

## Run With Endurance Part 4

Hebrews 12:7

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It is our joy to turn back to Hebrews chapter 12, if you would turn there with me this morning, Hebrews chapter 12 as we continue our way through this wonderful letter yet again. And as you turn there, I want you to think with me for a moment of a time in your life in which you achieved a great goal. I mean a goal that really mattered to you. It could be a matter of any kind an academic goal, a health goal, a financial goal, spiritual goal, whatever it may be. But a goal that you really had to work for, that you had to try for. Think of that in your mind and once you have it, consider this question: What did you use for personal motivation to help you reach that goal? in other words, when it became difficult, when you started to feel the strain that went with striving for that goal, whether it was a strain on your time or your body or a pocketbook, whatever it was, what did you draw upon for motivation to keep going?

Anyone can set goals. That's the easy part. But only those who have an underlying motivation that's powerful enough will make it across the finish line achieve that goal. It means if you really want to achieve something you have to start by asking: Why do you want to do this? What is the end goal? What do you hope to get out of it? If you don't start with the right kind of motivation you're never going to reach that goal. And the more difficult the goal is the more essential it is to have a motivation. That is something of lasting value. The higher the goal, the more valuable the motivation must be. Now I want you to think about that in conjunction with what we've been studying in the book of Hebrews. What is the great goal that the author has been encouraging us to pursue? He's admonished us over and over again to cultivate an enduring faith in this superior Christ. He keeps telling us to hold on, to keep running. Don't stop keep going no matter what providential trials come our way.

And so if enduring faith is the goal then what's the proper motivation for reaching that goal? In our passage this morning the author is going to reveal that one of the essential motivations for enduring in faith as a Christian is in fact the great gift of the Fatherly discipline of the Lord, the discipline of God in the life of his children. But before we get there, let me just remind you where we've been. The theme of the letter of course is the superiority of Christ. We have seen this proven to us time and time again as you see there on the screen that Christ is better than every aspect of the Old Covenant, every person in the Old Covenant. Then halfway through chapter 10 we move from proving that truth to applying that truth and essentially it's one verse after another calling us to live with unwavering faith in this superior Christ. Remember in the opening verses of chapter 12 we saw the ultimate application of the Hall of Faith, those famous verses in chapter 11 read with me again

Hebrews 12:1-2 he says *"Therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us 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, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and*

*perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

The primary application of chapter 11 was **Run Faith's Race With Endurance**. That brought us to verses 3 to 6 Let me read those again:

*“for consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons ‘MY SON DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.’”*

So this is the theme that we have been unpacking together from these verses: we are to **Cultivate endurance by considering Christ, battling sin and embracing God's Fatherly Discipline**. Now today and for the next few weeks we're going to be in that last section, embracing God's Fatherly discipline. It is one of the ways that we cultivate endurance in the faith.

Remember in verse 3 we had this command “consider Christ's enduring faith” and then we were given two reminders: reminder number one in verse 4 “Battle Sin unto Death and then reminder number two, which we've just begun to unpack **Embrace God's Fatherly Discipline** in verses 5 through 11.

Now this is a longer section, the second reminder, and he opened it remember last time in verses 5 and 6 with a quote from the Old Testament, a quote from the Septuagint version of Proverbs 3 verses 11 to 12. And what we have in this section of Proverbs 3 are two Incorrect responses to the discipline of the Lord Remember, he said the first incorrect response is to **treat God's discipline lightly**, that is to treat it flippantly, to give it little consideration. Secondly, the second incorrect response to the discipline of the Lord was **to faint at his reproof**, that is a woe is me mentality or a throw in the towel, I quit, sort of fainting under the reproof of the Lord.

And remember the reason that these are incorrect responses to God's discipline he said is because God's discipline is actually an expression of His love for his children. The discipline of the Lord is not a thing to be rejected or pushed aside. It is an aspect of his special love that He is set on his children. Now finally remember the definition that we're using for the word discipline.

This is the definition of the Greek word That's represented here. It is “the act of providing guidance for responsible living upbringing training Instruction or in our literature (the scriptures) as it is attained by discipline and correction.”

