



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Geoff Brown

Hebrews 12: 4-11

Winter 2022

"You Have Forgotten The Exhortation"

TRANSCRIPT

We're in Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews 12, everyone knows who wrote the Book of Hebrews—the Holy Spirit. *(laughter)* In chapter 11 He's just gone through 'The Hall of Faith', and then in chapter 12 He's going straight into Jesus being the example in dealing with us in discipline; and how that, in fact, is the love of God working in our lives. So in order to get full context, I'm going to read chapter 12, verse 1 through 11 although I will only exegete verses 4 through 11,

This is the Word of God,

12 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, ²fixing 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.

³For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵and 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;

⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,
And He scourges every son whom He receives."

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? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ 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? ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

Hebrews 12:1-11

May the LORD add His blessing to the study of our Word and time this morning.
Let's pray,

Father, we come before you today and we are wounded people. And You know, too oftentimes, we are not looking to You for help, but looking to others. And yet, Father, You are the God of compassion and Father of all comfort,; Who comforts us in all our troubles so that we may comfort those in any trouble with the comfort that we received from God. And I do pray, as we study in this time this morning, that You would be glorified, that Your people would be edified as we go through the trials of this life, this disciplined course that You have us on. Father, You are so caring for us. You love us. You chose us before the foundation of the world. You will see us through to the end.

And LORD, as we look about, folks here at the Chapel, the difficult times that we've had, there are many here today, they're struggling, either sick or downtrodden, just having a hard time in life, and we pray that You would grant them the joy of the LORD this morning. That they would feel, tangibly, the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension. For the rest of us, LORD, would you help us to be lights in our

neighborhood, in the City of Dallas and beyond, that we would seek to make disciples of all nations.

LORD, you have us here on purpose to do Your work and we pray that we would do it well. And as we stumble, which we always do, that we would continually be brought back to the King of kings, Who loves us so much, realizing that we are just dust, and we could come back to Him every day, confessing our sins and knowing that we are forgiven. Help us today as we study Your Word. I pray that I would teach in a way to be honoring to You.

Father, we do lift up our country, that You would grant grace to our leadership, that You would help them to make wise decisions, that You would even bring about revival in this country, something that You haven't done for a long time. We don't deserve it, we don't, in some sense, expect it but we do believe that You could bring it, if You would. Father, we pray that You would do that.

We lift up the elders and the deacons here at Believers Chapel, that You would grant them understanding. Give the elders wisdom to know how to lead and shepherd; pray that You would help the deacons, that they would serve well; and that You would help each of us that we would be about the work of our Father, whatever You call us to do. In Your Son's name we pray it. Amen.

(Message) As I said, the context of Hebrews 12, in the entire book, we've got Hebrew believers that are struggling. They're undergoing persecution by their fellow countrymen and they are considering returning to the Old Testament laws of sacrifice in order to escape persecution. And the author is exhorting them to realize that Jesus Christ is greater than the angels, He's greater than Moses. Jesus Christ is God. And if they now abandon Him to return to their former ways, they will be lost forever under the terrible wrath of God.

In Hebrews 11, the author wrote of 'The Hall of Faith', providing them examples from the Old Testament of what real faith looks like. It's a faith of being sure of what we hope for, certain of what we do not see. It's clear that without faith it is impossible to

please God. And that following the LORD in this life will result in the miraculous; (either miraculous saving or miraculous perseverance), that the Spirit gives us to the end.

Now, in chapter 12, He exhorts them to lay aside any encumbrances and sins that make them stumble in the Christian race and to fix their eyes upon Jesus Christ; considering Him and all He has done for us in this life and on the cross, so that we don't lose heart. Today, in verses 4 through 11, the author's going to remind them of something they have forgotten.

You see time and time in the Old Testament, the LORD is constantly telling His people to *remember, remember*; 'Remember the promises of God', 'Remember the LORD is with you', 'Remember what He has done in your life.' What's the problem with us? — We tend to forget. He tells us to '*Remember*'. We do the opposite and we forget. And the dangers of forgetting, we'll see here.

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan wrote about it. After Christian and Hopeful step aside from the true way into Bypath Meadow, they end up realizing that, "Uh-oh, we're in trouble." They try to get back on the true way and they fall asleep, (they're so tired), on the grounds of a giant named Despair. The giant captures them and locks them up in Doubting Castle, throwing them into a dark, smelly dungeon, where they are locked up for days without food and water. Giant Despair beats them mercilessly and eventually tells them, 'They just need to kill themselves because there is no way out.'

