

## Run With Endurance 6

Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 12, as we continue our way through this wonderful letter together. Hebrews chapter 12. And as you're there, thinking on this aspect of the discipline of the Lord and how that relates even to our discipline of our own children, it's right that as parents we have specific goals for our kids.

I'm sure you do. And our goals typically align with the things that we value as most profitable for our kids in a number of areas. Things that we want to be true about their character, things we hope that they will take into their future.

Because of that, we often have goals for things like even academics. Some parents have goals for things like athletics or playing certain musical instruments. We have goals in the area of life skills.

We hope our kids have the necessary skills to function as adults and to maintain a house and a car and hold a job and manage finances. We have people skill goals for our kids, that they can interact with all kinds of different people in a way that would honor the Lord. And, of course, above all, as Christian parents, we have spiritual goals for our kids.

We pray above all that they would know and love the Lord Jesus Christ and be conformed to his image. In fact, we would give up all the other goals if only to have this one spiritual goal.

But I want us to consider how the goals we have for our kids connect to the way that we discipline and instruct our kids.

The true nature of our goals for our children can be seen by looking at our discipline. What kind of actions and words do we correct? What kind of actions and words do we commend? What goals do we put out challenges in front of our children to challenge them to succeed? What obstacles do we put in their place, in their way, to challenge them and to train them?

And as we begin to look at our discipline, we begin to see what our real goals are for our kids. But the truth is, discipline always has a goal. It can be a good goal, a noble goal, or it can be a petty goal, a sinful goal even. But something is motivating the choices that we make on a daily basis as we implement discipline and instruction for our kids.

And if it is true that we as human beings always have something motivating our discipline of our kids, then how much more is it true of our Savior, of our great God, our Holy Father, who disciplines us as His children? The discipline of the Lord, then, is never haphazard. It is not random. Our God always has a very specific purpose in mind when He brings discipline into our lives.

And our passage today highlights that truth and shows us that the key goal of the discipline of the Lord and the life of His children is our sanctification, our sanctification, that we would be made holy.

Before we get there, though, just quickly let me remind us of where we've been. The theme of the letter to the Hebrews as a whole is **The Superiority of Christ**. We've seen that proven

now time and time again. That's there on the screen. All these different aspects of the Old Covenant, Christ is better than them all.

Now we have moved from proving the superiority of Christ to applying the superiority of Christ. And over and over again, the author is calling us to have an unwavering faith, endure in the faith. In fact, the application of the most famous chapter in Hebrews, Hebrews 11, the great Hall of Faith, the application that we were given in the opening verses of chapter 12 is that we are to **Run Faith's Race with Endurance**, be inspired by their faith, and ultimately be inspired by the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But now we've entered into this section in Hebrews 12, verses 3 to 11. Today we'll close out that section as we study verses 10 and 11, but I want to read the whole section for us by way of context as we begin this morning. So Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 3. The author writes,

*"<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. <sup>4</sup> You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." <sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup> 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? <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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."*

The theme that we've been unpacking now for weeks in this section is this. We are to **Cultivate endurance by considering Christ, battling sin, and embracing God's Fatherly discipline**. We'll close out that theme this morning.

Remember, there's the command in verse 3 that kicks this off, **Consider Christ's Enduring Faith**, followed by those two reminders, **Battle Sin unto Death** in verse 4, and **Embrace God's Fatherly Discipline** in verses 5 to 11. So that's where we are this morning, continuing to unpack that second reminder.

Remember, in verses 5 and 6, what we have there is a direct quote from the Proverbs, Proverbs 3, verses 11 and 12, reminding us of the gift of the discipline of the Lord, but also reminding us that there are two incorrect responses to God's discipline. Those incorrect responses are, one, **to treat God's discipline lightly**, that is, flippantly, to give it little consideration. Secondly, the second incorrect response is to **faint at His reproof**, that is, to throw in the towel, to take on the woe-is-me mentality, rather than humbling yourself in obedience to the Lord.