So this definition reminds us that we're not to think of God's discipline too narrowly. This word can be used in a variety of ways depending on the context in which it's used and what I'm going to argue this morning is that we see biblically every aspect of this definition at different times in the discipline of the Lord. Now with that in mind, we've made our way to

verse 7. This is where we will land today. Read with me the first half of verse 7 where the author says

*"it is for discipline that you endure,"* it is for discipline that you endure.

So we had a command in verse 3 and then two reminders. Now we'll call this the instruction, and here is the instruction: **God's Discipline Motivates Endurance.** God's discipline motivates endurance. It is for discipline that you endure. Remember the primary application of the fact that Christ is superior overall is that we should endure in our faith in this superior Christ. But just as it's helpful to have a specific motivation when trying to reach a temporal goal in life, how much more is it necessary to have the right motivation when in trying to attain such a goal as this, the spiritual goal of persevering in the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Notice the wording here in this first half of verse 7, the word "for." It is for discipline, or on account of discipline, that you endure Don't forget the context here.

We have these Jewish Christians receiving this letter. They're walking through perilous times. Some of them have had their homes and their possessions taken from them unlawfully because of their faith. Others have been thrown into prison because of their faith. They are really going through it when it comes to trials in life based on persecution, in this case and they rightly, as a normal person would, are struggling, they're struggling and he's calling them to persevere in the faith. And this reminds us of one of our most common questions that we're tempted to ask when we go through difficult times. In our humanness we want to know what is the point of all this? God, why have you ordained this particular circumstance for my life of all the circumstances that you could have ordained for me? And the answer comes to us here in the opening words of verse 7: It is for discipline that you endure, for discipline. This is similar to the instruction that James gives to us and those famous verses in James 1:2-3 *"Considered all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces (what?) endurance."*

The testing of your faith produces endurance, the joy in the midst of a trial. It's not the trial itself it's what God's doing through the trial, the testing of our faith produces an enduring faith. Similarly, the author of Hebrews says the discipline of the Lord motivates this enduring faith that God is cultivating in us

What does that mean exactly? Let's be honest. When you're in the middle of a trial, and I don't mean a paper cut kind of trial, I mean cut to the heart kind of trial when all the walls of your life seem to be closing in around you, words like these can seem in our humanness to be somewhat cold and insensitive. As I studied for this this week. I was struck by many instances in the life of Job just in my regular reading through Scripture and I was reminded that Job gives a wonderful description of what it's like what it feels like when you're in this kind of trial, a dark, dark, trial.

Job describes it this way in Job 3:20-21

*"Why is light given to him who suffers (in this case light meaning life), Why is life given to him who suffers and life to the bitter of soul, Who long for death, but there is none, And dig for it more than for hidden treasures, Who rejoice greatly, and exult when they find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in? For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, And my cries pour out like water. For what I fear*

*comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. I'm not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I'm not at rest but turmoil comes."*

Now notice in these verses Job is not suicidal in the sense that he wants to take his own life, but he is wishing for death that God would just bring him home. Because the pain is so difficult. There is there's no way of escape. Job describes later he can't even sleep at night sleep is not a relief. And when it does get dark, he longs for the light of day, he has nowhere to run. Have you ever felt that way in a trial, have you ever had that kind of trial? If you live long enough in the Lord, you will have difficulties, painful dark days that God providentially pushes you through to walk through in life.

In those moments, we can wrongly think that the author of Hebrews here is out of touch. He just doesn't get it. These words are not comforting. But when we think that way what it reveals is not that God is actually callous and uncaring. What it reveals is our own lack of understanding of the true eternal benefits of God's loving discipline. God's discipline is in fact one of the greatest gifts that He gives to us as His children as he providentially brings us through trials He arranges for our life. But to understand this we have to educate ourselves more thoroughly in the Scriptures as to what the Bible says about this concept of the discipline of the Lord. And so I want to warn you up front: We're not going to make it past the first half of verse 7 in our study this morning.