After several days Christian and Hopeful pray at midnight. And then right before dawn, Christian remembers something. He says to Hopeful, "What a fool, what a fool am I, to live in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty. I have a key in my bosom called *promise* that I am persuaded will open any lock in Doubting Castle." And sure enough, he and Hopeful unlock the prison door and make their escape because of the remembered the promises of God.

Today we will see these folks in the Book of Hebrews; they have forgotten. They've forgotten the promise that really is going to come in the form of an *exhortation*.

The terrible trials that they are going through are surefire signs that God is treating them as sons. You see, what we fail to remember all the time is the trials that we have...what are they really? When you peel them back, what are they? —It's discipline. It's discipline of the LORD. And the point of it is the discipline, (they needed to remember), is meaningful; it's beneficial. That means it's good for them: And they are the very tools that the LORD uses to shape each of us into the image of His Son.

Romans 8:29 states, "For those whom God foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son..." And so I will tell you this, and you'll hear me say it a few times today, 'Your trial, in reality, is discipline. It's not on accident, it is personal, and it's tailor-made to conform you into the image of Jesus Christ by your Father, who loves you and knows what is best for you.'

So let's dive into the text, shall we? Chapter 12, verse 4. "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin." Once again, (the Hebrews, they had their property stolen, they were put in jail, persecuted), they're getting worn down. And as Dan has quoted before, "Faith did not protect them from trials." Have you ever felt that way before as a believer? I thought perhaps, maybe the way some of you have witnessed to others; that 'God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life'; and then you get in the Christian life and you go, 'This doesn't look wonderful at all!' And maybe we've forgotten the words of Jesus Christ where He says in Luke 9:23 and 24, "If anyone would come after Me he must...", what?, "...take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save *his life* will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake...will save it.", '*his life*', is most times about death and denial: Victory is ahead, but not there.

So He's going to remind them the reason as to why this painful discipline is happening. God is treating you as sons. It's expected; this is par for the course. "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 reprov'd by Him.' " (vs5)

Here's what they have forgotten. Literally, what they have forgotten is the Old Testament, Proverbs chapter 3, verse 11 and 12, which is the direct quote mentioned in Hebrews here. They have forgotten that the LORD sends these trials, "You've forgotten the exhortation." Notice this, they've fallen prey to one of two bad ways to handle trials. Number one is *regarding lightly*, (vs5), a discipline of the LORD. And number two, as we'll see in just a moment, is when we *faint* underneath the load of the LORD's discipline.

First off, "My son, do not regard *lightly* the discipline of the LORD." To *regard lightly* is to 'think little of', 'to downplay it', 'to disregard it'. And we would say, 'No! God is sovereign in your life. The discipline you're going through right now is not on accident, it's on purpose.'

Before we go any further, I'd like to line out that there are really four different types of discipline that we see in Scripture. Kent Hughes says there's three kinds, but I think he would agree the fourth one is also a type of discipline. I'll give you the four.

First off, the one that we normally think of is, 'Why are we disciplined, ladies and gentlemen?' We normally think of, 'It's my sin. It has to be.' And certainly we'll cover that one first.

Sometimes discipline is corrective. It's dealing with sin. In 1 Corinthians 11—what's going on? The Corinthians, some of them are more rich and are getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. And they're eating all the food before the poor are able to get off of work and get there; (they don't have anything). The Lord takes the Lord's Supper very seriously. And Paul says, 'That's why some of you have become weak and ill, and some of you have even died.' (vs30). Can you be so caught up in sin that the Lord will remove you from this earth in order to protect His testimony amongst the lost? Yes, He can, and does. That's the first form of discipline, correction.

The second is *prevention* or *preventative* discipline. This sort of discipline happens so that we don't fall into a particular sin. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul describes just an amazing episode in his life. He goes to the highest heaven. He doesn't know if he's in

the body or out of the body, in the sense of he doesn't know he was literally there or was it a vision? But he tells about this. But he doesn't tell you that much because the LORD won't allow it. But he has seen things that you and I could only wish to one day see. And we will one day. And so what has the LORD given to keep Paul from exalting himself? He gives him "a thorn in the flesh", (and literally, that's what Paul says), in order "...to keep me from exalting myself!" (vs7).

