

Run With Endurance Part 5

Hebrews 12:7-9

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Well, again, I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving with your family, and it's wonderful to be back together to open God's Word to Hebrews chapter 12. If you would, take your Bible, turn there with me, Hebrews chapter 12.

And as you're turning, I want you to consider how you would respond if you open the morning newspaper to read that this past Friday, four 15-year-old boys were caught spray-painting graffiti on a local elementary school. How would that strike you? And then now I want you to consider that after looking carefully at the photo included in that newspaper article, you happen to recognize that one of the four was your son. Another example, how would it make you feel if I told you that I was in the grocery store this past week, and there was a five-year-old boy running up and down the aisles, terrorizing people, knocking things off the shelves, screaming his head off? And how would it strike you differently if I told you that little boy was your son? Thirdly, how would you respond if you were sitting under an umbrella on a beach somewhere watching as a few teenagers played happily in the waves in front of you, and suddenly the lifeguard began to frantically blow his whistle because there was something dangerous in the water telling everyone to get out, but those teenagers ignored his whistle? Now what would you do if those teenagers were all your children? You see how it changes your perspective on a situation when the child involved is not just some random child, but it's the child that you love, the child that you've been given the responsibility to steward and to care for and to discipline.

Now what if I told you that there is a gracious and glorious God who created this universe and all it contains, including every person sitting here this morning? And what if I told you that if you are in Christ today, that that God calls you son or daughter? He sees you as His true adopted child. You see how special it is to be the object of His Fatherly affection? And if our affection and our commitment to our children is so great, how much more is the love and the commitment of our Heavenly Father to His children, to you and to me? In our passage this morning, that's exactly what we're going to see as we return to the book of Hebrews and how God specifically loves us through the means of His fatherly discipline and how His discipline is an expression of His care for us as His own. Hopefully you have the theme of Hebrews memorized at this point, The Superiority of Christ.

We've been looking at this now for some time. We've seen that He is superior over all things, every aspect of the old covenant. And now we've been applying the superiority of Christ and we've come specifically to chapter 12 and we have seen that the ultimate application of everything in chapter 11, the Hall Of Faith, is that we are to **Run Faith's Race With Endurance**.

It's a call to unwavering faith. Then in verses 3 to 6, we're introduced further to this theme of endurance. Read with me there, Hebrews 12:3-6.

"For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You've 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."

We've been unpacking this theme that will be our theme until we get through verse 11, **Cultivate endurance by considering Christ, battling sin, and embracing God's Fatherly discipline.** What we've seen in verses 3 to 6 is an opening command, **Consider Christ's Enduring Faith** in verse 3, and then two reminders. Reminder number one, **Battle Sin Unto Death** in verse 4, and now we've been unpacking the second reminder for a couple of weeks.

Reminder number two, **Embrace God's Fatherly Discipline**, verses 5 through 11. Remember, in verses 5 and 6, we saw this quote from Proverbs 3, verses 11 and 12, and this quote from Proverbs 3 brought up the topic of the discipline of the Lord, and specifically highlighting two incorrect responses that we're tempted to have to God's discipline. The first incorrect response is to **Treat God's Discipline Lightly**: to treat it flippantly, to give it little consideration.

The second incorrect response is to **Faint At His Reproof**, that is to take on a woe-is-me mentality or to just throw in the towel and say, I quit. And the reason that both of those responses are incorrect is because they fail to take into account that the discipline of the Lord actually is an expression of His great love for those whom He calls His children. It is only the privilege of God's adopted children.

Remember the definition of the word discipline that we've been working with. This is the definition of the Greek word that's used here. It is "the act of providing guidance for responsible living, upbringing, training, instruction, and in our literature, (the scriptures), chiefly as it is attained by discipline and correction."

This led us last week to look at verse 7, just the opening portion of verse 7 to better understand this topic of God's discipline. And there we saw this Key Instruction that **God's Discipline Motivates Endurance.**

Remember, this whole application is that we're to run this race of faith with endurance. And now we see that one of the motivating factors for running with endurance is the discipline of the Lord. And so last week we took a journey through the scriptures to look at four purposes of discipline, four purposes of God's discipline.