The reason is because last week I told you when we've talked about this issue of God's discipline it brings up questions we have about how does this work and why is this happening? Are you saying this, are you saying that? And as I studied this week I became convinced that we need to clear the cobwebs of some of our questions about the discipline of the Lord by just studying the Scriptures more holistically on this issue and then come back next week to this passage as we unpack the rest of these verses because he means for it to be encouraging. But when we have these questions about discipline in our mind, sometimes we don't hear the encouragement as we should.

So what I want us to do this morning is based on this first half of verse 7 *"It is for discipline that you endure"* to look at four purposes in Scripture for divine discipline. Four purposes, or we might say categories, of discipline.

And the first purpose will mention is **Correction**. The first purpose of divine discipline is correction. Let's begin by understanding the aspect of God's discipline that most find it hard to wrap their minds around. And that is when discipline comes specifically to correct a sinning believer. The Bible is clear that God does lovingly discipline His children for the purpose of revealing sin and calling us to repentance. And this form of discipline can come in a Christian's life I would say as the primary or the secondary purpose of a trial that God has brought into their life providentially. But the most difficult for us to understand at times is when discipline comes in the life of a Christian for this primary purpose of correction. In those instances the trial that God brings into your life directly corresponds to a pattern of sin that He's seeking to bring out and draw you to repentance over. So let's look at some examples of this in Scripture, one Old Testament example, one New Testament example. First of all, the famous example of David. David in 2nd Samuel chapter 11, you remember the sad story he gives into the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. She becomes pregnant, in

order to cover his tracks he ultimately murders her husband and for a time he's unrepentant of that sin. He's not turning back to the Lord, he's not confessing his sin until God sends the prophet Nathan, who confronts him for his sin and then this is what we see here in 2nd Samuel 12:13-14:

*"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. <sup>14</sup> However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.'"*

Now that sad consequence was just one of many consequences that are outlined that would come in the life of David. But I read those verses in way of summary. This is God bringing a consequence into David's life specifically because of a hard-hearted pattern of sin.

What about the New Testament? One of the most well-known examples of the discipline of the Lord specifically for correction over sin comes to the church at Corinth. I want to read a passage that I read every time we take communion together, but stop to explain some things we normally don't have time to fully explain. This is 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. Speaking of the Lord's table,

*"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason (listen to this) many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep. (that is, have died. Verse 31), But if we judge ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world."*

So the Corinthian church was in a pattern of blatant sin. They were flagrantly and unashamedly abusing the Lord's table and because of that God brought His discipline upon them in the form of sickness, even to the point of death in some cases. Now you may have caught the fact that Paul uses the word judgment to describe this discipline and if you were here last week, you may recall that I made the explicit point that God does not judge believers. And what I mean is this, if you read the way that he explains what he means by judgment he gets to the point that I was making last week, verse 32, *"But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world."*

This is the exact point I was making last week when I was using the term judgment, I meant in the final sense. There's now no condemnation for those who are in Christ was the point I was making, you might say in this temporal sense of judgment, in the sense of discipline: yes, God disciplines His children. But for what purpose? That they will not be condemned, that He will hold them fast and cause them to persevere in the faith.

So you might ask what exactly were the Corinthians doing that was so bad that God brought this form of discipline upon them. Well, he goes on to describe that earlier in that passage in verses 20-22. He says *"therefore when you meet together, it's not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the*

*church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you."*

Just quickly it seems that what's happening here is that the wealthier members of the church in Corinth are sinning against the poor members in the congregation. They were coming together for the Lord's table supposedly but what was actually happening is the rich people who could afford it were eating to the point of excess and drinking to the point of excess, even drunkenness, while some of the poor people in the church who couldn't afford it left hungry, not having eaten anything at all. And Paul's condemning them for this thing. You're making a mockery of the Lord's Table. What are you doing causing disunity in the church in this way? So the head of the church, Christ, brings discipline upon these believers to bring them to repentance. All of that to say it is true that God will bring discipline in the form of correction for sin in the lives of His people to reveal their sin and to bring them to repentance.