And the reason, remember, that those are the incorrect responses is because they miss the important fact that the discipline of the Lord actually is a great gift, a privilege, reserved only for His true children. To be disciplined by the Lord is a gift, and it's a sign that you are truly His.

Then we looked at the definition of the word discipline itself, the Greek term that's used here over and over again, and here's the definition of the term. It means "the act of providing guidance for responsible living, upbringing, training, instruction, and chiefly in our literature, that is, chiefly (in the Scriptures), as it is attained by discipline and correction". So this is a multifaceted word, depending on the context, and what we've discovered is that God really disciplines us in every facet of the term.

And we looked at that and saw there are four primary purposes for the discipline of God. Number one is **Correction**. Two is **Prevention**. Three, **Instruction**. And four, **Demonstration**.

Now, that brings us to verse 7, where we were given this key instruction. **God's Discipline Motivates Endurance**. Remember, the call here is to endure in the faith, and what he's saying is one of the chief motivations to endure in the faith should be the discipline of the Lord. It should compel us to run harder in the faith.

And that leads to the question, how? How does the discipline of the Lord motivate us to endure in the faith? That brings us up to speed to where we left off last time. There are three encouragements given here about how we are motivated by discipline to endure. We've already looked at the first two.

Encouragement number one was **God's Discipline Affirms Our Adoption**. The second encouragement, **God's Discipline Deserves Our Submission**. And then this morning, finally, we will focus our attention on encouragement number three: **God's Discipline Produces Our Sanctification**.

So with all that said, let's focus our attention now just on these two verses at the end of this section, verses 10 and 11. Read those with me one more time. Hebrews 12, verse 10.

*"<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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."*

So in these two verses, we have this third encouragement. **God's Discipline Produces Our Sanctification**. And he begins here with the word "for", meaning this is still in the same flow of the same context. He's still talking about the same idea that was introduced all the way back in verse seven.

And since verse seven, he's given us illustration after illustration from home life. Examples of how earthly fathers discipline their children and then bringing spiritual truths that we can apply to our relationship with our heavenly Father. He's going to do that again today.

The first thing he taught us is that discipline by your father proves that you are a legitimate son. Therefore, it's a reason to rejoice. He also proved that we respected our earthly

fathers, and rightly so, and their discipline. And so how much more should we respect the discipline of God and obey Him in our response to that discipline?

But now he gives us another illustration from home life. And speaking first of our earthly fathers, he says in verse 10, for “*they, (that is earthly fathers) disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them.*” These earthly fathers refer to your father or mother, your parents who raised you in your home, and their discipline was from birth until you reached adulthood and exited that home. That's why he says this was for a limited time, a short time.

When you think about it, comparatively, if God gives you normal length of life, the time in which you live under the discipline of your parents in their home is really short compared to the rest of your life. And that's the idea here. It was limited in its scope, that discipline.

But secondly, it was limited in its morality because he says they not only disciplined us for a short time, they disciplined us as seen best to them. This is happening in each of our homes. It was not only limited in its time, but as we said last time, all people have these two great attributes that are hindrances to us. We are fallen and we are finite. We are fallen in the sense that we battle sin as believers. We're forgiven of our sin. We're given a new nature and yet still we battle our flesh. And we're also finite which means that we're limited in our understanding and our ability to know God is infinite. We are finite.

And so in every home, what you have are two sinners, two parents who are sinners and who are finite even when they're doing their genuine best to raise their kids according to the Scriptures, praying over those kids, thinking through their decisions by Scripture because of these two attributes of being fallen and finite, they will make mistakes. Their discipline, my discipline, it will be flawed at times.

This is an inescapable reality. By the way, this is a side note why we should think of the goal of our parenting not in terms of perfection but in terms of faithfulness. Are we faithful in the goal of honoring and glorifying Christ as we seek to do our level best with what we know and as we battle our own sin to raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord?