They are **correction, prevention, instruction, and demonstration.** These are the four primary things that God is accomplishing through the discipline that He brings into our lives. Correction, prevention, instruction, and demonstration.

Now if you missed that message last week, I encourage you to go back and listen to it because it really lays the foundation for the application that we'll be looking at beginning even today. But we're going to move on now in our study to the next half of verse 7 all the way down through verse 9. But this section runs through verse 11. So what we're going to do is read verses 7 through 11 for the sake of context and seeing the whole argument.

Hebrews 12 beginning in verse 7. *"It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time, as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful. Yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."*

Now, I want to take a moment and just give you the structure of this entire section so you can see where we're going. We've already had the instruction in the first half of verse 7. God's Discipline Motivates Endurance.

Now, the question is, how? In what way does the discipline of the Lord motivate us to endure in our faith? The answer to that question is going to come in the form of three encouragements. Encouragement number one is **God's Discipline Affirms Our Adoption**. So let's just read together the first encouragement which comes in the second half of verse 7 and verse 8. He begins, *"God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"*

He begins by plainly stating, God deals with you as with son. Apply it.

So he's just now getting to his application and explanation of why he chose that passage for us to consider. *"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 the first reason that this should motivate us to understand that God's discipline motivates our faith is because His discipline is proof that He's treating us as sons and daughters. He's treating us as His children. It's an affirmation of our adoption. Or in other words, it's assurance of our salvation.

One of the ways we know that we're in Christ is because He lovingly disciplines us. This is a great gift of God. It's a natural function of a loving father in his relationship with his children.

The fact that this is fatherly discipline that comes from a heart of love keeps us from those incorrect responses that were highlighted earlier. It keeps us from fainting. It keeps us from taking His reproof lightly.

And the reason is because we understand the very presence of the discipline of God in our lives is a gift because it affirms the reality that we belong to Him. That means the discipline of the Lord is not a sign of His rejection of us, but it is His acceptance of us, His love and His commitment to us. And when we think about the discipline of the Lord that way, instead of giving up and fainting, all of a sudden we think of joy and strength and motivation to run the race with greater diligence.

Next, the author goes on to explain just how right and natural and fitting it is for a father to discipline his son. Notice he says next in verse 7, *"For what son is there whom his father*

does not discipline?" To be a true son of a father is to be disciplined by the father. This is stated as a fact.

The author assumes that all will agree with this as a basic truth that fathers discipline their true children. Of course, in our culture, discipline has kind of fallen out of vogue, but the scriptures are crystal clear that it's not only our duty as parents to discipline our children, but it is an expression of our great love for them, our great care for them. Just think about the way the Proverbs speak of the discipline of children, and notice the connection between the love of the parent and the discipline that they give to their child.

Proverbs 13:24, *"He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently."* Proverbs 19:18, *"Discipline your son while there is hope and do not desire his death."* The meaning of that verse is not that the parent is so angry with their child that they're tempted to want their death. The idea is in love, disciplining your child keeps them from death because it keeps them from the path of foolishness which leads to their death.

Proverbs 23:13-14, *"Do not hold back discipline from the child. Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol."*

Again, the emphasis there, the loving discipline of the parent keeps the child ultimately from death and destruction. The reason is because the Proverbs are highlighting the way of the fool and the way of the wise. Constantly you see these words used back and forth. The way of foolishness leads to death and destruction. The way of wisdom leads to life.

And so constantly there is this call to heed wisdom, to choose life. And if you walk in the way of the fool, it will be to your own demise. So what we see here is that loving discipline and a loving home is designed to lead a child to wisdom and to keep them from foolishness. And it is their love that compels them to do this.