But let's take a moment and compare that loving discipline of the Lord to correct His children to keep them from further sin to what happens in the lives of unbelievers as they continually harden their hearts further and further against the Lord. We see a description of this in Romans chapter 1. I'm going to read Romans 1:18-19 and then skip down to verse 24. Romans 1:18 says *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them."*

So these are unbelievers hardening their heart. The truth of God is obvious through what He has made and yet they suppress that truth. They refuse to submit to it. They refuse to repent and so God brings His wrath upon them. What does that look like? Verse 24, it looks like this:

*"therefore God gave them over in the in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them ."*

What it looks like is they harden their hearts against the Lord. But instead of disciplining them to bring them back to himself as He does His children, He simply gives them what they want and allows them to pursue it. Which takes them only further and further down that road of sinful destruction.

So, what warrants this kind of discipline in the life of a Christian? What we've seen here is that what warrants such discipline is when a true believer temporarily hardens their heart in unrepentance towards God, in a pattern of sin. We need to acknowledge that all Christians sin every day. I sin every day, you sin every day. But that is not the same as what's being described here. When God brings this kind of discipline into the life of a Christian for the primary purpose of correction it's in response to a hardness of heart and a particular pattern of sin that they refuse to turn away from.

Think of the examples we looked at, David and the Corinthians. Now what about the rest of the sins? Because we sin every day, does God just not care about those sins? Is He not disciplined about us for those sins? Well, this is why I mentioned that this kind of correction may be a secondary purpose in any trial that we go through. What I mean here is this it is

unbiblical to say that every trial we face is for the primary purpose of God correcting a specific sin in our life. The Bible clearly teaches that is false and I'll look at that in just a moment. God actually condemns that. But it is biblical to say that every trial that God brings into our life stretches us. You know it if you've walked through a trial. Your flesh goes to war and you're having to battle your flesh. And so there are times in that trial that you struggle with sin and God graciously brings conviction, God graciously shows you that sin and helps you to grow so in that secondary sense, yes, even in those kinds of trials, God corrects our daily sin, so to speak, but that is different than this primary purpose of discipline being correction. This comes as a response to hardness of heart and a pattern of sin.

Now I do want to take a moment and answer this question. How do we know biblically that it's false to say that every trial in life God is punishing you directly for a pattern of sin? Well, this is unfortunately a common teaching that's out there in evangelicalism. There are even some who go as far as to say that if you have this kind of sickness it corresponds exactly to this kind of sin. This is foolishness.

The scriptures don't teach this. How do we know that? Well, we need to look no further than the example again of Job and his friends. Remember in the beginning of Job chapter 1 verse 8, God makes it very clear what His perception of Job is. Verse 8 *"The LORD said to Satan have you considered my servant Job? (Now here's God's assessment of Job). For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."*

So clearly God does not see an ongoing pattern of hard-hearted sin in the life of Job, does He? No, He says this is a godly man. This is a man who fears me. But Job's friends have a wrong understanding of theology. They have what we would call retribution theology, which means every sickness or difficulty or trial comes as a direct result of God's retribution. It's an example of God's punishment. And Job's friends say this to him over and over again.

Essentially, they're saying there's got to be some sin in your life. That's the only explanation for why this has happened to you, so just fess up. Basically, that's my East Texas way of saying it. This is the way it says it in Scripture:

Job 4:1 *then Eliaphaz the Timonite answered, (jumping down to verse 7, this is what he says) Remember now, whoever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger they come to an end ."*

What is he saying? He's saying now just think about it logically. It's those who do evil that receive these kinds of trials, Job, that you are receiving and so therefore this has to be a result of your sin. But here's the clearest passage that puts this to bed because at the end of Job we have God's assessment of these friends and their advice. Job 42 verse 7 *"it came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliaphaz the Timonite, My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends (Why?) because you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has."*

You were wrong in your assessment and you spoke wrongly of My character and My dealings with My people. So this proves that while God does at times use discipline for the

primary purpose of correction it is theologically inaccurate to assume that that is always true in every case of a trial or sickness that a believer endures.