But let's be honest, every single one of us misses the mark at times. We can parent with selfish motives. As fathers especially, I'll warn us because we're given rightful authority in the home, we can, if we're not careful, create an atmosphere in the home in which everything really is arranged not so much according to Scripture as it is our preference. I just like it to be this way. I like the noise level to be this way. I like things to look a certain way. I like certain kinds of food. And so I'm going to arrange our lives according to my preferences. We have to be careful.

At times we get on to our children, not for things that are actually sinful or wrong but because they bother us. We want them to stop doing certain things or they're doing something hindering us from doing what we want to do and so we discipline them for that.

In addition to that, because we're limited, we don't actually know the hearts of our kids. No matter how close your relationship is with your child, only God knows the inner workings of

their heart. And we don't know all that they do in the dark. That means we are always parenting and disciplining with limited information.

And that means sometimes our parenting and our discipline can be unintentionally unjust. We can sometimes discipline our kids for something they didn't actually do. Other times we can refrain from disciplining them when we should because we either don't know they did something or we don't believe they did something.

And so even when we are doing all we can to be humble and selfless and biblical and faithful, we are fallible. So the point here is to highlight how limited that parental discipline is and was in our homes because of these things. It's limited in its scope and the timing of our life is only for a short period. And it's limited even in its morality because earthly fathers do what they see as best, but of course that doesn't always mean it is.

But this is to set up a contrast, a comparison. We have this limited discipline, valuable, yes, but limited in the home and it's compared now to the discipline of God. Look back at verse 10 and we have this word "but" that provides the comparison. They disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them but He, that is God, disciplines us for our good. He disciplines us for our good.

Notice what motivates the heart of God. Our good. It is goodness, perfect goodness. And notice God is not limited by either of the limitations that are listed of earthly fathers. The time, the scope, God's eternal. He's not limited in the amount of time. We never reach a place in the Christian life in which we don't need the privilege of the discipline of the Lord. We're always under His discipline in that sense and it's not limited in its morality because He's perfect and holiness. That means everything He does in disciplining us as His children is perfect, it is pure, it is right and it is for our good every time. Never will God discipline you as His child for sinful reasons or motivations. Never. It's impossible.

And so you see how much better, how much more glorious is the discipline of the Heavenly Father over that of earthly fathers and mothers. He's also not limited in the sense of His knowledge because He knows all things. That means all of our actions and thoughts and heart motivations, every word you've ever spoken even if you thought you were alone, He sees it all. It's laid bare before Him in the light of His glory.

And so that means He always disciplines with perfect wisdom, with perfect justice, with perfect timing and with perfect goodness. He's eternal. He's infinite. And so in these two key areas in which human discipline is limited, God is again found to be limitless.

But what is this good? When it says that He disciplines His children for their good, notice he then outlines the word good. He describes it for us at the end of verse 10. But *He disciplines us for our good so that we may share His holiness*. So that we may share His holiness.

Now that is a shocking statement. What? God desires to cause us to share His holiness? This should take us aback. It is unthinkably wonderful that God would ever condescend to save me let alone to then give me this great gift of sharing in His holiness.

But that's exactly what it says in plain language. Now we do have to be careful that we understand what that means and what it doesn't mean but there's no taking back the words. It's very clear.

The goodness that God gives to us in discipline is a share in His holiness. Now we want to be careful here because we can't think about sharing in the way that we share things as human beings. Because to share something as a human being necessarily means if I give some of what I have to you, I now have less than I had before. If I give you half my candy bar, I used to have a whole candy bar and now I have half a candy bar.

Understand, God's holiness is infinite. He can never be more holy than He's been and He can never be less holy than He's been. He is perfect in holiness and so in giving His holiness to us, it is merely a description of the addition of holiness to us but never the subtraction of any ounce of holiness from Him. Such a thing is unthinkable.

This is rather a description of the ongoing process of sanctification which will culminate in glorification in which we are made perfectly holy and righteous. And this is the chief aim of His divine discipline it says. That He might do good to us and that good is defined as the sharing of His holiness. As we said in the beginning of the message, discipline always has a goal.