Now if that's true of a human family, how much more is it true of the heart of God, the love of the Father, the Heavenly Father, to discipline His children for their good? This is an assumed reality, particularly here in a Jewish context, as they would have known the Proverbs and would have committed themselves to raising their children in this way. But he goes on to explain even further this reality. Because He says here in verse 8, *"But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, (that is, all true children have become partakers), then you are illegitimate children and not sons"*

So what the author is saying, what should really concern you is not those moments when you believe you're being disciplined by the Lord. What should concern you is the thought of never being disciplined by God. The thought of being able to run headlong into sin with little to no conviction, with little to no care, to be able to run into sin without God providentially putting a roadblock in your way to trip you up, to keep you from going down the path of death. That is what's terrifying.

But what should encourage us is that when we have the love of the Father, He brings discipline into our lives for our good. You see the argument that he's making.

I want you to think back to your life before Christ, especially if you were saved later in life. This will be even clearer in your mind. Think of the way that you used to be able to sin without having a guilty conscience or with being able to quickly push away and squelch that guilty conscience.

Think of the way that you pursued your sin with little thought or with little care. Now, think about what happened when you came to know the Lord and the difference that that made in your life.

This was demonstrated for me a couple of years ago very powerfully on occasion when I was on staff at Countryside Bible Church. Part of my role there was over the membership process. The process there is very similar to our own. Part of that, we want to spend time with a person and get to know them and hear their testimony.

We want to know that they know the gospel, that they've really come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. In one of those meetings, I was sitting with a couple. They were new to the church. They'd only been there a couple of months. I didn't know them outside of that first meeting. I could tell immediately that they had not grown up in the church.

They didn't walk the walk and talk the talk. They didn't know the theological buzzwords that we might expect them to use when sharing their testimony. And so I just began to ask some follow-up questions to better understand what God had done in their life.

I'll never forget that interaction. It really impacted me. They couldn't use the theological words. They didn't know them for what had happened to them. But they just said, we don't know what happened, but our lives have been completely turned upside down.

We used to love to party on the weekends. That's all we wanted to do. That was our life. We surrounded ourselves with people who wanted to do that. That's what we look forward to every week. That's what we wanted to do. About two months ago, they'd heard a sermon or read a book. Something switched.

All of a sudden, we don't want to do that anymore. We don't want to be with those people. We don't want to do those things. We can't. When we try to do those things, there's this heavy weight of conviction on us that just pushes us away. We can't go down that path anymore. Now we just want to be here at the church. We want to be with God's people.

You see, that's a great illustration of what happens when God adopts you into His family. He makes you new. All of a sudden, you see everything through a different lens.

You didn't know that you were dirty and filthy and full of sin, but all of a sudden, you see it clear as day. You realize you need to run to Christ for rescue and be made clean. You can't go back.

Even when you try to go back, when your flesh is looking over the fence and thinking, maybe it would be okay, there's this weight of conviction that says, no, I can't. I can't go back to that. I don't want to go back to that.

That's the discipline of the Lord in one form, to bring deep conviction to His people, to keep us from sin, to keep our feet on the path of life. What should terrify us then is when we can think of ourselves in a situation in which we just walk right into sin, and it's fine. No big deal.

But the discipline of the Lord, that is no cause for concern. That is a cause to rejoice that I am a child of the King. He goes on to say, if you're without discipline, that means you're an illegitimate child.

He says *"you are illegitimate children and not sons."* Now, to understand that term, illegitimate children, in its context, we need to understand the Bible is not condoning this activity, but rather just giving it as it is culturally at the time that it was not uncommon to have concubines in the house and to have slaves living as concubines in the house. And this word, the Greek word, in its context, refers ultimately to kids who were born out of wedlock to one of these slaves or concubines.

The author, again, he's not condoning that behavior. He's simply saying in those situations, the father, sinfully, wrongfully, did not treat that child as a son. He was not going to receive the inheritance. He was not going to receive the family name. And so the father did not discipline that child. That child did not come under his correction, his instruction, his prevention, his care.

He was undisciplined. But it was the true legitimate son of the father that was the apple of his eye, that caught his attention, that he poured into, that he disciplined. And it was that son who would have all the rights of sonship.