Our Lord taught this to his disciples in John 9. You remember the man born blind? John 9:1-3

*"As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked him, Rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind. (So they're coming from the same perspective. Obviously, he's blind so someone must have sinned to cause this. Jesus says verse 3): Jesus answered, It was neither that this man sinned nor his parents, but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

So in summary one of the purposes for which God disciplines His children but not universally in every case is this corrective form of discipline. But here's the big question that we have as Christians. How do you know if the trial you're currently experiencing is this kind of corrective discipline? Well ask yourself, honestly, are you living in a hard-hearted pattern of unrepentant sin? Is the answer yes, have you actually hardened your heart against the Lord? Is there something you're holding on to, you know, it's sin. You're convicted of it and you push that away and say no, I'm going to do this anyway. You see the truth is, if you look in your heart for sin, you're going to find it all of us have sin. This is different. This is that hard-hearted disposition towards the Lord of 'I'm going to do this and I'm not going to give in.'

Again, the two examples, David adultery and murder. And Psalm 32 he says I was silent about my sin and when I was silent It was like my body was wasting away as I was under the heavy hand of the Lord.

In Corinth, this was not a single sin of the heart. This was bold-faced favoritism, gluttony, drunkenness, factious behavior and so God intervened with this kind of discipline. So if you're concerned this morning that your trial perhaps in your life is actually this kind of corrective discipline then, one, survey your life, and, here's the answer, if you find that you are in fact living in rebellion and there is a pattern of sin in your life. What do you do? You repent. That's the whole point. That's the whole point of the discipline, to draw you to repentance that you might be restored and your fellowship with the Father and your fellowship with the body. That's what church discipline is to do. What is the point of it? To draw a person to repent and be restored. And this is what God does through this kind of discipline.

This is the good news. Don't despair, don't faint under the discipline. Don't throw in the towel under the discipline, repent. Repent and return to the Lord. In fact, you may be sitting here this morning and you're realizing it's not just a single instance of a hardness of heart but your life is characterized by a hardness of heart towards God. And If you're honest with yourself and you see in your life nothing but a hardness of heart towards the Lord It may very well be then that you're not in Christ at all. So what do you do? Repent, and put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the good news of the gospel. This is the good news for the whole world that God has sent His son to live in our place and die as a sacrifice on the cross and to be risen again from the dead and for all who will repent and believe there is forgiveness of sins and everlasting life and adoption into His family of sons and daughters. So if you're here this morning and you're under the weight of conviction from the Lord



through what we've looked at in the scripture the answer is repent. Humble yourself and Repent. This is how we respond to the discipline of the Lord. It's how we respond if you're not in Christ, repent and believe the gospel.

But there are three other purposes that we need to look at in scripture for this fatherly discipline. I wanted to begin with correction because I think it's the most misunderstood. It's the one we have the most difficulty with. But there are other reasons for the discipline of the Lord.

Purpose number two we'll call **Prevention**, not just correction but prevention. The Bible actually teaches that God is so graciously committed to our sanctification and our preservation that at times He brings trials into our lives to keep us from sin that would lead us astray if the trial wasn't there. You say well, where do you see that in the scriptures? Well, there are many places, but one of the most famous is in 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 verses 7-10. Listen carefully to the way that Paul says this. He says *"because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a Messenger of Satan to torment me"*

Why? To keep me from exalting myself. He says it twice. The reason for the thorn was to keep him from exalting himself. Not that he already had taken on a lofty view of himself and was exalting himself but to keep him from becoming conceited and having a high view of himself because God had given him the privilege of such great revelations that others had not had. *"Concerning this (verse 8) I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me (that is the thorn). And he said to me my grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness."*

Notice the word "because" in verse 7, the phrase "for this reason." Very clearly this is a moment of prevention of God bringing a trial into Paul's life to keep him from spiritual disaster. This is what God does. The truth is we have no idea all that God keeps us from. We can't even fathom the things that God has kept us from by His gracious prevention. I want you to think about this more deeply with me and how it's tied to the character of God.