And God has just revealed to us His goal in disciplining us and that is that we might share His holiness. Now this is not unique to the book of Hebrews. This in fact is all over the place in Scripture. We're going to look at a few passages here that say essentially the same thing.

Romans 8 which we read earlier this morning in Scripture reading. Romans 8:28-30:  
*"<sup>28</sup> And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined, (but what did he predestine them to?) to become conformed to the image of His Son, (that's what you were predestined for, that you might be holy, conformed to the image of His Son) so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup> and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."*

2 Thessalonians 2:3-14: "<sup>13</sup> But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (Now listen to this)<sup>14</sup> It was for this He called you through our gospel, (for what?) that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. "

Again, shocking statement. What do you mean that I may gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? It's the same idea of sharing in His holiness that you might be conformed to the image of the glory of Christ.

It goes on. 2 Peter 1:2-4: "<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup> seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises,

*(listen to this) so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."*

Again, shocking statement. What do you mean that we may become partakers of the divine nature? Same idea, that we might come to share in His holiness. Obviously, not that we would be divine, but that we would be made holy as He is holy.

And then finally, Ephesians chapter 5, verses 25-27: "<sup>25</sup>*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, (Why did He do that?)* <sup>26</sup>*so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* <sup>27</sup>*that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."*

Don't you see, Christian, the great goal of redemption is this glory, this holiness, this purification. God magnifies His own glory through His Son in redeeming us through the Son and causing us to share in that glory, making us holy. It begins with holiness. It begins with justification, which is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner. So in that moment at salvation, that righteousness of Christ is imputed to us by grace through faith. Our sin then placed on Christ, on the cross, paid for, and we are in that sense clothed with the righteousness of Christ so that God sees us then through that lens of the holiness of Christ and He treats us on the basis of that for the rest of our lives. But that's not the end.

It doesn't end with us simply being clothed with what Luther called an alien righteousness, a righteousness outside of us, but then He goes to work on us, forming within us an actual holiness, a real holiness in this life, and then finally in perfection and glory. This is mind-blowing. But this is the goal of the gospel.

Understand the goal of the gospel is not just to forgive you of your sins. Is that included? Of course! But it's so much more that you might be molded into the image of the Son of God personally and then be with Him forever. This is redemption.

Why is it necessary that He would cause us to share in the glory of Christ, to share in His holiness? It is because of the end goal. What is the end of all this? What are we looking forward to in the end? Is it not to go and be with Him where He is? To see Him as He is? And what do we call that place? Even in Christian lingo, when we talk about a person God taking someone home to where? Glory. We often say. Took him home to glory. Why do we say that? Because heaven is glorious. It is filled with the glory of God, which means to be there you too must be glorious.

So God is making you and I what we must be through Christ to be with Him forever. And the author of Hebrews says that is the point of discipline. What is He doing? He is doing you good by causing you to share in His holiness.

There is a connection point here with what was said earlier in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 10 speaking of what Christ has done in accomplishing, living a perfect life, dying for our sins: "<sup>10</sup>*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, (that is us, He is bringing us to glory) to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings."*

Connection point here. It is not an identical illustration because Christ of course did not go from imperfect to perfect. He has always been perfect. The idea here is that Christ did it in real time. He came and obeyed the Father doing the will of the Father perfectly from birth to death and resurrection and ascension. He suffered what He must suffer and He did it with perfection thereby manifesting that perfection.

But the connection here is that for us it is different. We are going from imperfect towards perfection but it is through this gift of suffering, through discipline, through difficulties that He brings into our life as He forms more and more His holiness in us. This is the ultimate good.

Don't you see that? Don't you see that this is the greatest good God can do to you Christian? Do you see that? What else would He give us? He has already given us His Son and now He gives us this gift of making us like His Son. What greater good could He do to you? Yet we are tempted, aren't we, to magnify lesser goods in our lives over this ultimate good of holiness. Many times we want other things.