The point here is that when we are disciplined by the Lord, we are a true son, with all the rights and privileges that come with being a child of God. Now in context here, these people, remember, were experiencing great persecution. And the author's not saying that this persecution has come as a direct result of their sin, but rather that God is going to use it, as he uses all things, for their discipline and for their good, in all the ways we described last week.

For their correction, prevention, instruction, and even the demonstration of His glory through them. So discipline then, when we understand it rightly, is one of the greatest benefits we have as Christians in the Christian life. It's one of the ways that God gives us the benefits of being a true son or daughter.

So if that's true, then why so often is it hard for us to accept and appreciate the discipline of the Lord? If we know ultimately it's good, ultimately it means He loves us, then why is it so hard? For example, why is it so hard when God won't let us pursue our sin, because He brings this weight of conviction, when we don't want to forgive that person? Doesn't God know what they did to us? I don't want to let go of that. Or whatever sin it is, we say, God, in my circumstance, could you really be calling me to obey that command? And He won't let us follow after our sin. What about when He doesn't give us what we ask for, and we pray and we pray, and we do all that we can from a human means to try to get that thing, and every time it's closed door, closed door, closed door, clearly the Lord is not giving us that thing.

What about when we bring circumstances into our life that we don't desire, that we didn't choose? Why is it so hard for us if this is such a good thing? Well, the answer to that, biblically, really is two words. If you remember, two words. Here's why it's so hard.

We are fallen, and we are finite. Two words, fallen and finite. First of all, we are fallen.

Sin has a pervasive effect. You know, when we use that term total depravity, we are not saying that sinners are as sinful as they possibly could be. What we are saying is sin has had an effect on the total aspect of our humanity.

Every part of us totally has been affected. That is, your will, your thoughts, your desires, your emotions, everything about you has been affected by the fall into sin. We are totally depraved in that sense.

Every part of us is affected. We, as believers, have a new nature. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us, and yet still the Bible says we have what's called the flesh, that part of us that's yet to be redeemed.

And if you've been a Christian for more than five seconds, you know your flesh is locked in a daily battle against your new nature, and they are doing this. And the Spirit is helping to strengthen us to fight the fight against our flesh and to win that battle moment by moment.

But what that means, then, is we can't trust our thoughts. Our thoughts do not naturally lead us to righteousness. We have to lead our thoughts. We have to lead our emotions. We have to lead our desires. The worldly mantra, just follow your heart, is unbiblical. The Bible says lead your heart with truth.

If you just follow your heart, it will lead you to sin every time. We must lead our hearts to truth, but because we are fallen, what that means is we are trying to follow a God who is holy and perfect and good. He doesn't have any sin.

He has no spot or stain. And so He is bringing things into our lives that are for our spiritual good, but because we are fallen in our flesh, our flesh does not always want that thing that God says would be good, is the truth. And there comes the battle. That's why it's hard.

But not only are we fallen, secondly, we're finite, which means that our ability to understand and comprehend is very limited. And put that up against God, who is infinite and transcendent. His knowledge and His wisdom know no bounds. God knows all things. Nothing is hidden from Him.

So as we struggle with God's discipline, we do so because often in our finite brains, we cannot connect the dots that God is connecting. He's operating up here, and we're operating way down here. And so we simply have to trust Him.

In both cases, in our fallenness and our finiteness, we have to come to the reality that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Father, which is we trust not our desires, we trust what God says. And if God says it's true and right, then it's true and right, regardless of how I feel about it. That's how we lead ourselves in the truth.

This is why spending time with children is so good for us. Because they... children illustrate this truth on a daily basis. When children are young, I mean, like under one, and even beyond, but especially under one, when they pick up an object, where are they going to put that object? In their mouth. Every time. That's the very next place it's going to go, is hand to mouth. Now, if that object is a pacifier, or a teething ring, or a child-safe toy, as parents and grandparents were like, hey, have at it, enjoy it.