Understand that this reminds us of God's omniscience. You remember omniscience that is God is all-knowing. I think we would say that of course, we know that God is all-knowing but let's think about it for a moment. That means that God not only knows what's going to happen in the future because He ordained it. He also knows what would have happened in any infinite number of other scenarios. If He had allowed this, He knows this would have happened. If He'd allowed this, He knows that this would have happened.

For example, He knows what the outcome would have been in your life if you had gotten this job instead of that job, or married this person instead of that person, or lived in this house instead of that house. He knows all of those things. But God not only knows all things God is also omnipotent, that is all-powerful, which means He has the power to bring about whichever one of those scenarios He sovereignly chooses to bring about. But add to that the fact that God is also perfect in goodness, which means He can never do anything that is not perfectly good. Unlike us, God always makes the right decision every single time.

He never fails to do that. So put all of that together and think about that for a moment. What that means when we take God's omniscience and His omnipotence and His goodness and we put all of that together. It means that the plan that we are living, the plan for the ages that God has ordained is the best possible plan of all plans. You understand that? It's the best possible plan of all plans. It has to be because of His nature that must be true.

So think about this in terms of your own personal life. Now we understand that God has ordained every aspect of our life and we can start to draw some conclusions. When God chooses, for example, not to answer your prayer, or he chooses to take your life in a direction that you never would have chosen for yourself, you need to understand that He is not vindictively withholding something good from you. He is doing the best possible good to you He can do because that's all He ever does.

When you find yourself disappointed, angry, or confused over God's plan for your life do you ever stop and consider just for a moment that He may be sovereignly keeping you from something that would be spiritually detrimental for you?

You know, this aspect of God's prevention will change the way we pray. It will cause us to pray prayers like this "God, please only give me this thing that I'm asking for if it is truly for my spiritual good in your glory. God I'm praying for this thing because the best I can see it would be something good for my life, but I trust that only you really know that and if this would be something that if you gave it to me it would become an idol in my life or cause me to grow cold in my heart towards you, please God keep it far from me. Do not give it to me unless it will promote your glory and my spiritual good." This is how we ought to pray when we think about God's preventative discipline. He cares enough for his people to keep us from things that would ultimately destroy us.

There's another aspect of God's Fatherly discipline. Purpose number three: **Instruction**. Instruction. Correction. Prevention. Instruction. One of the best gifts that God gives us as His people through discipline is that of instruction. He teaches us through the trials and difficulties of life. This can be seen all over the scriptures, but there was one particular passage it really jumped out at me this week that highlights this truth to the people of Israel.

in Deuteronomy chapter 8, remember in the book of Deuteronomy the people now are about to enter into the promised land and Moses is preparing them for that entrance. This is now the new generation, the old generation having died off, and Moses is explaining to them the heart of God behind all the trials that He put them through as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

This is Deuteronomy 8 verses 1-6:

*"All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers. <sup>2</sup> You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, (listen) that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your*

*fathers know, that He might (listen) make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. <sup>4</sup> Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. <sup>6</sup> Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him."*

Moses tells the people that God was testing you and humbling you through all of the trials that He put you through in the wilderness so that He might teach you the truth that you might be instructed. And what was the primary instruction? Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Father, that is, God's people are to find their true source of life and sustenance in the Word of God. We do not obey our fleshly lusts and desires. But even when they're screaming at us, even the desire to eat, we don't listen to that desire, we listen to the Word of God and we obey God even in the face of those fleshly desires.

This is why Jesus would quote this very passage when he's tempted by Satan after 40 days of not eating. He did what the Israelites failed to do. Satan tempted Him with an opportunity to eat. But it was a sinful means of gaining that bread and so He responded even though His stomach had to be screaming at Him after 40 days of not eating. He said man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the Father. I won't sin against the Father to feed my stomach. Which, as a side note, puts a new lens on being hungry. That, if you don't know what that is, it's justifying anger because we're hungry. Our fleshly appetite never justifies sin against our God. But do you see the point, the point that Moses is making is that God used those difficulties to teach you, to instruct you, about Himself and about how to obey God in the face of difficulty.

