

The Book of Hebrews

מֵאַנֶשׁ מִנִּמְדָּא דֵּא מִנִּי תֵּאֲקֵלָא
צִמְאֵל לֵל נִתְאַתְצֵרְחָ דִּרְתִּסְנִי סְקֵ
אֵת פִּקְלָא תֵּסְנִי סִרְבָּאֵל
רֵדֵ תֵּאֲ סִדֵּ תֵּאֲקֵסְנֵ דִּמְמֵצֵ
תֵּאֲתִפְלֵשׁ נִ תֵּרְדִנְהֵרְפֵרֵ נִ רֵלֵדֵ
תֵּאֲגֵשׁ רֵלֵדֵ מִלֵּלֵצֵ סֵסֵ תֵּלֵשׁ



Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)**
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

Outline of Hebrews

- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)**
 - A. Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)
 - B. Warning: No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
 - C. A Call to Persevere (10:32-12:29)
 - 1. Don't Abandon Confidence but Persevere in Faith (10:32-39)
 - 2. The "Hall of Faith" – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
 - 3. Endure Discipline as Sons (12:4-11)
 - 4. Persevere in the Pursuit of Holiness (12:12-17)
 - D. You Have Come to Mount Zion Instead of Mount Sinai (12:18-24)
 - E. Final Warning: Don't Reject God's Word! (12:25-29)

Endure Discipline as Sons (12:4-11)

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.”
[Prov 3:11-12]

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.*

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

- In **his** endurance of the hostility of sinners, Christ had suffered **death**.
- So too did many of the heroes of the faith celebrated in chapter 11. Some of them are described as having been “**tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.**”
- The recipients of this letter had in **earlier** days endured **severe persecution** for their faith, but they had **not yet** been called upon to **die** for their faith.
- There might yet be **more** severe trials coming their way, but this was no time to be discouraged, considering that **others** had remained steadfast while enduring suffering **much worse** than theirs.
- **Instead**, they ought to realize that their present hardships were a token of their heavenly Father's **love** for them, and the means by which he was **training** them as a father would train his sons.

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.” [Prov 3:11-12]

- The readers’ dismay over their present suffering is **partly** due to the fact that they have “*forgotten the exhortation*” given to them in the Scriptures.
- The author clearly believes that the words recorded in Prov 3:11-12 should be an **encouragement** to the readers of **his** day.
- These are not merely words of antiquity directed to a former generation.
- What was written long ago is **also** addressed to contemporary readers.

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.” [Prov 3:11-12]*

- The Greek word translated “*exhortation*” (*paraklesis*), is part of a word group used throughout the book of Hebrews (cf. 13:22) that has a range of meanings that includes **stern exhortation** (admonition) as well as **warm encouragement** (comfort).
- **Here** the tone of the Proverbs citation and the author’s application of it seems to favor the idea of a heartening **encouragement**.

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.” [Prov 3:11-12]*

- Proverbs 3:11 seems to describe **different reactions** to the Lord’s discipline: on the one hand “*regard[ing it] lightly*” and on the other “*be[ing] weary*.”
 - The **first** response (“*regard lightly*”) is that of an **arrogant** son who **ignores** his father’s discipline
 - The **second** (“*be weary*”) is that of an **insecure** son who construes his father’s reproof as **personal rejection**.
- **Both** of these reactions demonstrate a forgetfulness of the truth of Proverbs 3:12: “*the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.*”

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.**” [Prov 3:11-12]

- Those who respond to the adversity that God brings into their life either by **challenging** God’s authority or by **doubting** his good purposes, have “**forgotten**” that such suffering is a token of:
 - Gods **love**
 - Their **legitimacy** as his **sons**.
- The situation envisioned in Proverbs is fatherly correction when a son **misbehaves** (cf. Prov 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14).
- The author of Hebrews **widens** the perspective on “**discipline**” to include afflictions suffered as the result of **faithfulness in resisting sin**.

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.**” [Prov 3:11-12]*

- Those who suffer for righteousness' sake, as well as those disciplined to wean them from sin, can be **assured** that the pain that they're enduring will **ultimately** serve their Father's loving purpose for them:
 - *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
(Mat 5:10-12)

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.**” [Prov 3:11-12]*

- The stresses and strains suffered by the original readers were ***not unusual*** but are a part of what happens in the life of ***everyone*** who belongs to the family of God.
- Discipline, in this context, is ***not*** a sign of God’s ***anger or punishment*** but of his ***favor and acceptance***.

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.*

- The readers “*have to endure*” because “*God is treating [them] as sons.*”
- In the Greco-Roman world it was not unusual for a nobleman to subject his **legitimate son and heir** to a **rigorous upbringing** under the severe tutelage of a guardian, since the future of the father’s name and estate would eventually rest with that son:
 - *The heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.* (Gal 4:1-2).

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.***

- Meanwhile, ***illegitimate*** children, since they did ***not*** bear their father's name nor stand to inherit his property, might be left ***without*** moral discipline.
- So, to be ***spared*** God's painful discipline is indicative ***not*** of his ***favor*** but of his ***indifference and rejection***.