But, what if you came around the corner, and your 10-month-old was sitting on the ground with the toilet brush in their hand? Now, if that's the scene you walked into, your love and concern for that child would cause you to do what? Run across the room, and as quickly as you can, get that out of their hand before they can put it in their mouth. But as you go to get it out of their hand, are they going to freely and willingly give it to you? No. Many times you're going to have to take their little chubby fingers and pry them one by one off of that, trying not to hurt them, but trying to get it out of their hand.

And when you do get it out of their hand, how are they going to respond? Are they going to say to you, well, thank you, loving father, thank you, loving mother, for keeping me from such dirty germs? Of course not. They're going to scream their head off. In fact, they're going to be angry at you, so angry, in fact, that if they were grown, they would fight you for that toilet brush.

And yet, as a parent, what are you going to do then to that 10-month-old? Are you going to stand there and chastise them and give them a lecture on how you're doing this for their good and protect them? No, you're going to pick them up. You're going to hold them, comfort them, so that they know it was your love that drove you to take it from their hand.

This is the love of a father, and this is why it's so helpful for us, because we know that our child at that age does not, literally does not, have the capacity mentally to understand what's happening. But we do. And you have to understand that's how God operates with us all the time. We simply don't have the capacity to know the realm at which God is working. We just don't.

And so we have to trust that we are the 10-month-old. And when our hearts struggle and when we feel anger rise in our hearts over our situation, and we just don't understand, we have to picture the 10-month-old and realize there are things going on above my pay grade, and I will trust Him, because I do know His character. I do know His love.

And so if you want to comfort yourself with truth in moments like these, when you're struggling with the discipline of the Lord, here are two key truths to think on. Truth number one, **His Thoughts and Ways Are Higher Than Yours**. His thoughts and ways are higher than yours.

Isaiah 55:8-9, *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*

And secondly, truth number two to think on in these times is that **His Grace and Love Are Sufficient For You**. 2 Corinthians 12:9, *"and He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you."*

Romans 8:35, and then verse 37, *"who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, peril, or sword?"* Verse 37, *"but in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."*

He's far more than we need, and His love and grace will be far more than sufficient. Thinking on these truths is how we properly cultivate the right perspective of God when we're struggling with discipline. So Christian, when God brings a weight of conviction over you about a sin you don't want to let go of, or when He confronts you with the truth, whether you're reading the scripture or hearing a sermon, and the truth just hits you in the nose, or when He says no, or not yet to the thing that you keep praying for, or He brings difficulties into your life for His own good purposes known only to Him, stop and foster joy in your heart by reminding yourself first of all that you are His true child.

I am his. He loves me. This is an expression of His care for me, even if I can't see how.

And then know that He knows what you do not know. He knows how He's using this for good even if you never see it. This is how we encourage our heart, and this is how the discipline of the Lord becomes a motivation to endure in the faith.

But that brings us to a second encouragement this morning as to why we should think this way about discipline as a motivation to endure in our faith. And the next encouragement is that **God's Discipline Deserves Our Submission**. God's discipline deserves our submission.

Verse 9. Verse 9 reads, *"Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more, or much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"*

The word furthermore obviously means he's continuing this argument that it's for discipline that we endure. And this next illustration that he's going to use is an illustration from home life.

He's going to give an argument from the lesser to the greater. Because this is true, then this must be true. And I want to acknowledge before we get into this verse that what's described here in the first half of the verse that's assumed about home life honestly may not have been your home life.

You may not have had a father or mother who loved you and disciplined you in the ways that this verse described. But I want you to understand he's giving this as the way that we all know it should be. And even if this has not been your experience, have no doubt that the second half of the verse will be your experience in Christ. That our heavenly Father will never fail to be who he says he is.

So let's consider this illustration then. Here is the lesser portion of the illustration that will point to a greater reality. He says we had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Literally, a more literal translation of that Greek phrase is *"furthermore, on the one hand, we had fathers of the flesh as disciplinarians."* That'll come into play here in a

moment. Fathers of the flesh. They taught us through the means of discipline the way of wisdom and the way of folly. To avoid the way of folly and of walk in the way of wisdom.