Paul says the same thing. Listen to this famous passage, Philippians 4:11-13. He says *"not that I speak from want for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."* Now, how did he learn that? Because God put him through times of deprivation and times of prosperity. He had them both and he learned in every circumstance how to be content with what God had given him. But he had to learn it through the discipline of the Lord in this instructive sense of teaching him through difficulties.

J.I. Packer is certainly right when he says these words.

*"This is the ultimate reason, from our standpoint, why God fills our lives with troubles and perplexities of one sort or another--it is to ensure that we shall learn to hold him fast...God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing so that we may learn thankfully to lean on him. Therefore, He takes steps to drive us out of self-confidence to trust in himself."*

Christian, I think we can say that in every trial God brings in our life, whatever other purposes He may have, instruction is always one of the purposes of the discipline of the Lord. And it's because in the midst of a trial we learn far more about God than we do in times of comfort and peace. You know this from your own life. It's like we never learn. We are always trying to get to that comfort in that peace and that rest. But the truth is we don't learn much there. We learn about God in the valley. And it's because in trials the Word of

God ceases to be theoretical and it becomes real. It's the difference, if you think like a military academy, like West Point. It's one thing to talk in a classroom about strategies of war. It's an entirely different thing to be dropped off on the front lines. And that's what happens in a trial. God puts us on the front line, so to speak, and says now use the things I've taught you. Trust Me to be who I've said I am. This is how it works. It's as if He's saying you've heard these things of me, now let me show them to you. You've heard I'm a God of mercy and grace and love and care. Now I will show you that I am those things.

So Christian, don't miss the opportunity to learn the glorious lessons about God and His word that He's seeking to teach you through your trial. If you give in to fainting or if you take the trial lightly, you will not learn things that He intends for you to learn.

Now there's one final purpose I want to mention of discipline this morning most of the commentators, I admit, focused on those first three purposes of discipline that I gave you. But as I studied this concept there was a fourth that just kept jumping off the pages of Scripture and its purpose number four, we'll call it **Demonstration**, the purpose of demonstration. And this is a purpose that's often overlooked, but it's sitting right there in the Scriptures. And the truth is, through trials, God often brings glory to His name and assurance to His people as He shows through that trial what He has made this child of God to be. He shows the reality of their true salvation through that trial and His own glory.

We saw this in John 9. I chose not to bring it out at the time because I wanted to bring it out now but in John 9 verse 3, did you notice what it said at the end of that verse? This is about the man born blind. *"Jesus answered. 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents, but (why was it?) it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'"* A demonstration of the glory of God and the grace of God and the power of God. Think about it. God ordained that this man would be blind for 40 years so that on this day in history He could heal him and through that miracle in this man's case not only heal him physically but this man comes to know Jesus Christ as Lord and he proclaims that even in front of the religious leaders later in that passage. It's a demonstration of the glory and the grace of God and a demonstration ultimately of this man's faith, newfound faith in Christ. After all, we are to be lights in the world as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:16 *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they see your good works. (and what will be the result) and glorify your Father."* As He demonstrates through us the work that He's done, the reality of the power of the gospel to save sinners and transform sinners. It's the only explanation for why we would ever obey God because of the work that He's done in us and it demonstrates the glory of God.

It's a demonstration of our God. It's a demonstration of our assurance of our faith because we know we would never persevere if it wasn't for the fact that God had made us His own. We see this as well, of course in the life of Job. This jumped out to me and reading Job again this week Job chapter 1 verse 8, *"The Lord said to Satan 'have you considered My servant Job? For there's no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.' Then Satan answered the LORD, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every side? You've blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put*

*forth your hand now and touch all that he has and he will surely curse you to your face.’ Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.’ So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.”*

Notice that God didn't point Job out to Satan with evil intention in mind. God is rejoicing over this child of His. Have you seen him in all you're walking around? This true man of God who truly fears me who loves me. It's Satan who assumes false motives. It's Satan who accuses Job of having evil reasons in his heart for loving God. And so God says well, let me show you. He demonstrates that even if all is ripped away from Job, he will not turn from Me. He truly loves Me. Look at what I've done in Job.

