28:20). As long as we stay close to Him, He will be with us.

Do Not Grow Weary (Hebrews 12:3–17)

Y T S S R E H T A R L X E U
E V S E Y D R U D B I F X X
P W E V T E I D D L G E R P
G O N O I T A T R O H X E F
W R I L L R I N E O T P P O
H G L N I A S X S D L S R R
E V O G T E E H S H Y R O G
N Y H C S H S P E A C E V O
D C C P O T I A S D E N E T
U P V R H N T E I C D N D T
R S E U D I S C I P L I N E
E M R C V A A I P H S S N N
R E H T A F H N D T R G H G
W E A R Y P C W R E G A R D
G S P D E T S I S E R D L I

ADDRESSES	BLOOD	CHASTISES
CONSIDER	DISCIPLINE	ENDURE
EXHORTATION	FAINTHEARTED	FATHER
FORGOTTEN	GROW	HOLINESS
HOSTILITY	LIGHTLY	LORD
LOVES	PEACE	POINT
RATHER	REGARD	REPROVED
RESISTED	SEEMS	SHEDDING
SINNERS	WEARY	WHEN