What would you trade for this sharing in the holiness of God? When you really think of it that way, would you really trade personal comfort for holiness? Would you really trade recognition or pleasure or riches or reputation for holiness? What earthly thing could ever compare to the treasure of the holiness of God?

So when we understand this, it just transforms the way we think about the discipline of God in our lives. We say, yes, of course, it is a good. It is ultimate good that you would discipline me, God, to bring about my sanctification.

But what confuses us often is the fact that, if we're honest, it doesn't really feel that good to suffer, does it? It just doesn't. Let's just be frank. Trials are not fun. They're not fun. Discipline in and of itself, not fun. Oftentimes, in the midst of discipline, we don't feel like we're getting holier at all.

In fact, in times of discipline and difficulty in trial, things come out of us that aren't holy. And we're saying, what's going on here? Sometimes the weight of the difficulty and the trial is crushing to us. It feels like too much in those moments. Like, God, you're piling on. It's too much. How can this possibly be good for me? I can see that that could be good, and I can see that that could be good, but God, this thing, the thing that you've chosen to give to me, I just don't see how it could be good.

Not fun. So how do we mesh the truth that was just taught to us here in Hebrews with just how difficult and painful trials and discipline can be? It's almost as if the author anticipates that way of thinking. Because notice how he begins verse 11: "<sup>11</sup> *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful;*" He just acknowledges it right out of the gate. All discipline for the moment doesn't seem to joyful but sorrowful. He admits that universally discipline in all of its forms that it comes to us by sovereign hand of God does not feel joyful in the moment. Instead, it's sorrowful, grieving, stressful, heavy.

Peter says it's distressing. 1 Peter 1:6: "<sup>6</sup> *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,*"

So Christian, don't think something's wrong with you or that you're necessarily spiritually immature because you feel sorrowful and grief under the weight of a trial. It's difficult.

Some may protest and push back and say wait a minute, what about James? Doesn't James say that trials are joyful? What does James say? James 1:2 he says: "<sup>2</sup>*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,*" notice James is not talking about the way they feel, the way we experience them. He's training us how to think about those trials. Consider them.

Trials feel sorrowful but what the author of Hebrews is doing is saying, I'm going to encourage you, command you, instruct you not to react based on how you feel, but to train yourself in how to think. How to think about trials. Because he goes on to say it is true, opening words of verse 11, "*all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, (but then he goes on to say) yet to those who have been trained by it afterwards it, yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*" Notice the key word "afterwards".

There is a comparison here in the first half of the verse and the second between the phrase "for the moment" and now the word "afterwards". Momentarily in the midst of the trial, it doesn't feel good, doesn't feel joyful, but afterwards it bears fruit. Afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

However, we have to stop here before we go too far into that fruit and acknowledge the fact that the author says clearly, not everyone will reap this fruit of peaceful righteousness. Specifically, who is it in this context that reaps that fruit through discipline? He says, verse 11, *yet to those who have been trained by it.* Only those who have been trained by the discipline of the Lord reap this harvest of righteousness.

This is essentially what James is getting at as well. If we just read the next couple of verses in that passage, James 1:2-4, "<sup>2</sup>*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,* <sup>3</sup>*knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* <sup>4</sup>*And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*"

There is this distinguishing between the feeling of the trial in the moment and the end result of the trial, and so we have to ask ourselves now, what does it look like to be trained by a trial? Because if you're a true son or daughter of God, we've already learned, you will experience the discipline of God. It's part of being a legitimate child of God, and I don't know about you, but if I'm going to have to go through discipline, I'd like to learn from it. I would like to grow.

So what does it mean then to be trained by the discipline of the Lord? Well, I think to understand this, we ought to begin by remembering those two incorrect responses to God's discipline, highlighted in Proverbs 3, and then we'll just flip them around and look at the opposite, because the opposite of those incorrect responses will be the correct response.