We see Job 1:22 *“through all of this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.”* He comes back again and Job 2:3- 6, the same thing happens. He brings up this the faithfulness of Job. Satan again accuses Job of being false. And yet again, even when his own wife tempts him, Job doesn't give in. Job 2 9-10 *“Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die?’ But he said to her ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*

And so we see in the life of Job, we see in the life of the man born blind, this demonstration of the glory of God, this demonstration of the work that He does in the lives of His people. And it gives glory to the Father. So what we need to see this morning is that the discipline of God is a great gift. It's a privilege. Through His loving Fatherly discipline, we are corrected. We are prevented. We are instructed. And his glory is demonstrated. And it's because of this that the author says “it is for discipline that you endure,” It's for discipline. For the good benefits of the discipline of the father.

That brings us to one quick final question that many people have when it comes to this concept. Is every trial in life an expression of God's discipline? And I would say, as long as we are understanding the word discipline in this multifaceted sense, the answer is yes. God is always at work in us disciplining us in these different ways. To be clear, again, every trial is not a direct punishment for sin. But God is always at work in His people doing these things.

And so the conclusion this morning is to **Evaluate Your Motivation For Endurance.** Personally evaluate your motivation for endurance. When you are in the midst of a trial, how do you encourage yourself to continue in the faith? What kinds of thoughts do you think? What do you set your affection on and set your meditation on? I think there are a lot of lesser motivations that we often use to try to push ourselves to the end of a trial. I'm going to put three on the screen. Sometimes we are fixated on a particular desired outcome. We just dream of well, it's all going to be okay, because in the end I'm going to get this or I'm going to get that, and we use that outcome to sort of try to encourage us to hold on; or dreaming of life in the future. It won't always be this way. One day it's going to be different, if I could just get over this hill, over this hump, and everything's going to be fine. When that doesn't work, we turn to seeking comfort and temporal distractions. I just need to take on more entertainment, more things to sort of dull my thoughts and the pain until it all goes away. But I hope you see this morning Christian, none of those will do. It is for

discipline that you endure. if you really want to endure to the end and reap the benefits of the discipline of the Lord start asking yourself in the midst of trials things like this:

How is the Lord using this to reveal sin in my heart that I didn't know it was there, that I might turn from it and turn to Him?

What physical or spiritual dangers might He be preventing me from that I have no idea of?

What's He teaching me about Himself about myself about his word through this trial?

How is God seeking to demonstrate His glory and His goodness to me and His people through this difficulty in my life?

You see, when the gift of God's fatherly discipline is the motivation for our endurance, it changes our whole outlook, our whole perspective. Instead of just saying God get me out, get me out, we're saying God, change me God, do this work in me, bring glory to Your name through me and hold me fast.

And so Christian the proper way to think about the discipline of the Lord as it comes through the trials of life is best encapsulated here as we close in the words of Andrew Murray as he says it this way:

“In every trial, small or great: first and at once, recognize God's hand in it. Say at once: my father has allowed this to come; I welcome it from him. My first care is to glorify Him in it; He will make it a blessing. We may be sure of this. Let us by faith rejoice in it.”

Let's pray together. O Lord Jesus this is our prayer. What a privilege to open Your word and to look at these wonderful passages that show us Your love and Your care for Your own. Forgive us when we respond wrongly to Your discipline. When we treat it lightly or when we faint under Your hand. When You only mean it for good. To mold us more to the image of Christ. To encourage us, even in the faith, to strengthen us in the faith, that we might be a light to the world and a beacon of Your glory. God, we pray that You would continue to do Your work in us. Hold us fast come what may. I don't know the heart of every person here, but I know many are walking through difficult days, for some the most difficult days they've ever walked. God hold them fast. Save the lost. Open blind eyes to the truth. Use these difficulties for Your glory for the salvation and edification of your people. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.