What was that thorn? —Aren't you glad the LORD doesn't tell you. Many thought it was perhaps a sickness, an illness, a physical infirmity. It may have actually been a person in his life that Paul just could not get away from. We actually have no idea. I'm so thankful. You know why I'm thankful? Because it applies to every situation we go through in life: this 'preventative thorn in the flesh' that kept Paul from being arrogant with spiritual pride seeping in.

And he begged the Lord three different times "...that it might leave me."; and the Lord says, "My grace is sufficient for you." (vs9). It's a way of saying, 'No, Paul, and through these things, you will become strong because you are weak.' So preventative discipline.

The third type of discipline is *education*. And I would say to you this: Most times, when you see this word, (*discipline*), in Scripture, it's really more about *education*. As a matter of fact, the Greek word for *discipline* is *instruction*—the same root word from where we get our term *disciple*. Disciple and discipline. —Think same thing, if you will, because that's the third different type of discipline. It's education about the LORD; about life; about the world.

In the Book of Job at the very end, Job has been asking questions of the LORD and now the LORD turns the tables and asks questions of Job; questions he can't answer; questions that none of us can answer. Check it out in the later chapters of Job. And what we see in Job chapter 42, eventually Job looks up and he says in verse 2, "I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted."

What is Job saying? He's saying, 'I don't know why my riches were taken away. I don't know why my kids were taken away. I don't know why my health was taken away. But I do know this: The LORD is in charge. He can bring all these things back. He can take my life.' Job can say at a particular point, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him." (Job 13:15). But at the end of the day Job says, 'My life is about the LORD. He can do what He wants.' So, it's education. Many times the discipline in our lives is about *education*.

And finally, the fourth way of discipline, is the term *edification*. Edification: Are there times in life that we can go into an extremely difficult trial and, in some sense, it really was not so much about us but about someone who we need to minister to; someone who's going to go down that same path that we just went down? It could be 10, 15, 20 years from now when the LORD will use your experiences and your understanding of the LORD and His kindness in the midst of horrible trials, to encourage them...Are there times?...Yes!

2 Corinthians 1:3-5, Paul will say 'Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trials so that', (*don't miss that*), 'so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.'

I myself have been through some terrible trials in life; as I know you have as well. What's fascinating is the LORD has brought other people into my life to say, "Geoff, I went through that. Let me tell you about that. Let me tell you how the LORD proved Himself faithful through that." And it causes you to, (sigh), breathe again.

Any of you all have gone through similar sort of situation with cancer; heart disease; loss of children—the LORD doesn't want you to keep that to yourselves. The LORD has purpose in that; He wants to use you to edify other saints.

So those are the four types of discipline: correction, prevention, education, edification. The writer of Hebrews has just said, you need to be careful that you don't start to treat this discipline in your life *lightly*.

And the other extreme would be what? Verse 5b, "...Nor faint when you are reproved, (*or corrected*), by Him." Here's the second way that we could take discipline in our lives wrongly: Not just take it lightly—but get depressed, get apathetic. Have any of you done this before? I'll answer the question, "Yes!"

You know how I know? Because you say something like this in the midst of a trial: "Figures...it figures." You're falling prey to the second issue here. You're not, perhaps, treating your trial lightly, but you're getting depressed; you're getting apathetic; "It figures, this is the way it's going to go. Of course, (*sigh*) figures."

We're going to look at comparison between Jacob and Joseph for a moment, and you're going to see how they handled their trials. Jacob, in Genesis chapter 42, the situation is this: All of his sons, minus Benjamin, have gone down to Egypt to get grain, and they come back. And as you know the story, they've met up with their long-lost brother Joseph but they don't know it's Joseph, (who's now prime minister of the land.)

Well, they come back to their father and they have money in their sacks, (which the Egyptian government will think that they have stolen it). Jacob sees this. And Jacob also notices, 'Where's Simeon?' And the brothers say, 'Oh, by the way, we had to leave him there in Egypt. But we can't go back and get him without bringing Benjamin with us.' And Jacob says this, "All things are against me." (vs36). "All things are against me."; or maybe the way we would say it, "It figures."