So, remember, the two incorrect responses to discipline are, number one, to treat God's discipline lightly, that is to give it no consideration. So, for example, that is to go through a trial and simply refuse to think about that trial in a biblical way. The goodness of God and

the sovereignty of God, and choosing to process that trial according to what the Scriptures say. Instead, you just treat it lightly and flippantly, and really don't give much thought. You just kind of try to wait it out.

The second incorrect response would be to faint at His reproof. That is the Eeyore mentality, woe is me, my life's so hard, I just want to quit. Both of those are incorrect responses, and both of those will ensure that you are not trained by the discipline.

You will not learn what God intends for you to learn and grow in the way God intends for you to grow if you take on those two responses. But let's flip them around. What is the opposite, then, of those incorrect responses? So, correct response number one, then, would be **to treat God's discipline seriously**. That is to analyze what you're going through in accordance with the Scripture with a real eye to learn, to grow, to trust. And secondly, the second correct response, then, is **to humbly obey in response to His reproof**.

You see, ultimately, that woe is me stuff and throwing in the towel is a prideful, stubborn response because we don't want to do what God is saying we must do. Humility is obedience. It is saying, God, you know best. God, you have ordained this for my life, and even though this is terribly painful, I will trust that you know better. That is humbling myself, then, to walk in obedience.

Those two responses, taking it seriously and humbly obeying, those are the responses of a person being trained by the discipline of the Lord, and they will reap the benefit.

To illustrate this more clearly, just think of it in the area of physical training of the body, which has some benefit, not as much as spiritual discipline, but it has some benefit. Think of it in athletics, for example. The famous coach, Tom Landry, said this, "the job of a coach is to make men do what they don't want to do in order to be what they've always wanted to be." That's that idea of pushing them past the point that they want to go, ultimately, that they might physically become, athletically, what they want to be.

Athletes who are serious about their athletic endeavors, they want to be pushed and trained by outside influences. They want coaches and trainers who will push them past where they would go on their own, because the truth is, all of us would stop short of what a coach would push us to do. When we think we're done, the coach says, ten more. That's the point of a coach, to push you past those limits.

If you don't heed that training, you won't receive the benefit. I saw this myself in middle school and high school. I played football. By my physique, I know you're wondering why I didn't go on to later play football in college, but it's just not what God had. If you played football, then you had to be in the athletics class as well.

In the athletics class, all year long, you're doing physical training, running, pushups, lifting weights, all those things. I saw on numerous occasions as some of my classmates, my peers would do all they could to do the least amount required to not make the coaches angry.

Things like this. There was a certain path around the campus of the school that we were made to run as a group. The coach would set a timer and the whole group had to be back

three minutes, five minutes, however long it was. If not everyone made it back, then we had to do pushups or up-downs or something like that.

The coach didn't realize that on the back side of the school, about half of the group would get off the path and cut across the grass across campus, shortening the route significantly, and then get back on the path and walk the rest of the way. Then when it came time to turn the corner where the coach could see, start running again like they had run the whole thing.

There were some students who didn't do that. They refused to do that. Instead, they ran the whole course and it was those students who actually received the training and the benefit that came from the discipline the coach was putting us through. The same idea in the Christian life.

As Christians then, every time God brings a trial or difficulty into our life, we have to preach the truth to ourselves and choose to obey what God's word says, even when it pushes us to the breaking point. That's what it looks like to be trained by the discipline of the Lord. That's what it looks like to consider it all joy when we experience various trials.

It means that everything in you at some point may be screaming to quit, to get angry, to throw a pity party, or to justify sin. But you have to preach to yourself with all your might and say, no, my God is good, my God is sovereign, my God never fails. He has designed this not for my harm, but for my good, and therefore I will trust Him, and I will not give in to temptation, and I will put one foot of obedience in front of the other until I find myself on the other side of this trial, or until He brings me home.