Certainly this would have been the expectation in a Jewish household living under the Torah. Knowing the Proverbs, they would have sought to raise their children. Fathers disciplining their children.

And the response to that parental authority would have been respect. And we respected them. That's the expected outcome.

It's fitting and right that the fathers discipline their children. And it's fitting and right that children respect the discipline of their father. That they submit to them, learn from them, and obey them.

This is the normal expectation. After all, it's codified in the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20, verse 12. *"Honor your father and mother that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you."*

This is why the author presents this as a foregone conclusion. In a biblical household, fathers discipline, and sons respect their fathers. But if that is the natural pattern in the earthly home, how does that relate to the way we think about God's discipline? Well, that's what he gets to now. He says, if that was true, then shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? Now notice how emphatic the language is here. He says, shall we not much rather.

The idea is that if that first idea was a foregone conclusion, then certainly this second idea is over the top, far and away beyond that truth. If things operate that way in the earthly home, then certainly they operate this way spiritually in our relationship with God as our Heavenly Father.

Now it's posed as a question. It's in the form of a question. Shall we not do this? But really, it's an emphatic statement. Of course.

The idea is of course we should be subject to the Father of spirits and live. It's the most logical thing in the world. And part of the emphasis here is on the title given to our earthly fathers versus the title given to God.

Notice how he refers to God. He calls him the Father of spirits. That may not be a title for God that we're used to hearing. But it comes right out of Numbers chapter 16. Right after the sons of Korah rebel against Moses and his authority, God is about to lash out against them for that sin. And Moses and Aaron intercede.

And in their prayer, they refer to God this way. Numbers 16:20-22. *"Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among the congregation, that I may consume them instantly."* (He's about to bring judgment on the sons of Korah.) *"But they fell on their faces and said, O God, God of the spirits of all flesh."* There it is. *"God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will you be angry with the entire congregation?"*

Now there's a play on words here in our passage in Hebrews that we can't see in the English language or the way it's translated. But that's why I gave you the more literal translation. He literally calls our earthly fathers "fathers of the flesh."

And that's because the play on words is between the word flesh and the word spirit. Our earthly fathers were fathers of the flesh, but God is the Father of spirits, that is, of the soul, of the immaterial part of us that will go on forever. This is not just a temporal arrangement, is the idea.

We had this temporal time when we were under our parental authority and they disciplined us, we respected them. That was of the flesh.

But this is of the spirit. It's eternal, a never-ending relationship in which we are under this Heavenly Father, the Father of spirits, the immaterial part of us that goes on forever and ever.

And so obviously, such a great Father, an eternal Father, who's able even to discipline us at the level of the spirit of our soul, deserves that we be subject to Him. That's the key verb here.

Shall we not be subject to this Father of spirits? And the answer is of course. So the call of discipline is a call to willingly arrange ourselves under the authority of God, respectfully to submit to Him, to subject ourselves to His authority, to obey His word.

In fact, this is actually basic to our understanding of the gospel.

This shows up even in how Jesus presented the gospel in Matthew chapter 11. In these famous words, Matthew 11: 28-30, Jesus says, *"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you'll find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Notice the command not only to come to Him, but the command then to do what? Take My yoke upon you. What is that? That's a call of submission to His authority. To take the yoke upon yourself like a yoke that would be put on two oxen. Therefore, they would be under the control of the driver who could drive them wherever he wanted to go. In this way, take the yoke of Christ upon you, He says, and learn from Me. Be My disciple. Humble yourself. Come under My authority and learn from Me.

Submit yourself to my authority. Coming to Christ and in the gospel necessitates humility and submission to bow the knee to Him as Lord. So the gospel itself is a call to come and die to our sense of self autonomy and to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So before we can even understand this submission to God as Father, we have to understand submission to Christ as Lord. To ask yourself this morning, honestly, have you bowed your knee to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you taken His yoke upon you? Have you come to Him weary and heavy laden because of your sin, repenting of your sin, coming under His yoke of authority that you might submit to Him and follow Him as Lord?