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?*

- An analogy is drawn here between “*earthly fathers*” and the discipline they mete out, and **God’s** discipline of his children.
- “*Earthly fathers*” discipline their children, and their children **respect** and honor them.
- If that’s true of “*earthly fathers*”, **how much more** should this be true of **God’s** fatherly discipline?
- Often in the letter “*earthly*” is contrasted with “*heavenly*” (e.g. Heb 12:25-26), and such a comparison appears again here.
- The “*heavenly*,” of course, is **always superior** to the “*earthly*.”

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**?*

- From this, it follows, that the readers should **respect and honor** God for the discipline **he** wisely appoints for them.
- And it goes even **further** than this.
- They should “**be subject to**” such a father, recognizing that he disciplines them in wisdom and love.
- Indeed, God disciplines, not to destroy or slay them, but so that they will “**live**” (forever with him).
- Discipline does **not jeopardize** eternal life. In fact, it is the **pathway** by which eternal life will be realized.

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?*

- The author uses a somewhat strange phrase here: “*Father of spirits.*”
- Usually the word “*spirits*”, when used alone, refers to angels or heavenly beings, but in **this** context it probably refers to human beings.
- It’s difficult to know why the author chose to use the word “*spirits.*”
- Perhaps he does so because he contrasts the earthly and the heavenly.
- In any case, the author emphasizes God’s sovereignty and love in the lives of human beings.

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.*

- **This** verse (verse 10) **further explains** the **previous** verse (verse 9).
- Verse 9 tells us that “*earthly*” fathers who discipline are “*respected*” by their children.
- But here in verse 10 it tells that the “*earthly*” father’s discipline is of **limited benefit**:
 - Parents train their children “*as it seemed best to them*” and therefore their discipline is **imperfect and flawed**.
 - Sometimes parents make **mistakes** in the discipline of their children, even if they have the best of intentions.
 - The discipline of parents is also limited from **another** perspective: It is “*for a short time*” and restricted to the few days in which parents are **in charge** of their children.

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.***

- **God's** discipline, on the other hand, does not suffer from imperfect knowledge.
- He **always** knows what his children need, and therefore his discipline is always "*for our good.*"
- The result of God's discipline is that "*we may share [God's] holiness*".
- God trains believers so they become more righteous.
- Believers, therefore, should "*be subject to*" to God's discipline (as it says in verse 9) and endure it, since it is "*for our good.*"

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.*

- The author acknowledges here that “*discipline seems painful rather than pleasant*”.
- But in the long run, discipline yields a harvest that makes the “*painful*” training worthwhile.
- The fruit produced by discipline, the author tells us, is “*the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*”
- “*Righteousness*” is another way of describing “*holiness*” (mentioned in verse 10).

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.*

- What is emphasized here is that such “*righteousness*” is “*peaceful*”, that is to say, it is pleasing and satisfying.
- The contrast between **present pain** and **future benefits** brings to mind what was said about Moses in Heb 11:24-26.
- He rejected the pleasure he could have enjoyed as Pharoah's daughter in the **present** and instead chose to suffer with the people of God in order to obtain a **future** reward.

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- God disciplines us by providentially bringing ***difficult and painful experiences*** into our lives.
- Sometimes God the difficult and painful experiences that God uses to discipline us are a ***direct result*** of our rebellious behavior – but sometimes not.
- Because of this, we can't always know ***why*** God has providentially brought difficulties into our lives.
- The comfort we have from ***this*** passage is that regardless of ***why*** God has brought pain and difficulty into our lives, his design is always to ***sanctify*** us, and so we should ***always*** receive them with thanksgiving.
- Obviously, this is easier said than done!
- Can you think of an experience that you'd be willing to share with the class, where God brought pain and difficulty into your life that you believe caused you to progress in your sanctification?

*Class Discussion Time

- Our author compares the discipline that God brings into the lives of his people with the discipline given by “*earthly*” parents to their children.
- We live in an society where parental discipline seems to have fallen out of favor in many quarters.
- So I thought it might be good for us to reflect briefly on some of the principles that the author references concerning parental discipline.

*Class Discussion Time

- 7^b *For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*
 - The assumption here is that it's a **given** that a father will discipline his children. To be a good father, you **must** properly discipline your children.
- 8 *If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*
 - A father who fails to properly discipline his children is treating them as though they are illegitimate children.
- 9 *...we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.*
 - A father who **does** properly discipline his children is worthy of being respected by them and normally **will** be respected by them – especially when they grow up and perhaps have children of their own.

*Class Discussion Time

- ¹⁰ *For [our earthly fathers] disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them.*
 - We only have a **short time** in which to raise our kids, make the best of it!
 - No parent is perfect. But our parents, in **most** cases, disciplined us in the way they thought best. As such, we should appreciate their efforts and not be overly critical.
- 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.*
 - In order for discipline to be administered properly, it **must** be **painful**. Discipline that is not painful, will be largely ineffective.
 - Nobody – neither the parent nor the child – enjoys the pain caused by discipline. But, in the long run, the **benefits** of properly administered discipline **far outweigh** the **pain** that discipline causes for both the parent and the child.