It's the idea of what Jesus quotes from the Old Testament when He says, man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father. Man does not live only by the impulses of the flesh, but by what God says, and when those two things are in contradiction, we obey the Word, and not our fleshly desires.

Sometimes God puts you in a trial, a difficulty, in which He is performing some act of discipline in your life, whether it's training, instruction, or correction, and it looks like obedience is actually going to make things worse. Obedience looks like a buzz saw that God's asking you to walk through, and in our flesh we try to reason and say, surely that can't be what He's asking me to do, because I know biblically I ought to do this next, but I just don't see that going well.

If you want to be trained in those difficulties, choose to do the hard thing. Realize obedience to God is always the right choice. It does not matter if that even means walking through the buzz saw in a very difficult situation. Obedience is always the right option. It's the spiritual equivalent of the coach saying, do 10 more push-ups when your body wanted to quit 50 push-ups ago.

Just as in physical exercise, you will not receive benefits from that exercise unless you push yourself to where there is discomfort and pain. That burning sensation is what you're going for, even though it's not a good sensation because you know only then will my body progress and be benefited from this physical training.

In the same way, God graciously puts His children as an active discipline through trials and tribulations that you might grow in your faith, in your trust, and in your character as He shares His holiness with you. What a gift. What a gift.

Notice the great fruit, it says, that comes to those who are trained by the discipline of the Lord, at the end of verse 11. *“Afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”* So again, in the middle of the trial, you may not feel like you're growing all that much. You may feel like you're just barely holding on by your fingertips, but God is at work in the midst of that, and afterward, afterward, is when you begin to see all the growth that God brought providentially through that difficulty.

And what is that fruit? Notice how it's described, *“afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”* The word righteousness here is just another expression of sharing in the holiness of God. The way that God causes us to yield this fruit of righteousness, again, is discipline.

That righteousness that we're longing for, what does it consist of? Well, it consists of things like steadfast faith, deeper love for God, deeper trust of God, more expression of the Fruit of the Spirit, and more putting to death the fruit of the flesh. Now, understand, it's not that growth is not happening in the middle of the trial. It is, it's just we don't experientially always see how we're growing because of the difficulty of the trial.

One commentator put it this way, “it may be impossible in the middle of suffering to see what good outcome it might have, and to talk blandly about the ‘educative’ value of suffering to someone in that situation is likely to be counterproductive. But the perspective our author here offers calls at least for a willingness to suspend our negative reaction until we are able to see in perspective. For the present, we're called to recognize in our experiences the hand of God, who alone knows the whole picture, and whom we can trust as our utterly reliable Father.”

So in the middle of the trial, you may not see how it's being used for good. Your job is to hold on for dear life, to trust Him and obey Him. And then often on the other side of the trial is where the good is seen with more clarity.

But notice one final thing. Notice he doesn't just describe this fruit as righteousness. He says this is the “peaceful” fruit of righteousness. Isn't that interesting? Of all the ways to describe this righteousness. This is the peaceful fruit of righteousness. In Scripture, there is often a correlation between righteousness and peace. This is a righteousness that produces peace. Peace comes with it.

So what kind of peace are we talking about? Well, righteousness, and you think about it biblically, produces peace in three primary areas. First of all, and most importantly, peace with God. Righteousness is required for us to have peace with God. This is why the angels declare on that day, the blessed day of the birth of the Lord, peace on earth. What peace? Peace between God and man through the righteousness that this one would provide by His life, death, and resurrection. So peace **with God**.

But also, peace **with others** in our relationships. Righteousness produces peace in human relationships. I mean, just think about this logically. If you think about others the way God says you should think about them, and you speak to them and about them the way that God says that you should, and you act towards them in the way that God says that you should, what does that produce in that relationship? Peace.

What kind of relationship wouldn't have peace if both people are doing that? What causes dysfunction in relationships? Sin. Sin. But righteousness brings peace, even to our human relationships. Righteousness then is the balm that heals the brokenness that sin brings.