The call of the gospel is not simply a call to come and be forgiven and then go on living as a slave to sin. The call of the gospel is to come and be forgiven and be made new, to be filled with the Holy Spirit so then you can fight and battle sin and walk in newness of life, no longer a slave to sin.

Take My yoke upon you. But it's important that we understand as Christians, those who have come to Christ in repentance and faith, that this is not just part of the gospel call, this is part of the Christian life. Have you forgotten, Christian, that you are under the yoke of Christ, that you have taken His yoke upon you to learn from Him, that is to listen to His word and to obey it.

Our obedience to the Father comes through our obedience to the Son. The Father adopts us as his own son through the sacrifice of His Son and in being adopted by Him and purchased by Him, we then necessarily submit to Him. So are you living in submission to the authority of God? But there's something else here, something wonderful.

Notice how he ends this verse in verse nine with these two little words that we could easily pass by and overlook. Notice he says, Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? And live. Those two words are wonderful.

Where do these words come from and what does this mean? These two words are rooted deeply in Old Testament teaching as it regards the blessing that comes to children for obeying parental authority. This is all throughout the scriptures. In fact, Paul draws on this idea in the New Testament as he gives instruction to children and parents in Ephesians chapter six.

Ephesians 6:1-3 *"Children, obey your parents and the Lord for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER, which is the first commandment with a promise."* (And what is the promise?) *"SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH."* This is right here in the 10 commandments. It shows up in Exodus 20 and it shows up in Deuteronomy chapter five.

It picks up and highlights the truth that we saw earlier when we went through those proverbs about disciplining our children. Remember the gist of those proverbs was this direct connection between the loving discipline of a father or mother and the longevity of that child's life. And that's what he's getting here, getting at here.

Because the father disciplines a child in accordance with wisdom to guide them away from foolishness, which will ultimately end in their destruction, they have life. If they obey their father and mother and walk in the way of wisdom, it will lead to life. So don't miss what the author of Hebrews is doing.

He's taking this very earthly idea and he's transcending it to a very heavenly idea to say if obeying your earthly parents led you on the path of life in this temporal life, how much more will obedience to your Heavenly Father lead you to life in the spiritual sense? Life eternal. Not just life in this temporal life, but life forever. Subject yourself to the father of spirits and live.

Obedience to God is the blessed life. This is truly life. To live in accordance with the word of God.

He leads us in the way of life not just temporally, but everlasting. So practically, boiling this down, this is what this means in real time. It means that when God disciplines us, He is not withholding good from us.

This is where we get mixed up. When God disciplines us, we often fall into the same temptation that our first parents fell into in the garden. We think that God is being a cosmic killjoy, that God's commands are keeping us from things that would be good.

That's what Adam and Eve believed, that eating of that fruit was going to give them something good that God was withholding from them because Satan had lied to them and they believed his deception. But God actually was keeping them from evil and keeping them from harm. The same thing is true about God's discipline today.

His discipline is for our good. Even when you cannot see it, He is not keeping you from something good. He's leading you in the way of life, the way everlasting.

The greatest blessing in life, to truly live, the path of not only the blessed temporal life but eternal life, is submission to the authority of our loving Heavenly Father. To embrace His discipline, to understand He's not against you, He is for you in Christ. And if somehow you've convinced yourself that God is doing evil to you rather than good, understand it is you who have been deceived.

God is good and He only does good. He's desperately seeking to put your feet on the path of life that you would walk in accordance with wisdom and in accordance with righteousness and truth. Don't you see there is great reward in being subject to a Father like this? Embrace His Fatherly discipline and live.

Now, as we boil this down and bring it to a close, there are two applications we need to walk away with from these verses today. And the first one is to **Relish the Privilege of Sonship**. Relish the privilege of sonship.

