

Sermon on Hebrews 12:3–11

Theme: Enduring Hardship with Your Eyes Fixed on Jesus

Opening Illustration

Herb Brooks and the 1980 U.S. Olympic team.

I. Examine the Hardship Faced by Jesus (Heb. 12:3–6)

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.”

- His stamina should inspire you (v. 3)
- His toughness should challenge you (v. 4)
- His confidence should motivate you (vv. 5–6)

Illustration

The author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was imprisoned for nearly 12 years and testifies that God used this suffering to increase his fruitfulness and effectiveness.

Application

When you face hardship, don’t compare your suffering to others — compare it to Christ. Remember: the One who endured the cross walks with you.

II. Evaluate the Hardship You Are Facing (Heb. 12:7a)

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure.

- Instructive discipline (Jesus and Job)
- Preventative discipline (Paul’s thorn in the flesh)
- Corrective discipline (David’s sin with Bathsheba)

Illustration

William Cowper, the English poet and hymn-writer, endured a life of deep personal suffering. However, the suffering produced deep personal reflection and led to valuable insights that have helped many.

Application

Ask yourself — is God using this trial to teach me, protect me, or correct me? Instead of resenting discipline, embrace it as evidence that you are His child.

III. Embrace the Process of Becoming More Like Jesus (Heb. 12:7b–11)

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.

- Discipline confirms your identity (vv. 7–9)
- Discipline enhances your holiness (v. 10)
- Discipline increases your fruitfulness (v. 11)

Illustration

A vineyard owner prunes his vines every season. To the untrained eye, it looks harsh — cutting branches away. But pruning allows the vine to produce richer, fuller grapes. Likewise, God’s discipline feels painful, but it produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Application

Instead of asking, “Why me?” ask, “What is God producing in me through this?” Trust that His pruning will lead to holiness and fruitfulness.

Conclusion

Closing Illustration

The South Alabama Men’s basketball team endured years of difficult seasons and challenging practices only to lead to an emotional and moving regular season championship.

Application Questions

1. When hardships come, do you see them as evidence of God’s love or as punishment?
2. Which type of discipline (instructive, preventative, corrective) might God be using in your life right now?
3. How can you shift your perspective to see present pain as preparation for future fruitfulness?
4. What practical steps can you take this week to endure with your eyes fixed on Jesus?