But then finally, thirdly, righteousness produces peace of the soul. Peace **within**. If you're a true believer this morning, then you understand there is no unrest like the unrest of a true Christian living in unrepentant sin.

You want to talk about heaviness, the weight of the hand of the Lord on you. David describes it like this, Psalm 32:3-4. He says, when I kept silent about my sin, that is, when I did not repent, he held on to his sin, "*my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.*"

That's what it's like to live as a believer in unrepentant sin. The heaviness of the hand of God, like you're wasting away. But oh, the forgiveness that comes with true repentance and confession of sin. He says in verse 5, "*I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.*"

This is why David starts the Psalm in verse 1 with this declaration: "*How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!*"

When you have known the heaviness of the conviction of the weight of the hand of the Lord because of unrepentant sin, there is nothing so sweet as the peace that comes in the soul because of peace with God through repentance and faith.

For all these reasons, the author says, the fruit that comes to those who are trained by the discipline of the Lord is the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Let me ask you this morning, is your life defined by peace? Peace of the soul? Peace in your relationships? Peace ultimately in your relationship with God? Peace and righteousness go hand in hand as do sin and dysfunction.

Let me ask you, is there sin in your life this morning that's unconfessed and unforsaken? If there is, it will cause dysfunction in every area of your life, and rightly so. And if you are a believer, then God graciously will bring His discipline into your life to rid you of that unrepentant sin and expose it so that it can be forsaken.

But if you're living in unrepentant sin this morning and the hand of God is heavy upon you because of conviction, friend, run to God. Do not walk. Run to God in repentance and faith. Maybe for the first time. Maybe you realize this morning you're not a believer at all. You're an enemy of God who's never come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. What do you do? You

humble yourself in repentance and faith, understanding your only hope is the Lord Jesus Christ, that He lived a perfect life, offered it on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, and rose again on the third day.

And only for those who confess Jesus as Lord, turning from sin and putting their faith in them, is there real reconciliation and eternal peace with the Father, not because we are good people, but because we are bad people, sinners who have been redeemed by a good God through what His Son has done for us.

Listen, if you're not a believer this morning, run to God in repentance and faith. But if you're in Christ and you're harboring sin, what do you do? Run to God in repentance, confessing freely that sin, and to anybody else who you've sinned against, and make it right, confessing your sin before the Lord.

This bears the fruit, the peaceful fruit of righteousness. How foolish it is to live even one more day in unrepentant sin, when there's such a gracious God as this who would forgive you and free you from that terrible, awful weight of sin.

As we close our time this morning, let me just encourage you with one key point of application. **Rejoice in the gift of sanctification.** Rejoice in the gift of sanctification. Do you truly believe that the greatest gift God can give you as a believer is a greater share in His holiness? Do you see that as the greatest good? Is there any other thing in this life that is more valuable to you than holiness?

Understand, if you're a true child of God, then God will, by His discipline, chip away at your grip on that thing, whatever it is that you value above being conformed to the image of Christ. By His discipline, He will chip away at your stronghold on that idol until He rips it from your hand in love to do you the greatest good He can do you, which is to conform you to the image of His Son.

Let me ask you, how are you responding right now to the trials and difficulties that God has providentially brought into your life? Are you being trained by the discipline of the Lord? Or are you kicking against it? Are you refusing to take it seriously and analyze it according to the Scriptures? Are you refusing to humble yourself and walk in obedience and do the hard thing? Listen, Christian, don't quit. Don't cut corners by justifying sin.

Submit to the will of God in your life. Choose to trust and obey God even when it's hard, even when it hurts. And on the other side of that trial, you will reap the peaceful fruit of righteousness. This is the gift of the discipline of the Lord.

Let's pray together. Lord God, we're so grateful to be Your children, to know the gift of redemption, and to be those who have the privilege of calling You Father and therefore experiencing Your loving discipline that You only ever mean for our good, that You might cause us to share in Your holiness. Help us to think this way and live in light of these truths today.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.