You know, Thanksgiving is now in our rearview mirror. I hope that you had a great Thanksgiving. I hope that you had a time at some point to give thanks with your family for how good God has been to you.

But I wonder for how many of us did we put on that list of things to be thankful for our adoption. Do you thank God? Thank God often for his adoption of you. Do you ever meditate on the riches of the blessing of being called His son or his daughter? And I want to challenge us this week in response to what we've learned today to spend some time meditating on this idea of adoption.

I want to encourage you to do a word search in the Bible on the word adoption or on the word sons and daughters. Search words like inheritance. Words that will bring up the benefits that are ours because we are connected to Him as His children.

Just think back to the introduction in this message and how differently you felt in those scenarios when it was about your child rather than about a random child. And now magnify

that to the nth degree and realize that God is committed to you, to your protection, to your instruction, to your care and to your discipline. There are great riches in our adoption but we need to relish that adoption.

Think on it. Apply it to your life. And if God has sovereignly placed you in a time of great difficulty in your life, a time that you maybe don't even understand and you're fighting off those wrong responses of taking it lightly or fainting along the way, would you just stop and meditate for a moment on the gift of adoption?

Remind yourself, this struggle in my heart, this conviction that God has brought upon me, it's a sign that I am His. I belong to Him. Even that is a reason to stop and rejoice.

And as you do that and you begin to meditate not just on the struggle you're having but on what it means about how God sees you and treats you, suddenly joy and trust and encouragement and endurance begin to build in your heart. Relish the privilege of adoption.

But secondly, **Submit to the Father and Live.** Submit to the Father and live.

We need to be honest with ourselves this morning and ask the question, is there any area in our life in which we are willfully choosing not to submit to God's authority? Is there any area of your life right now, Christian, in which there's this tug-of-war of you know God says to do this in His word but your flesh wants to do this and you are hard-heartedly holding on to this instead of what God calls you to do?

We need to submit to the Father and live. If the Bible describes disobedience to earthly parents as foolishness that will lead your life to the path of death and destruction, then how much more will foolishness in the sense of rebellion against a holy God lead to death? It's insanity not to listen to the word of God, not to follow the wisdom of a holy and infinite God.

It reminded me of Psalm 1 in this wonderful instruction in the first three verses of Psalm 1. *"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked nor stand in the path of sinners nor sit in the seat of scoffers but his delight(is in what?) The law of the Lord. (And what does he do because he delights in it?) "He meditates day and night." (What will happen to him?) "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and its leaf does not wither and whatever he does he prospers."*

Christian, are you walking in the counsel of the wicked either with wicked friends giving wicked counsel or taking wicked counsel in your own thoughts listening to your flesh? Are you standing in the path of sinners and sitting in the seat of scoffers or are you making your meditation the word of God day and night coming back to the word of God fighting your flesh and your sinful desires and sinful thoughts with the word of God? This is what it looks like to delight in His word and to meditate on His word and it's what it looks like to submit to the authority of the Father.

Submit to the Father and live. If this morning you've convinced yourself that God is somehow being unfair to you or unkind to you or even unjust in your current situation then

bring your mind back to those two words we looked at earlier. You are fallen and finite but God is holy and infinite.

Trust His perfect wisdom. Trust His perfect goodness. Preach God's goodness and holiness and wisdom to yourself and choose by His grace to trust Him and this is what it looks like to embrace the loving discipline of the Lord.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we ask for Your help in these things. It's easy to describe what the battle should look like and how we ought to trust You and how we ought to walk in holiness and yet sometimes in the trenches of the battle it can feel impossible in our humanness, but God help us to think rightly of You and rightly of the situation that You are an infinite God and we who are Your children have the privilege of Your discipline but also Your help and Your care and Your grace by the power of Your spirit to strengthen us to trust You and to walk in newness of life that is ours in Christ.

Help us to live this way for Your glory God where we are weak God make us strong with Your sufficient grace. God help us to trust You today and to embrace Your Fatherly discipline. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.