And how about Joseph? How does Joseph handle this sort of discipline in his life? Genesis 50, verse 20, when he looks at his brothers, at the end of the book, and says, "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." And you say, 'Oh, well of course. Joseph has the better view of things.' And the reason why is you know it is what? —He sees it.

Frank Seay was helpful to me one time on an airplane. I talked to him about a trial and we were sharing some things, (all of y'all know Frank, an old Chapel guy). And he said, "Geoff, you know the one problem with you?" And I said, "Well, there's many

problems. Which one?" And he says, "You don't see the LORD's work." Well I said, "Of course I don't." "You don't see ..." (and here's our term), "the *benefit*. You don't see the benefit. If you could only see the benefit, you would have no problems with this trial." And I said, "That's exactly right."

But you know, we're supposed to live by faith, not by benefit. And Jacob didn't see the benefit. He didn't realize that God was always working these things for His good. But Joseph, by Genesis 20, could see it. He could see the benefit. And so what do we have to do because we don't get to see the benefit? —We have to believe. We have to actually hold on to the promises of God.

Psalm 23, verse 6, "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will..." (what?) "...*pursue* me all the days of my life." Last time I preached here I tried to make that very clear. It's not just *follow*, —it's *chase*, it's *pursue*. It's hounds running after a fox—and they won't stop; they keep going.

And that's the way the LORD is working in you. And not just the afterlife—in this present life, day by day, the LORD is continually giving you goodness and lovingkindness. Hard to see some days, as we'll see.

Verse 6, "For those whom the LORD loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." You see, they had forgotten that discipline is what the love of the LORD looks like. But it looks a little strange, you might note, because He says, "He scourges every son He receives."

First off, that Greek word, *receives*. It typically means to welcome someone favorably. We see that in Acts 15, (vs4), at the end of the first missionary journey, "When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received", (*there's our word*), "received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them."

Well in verse 6, did you note how the LORD receives us? With scourges? That doesn't sound like a very good homecoming to me. Well, stay with me. First off, this

word, *scourge*, really the root word is describing the noun of a whip. They called this whip, they called them *mastiks*. And the *mastiks*, just to let you know a little bit more about this scourging process, was a whip of leather; a whip of leather straps with pieces of metal sewn into them. So to *scourge* someone was to tie them up to a pole and to whip them.

Now, before any of you little kids start looking at me going, 'That doesn't sound like a way that I want to be disciplined.' This passage must be seen in its context. It's using figurative language to describe the LORD's discipline for us. So, what is He trying to describe in one word? —'Painful' 'Extremely painful', the LORD's discipline.

Adoniram Judson experienced this. He was America's, at one time, America's most popular missionary. He went to Burma in the 19th century. He was, after two weeks of marrying his wife, Ann, they went to Burma; age 24 and age 23. William Carey, who you're probably familiar with, a British missionary, told Judson specifically, "Don't go there. My son Felix has gone there, and it's not a good place. It's a missionary graveyard." But Judson and his wife went anyway.

Judson spent nearly 40 years in Burma. He lost two wives and seven of his 13 children. In the 108 degree heat they struggled with cholera, malaria, dysentery. He was horribly tortured by the Burmese government. After his first wife and all 3 of his children died, he went through an incredible time of depression. He moved into a tiger-infested jungle for 40 days. He dug his own grave next to hers and sat—and waited for death to come. He wrote in his journal the following, "God is to me the great unknown. I believe in Him, but I find Him not."

Soon afterwards, the LORD, in His incredible mercy, brought him out of the darkness. Judson moved back to minister to others and he was able to translate the Bible into Burmese—an excellent translation still used today in Burma. The LORD used him to build the Baptist Church in Burma. Today there's over 5000 congregations and 1.7 million members. The man struggled. He felt the *mastiks* on his back, as many of us have.

And now He tells us, 'Why is this going on?' Verse 7 and 8, "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."

So He's saying, first off, 'What son is there and the father does not discipline?' Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the *disciplined instruction* of the Lord." Note this; If you are not disciplined, what are you? You're not part of the family. A good father disciplines his own children, not strangers. And that is certainly true of the Lord.

There was something special about your own kids back then—and even to this day. Roman children, described by F. F. Bruce, Scottish commentator says this, "A father would spend much care and patience on the upbringing of a true born son whom he hoped to make a wealthy heir. And at the time, such a son might have to undergo much more irksome discipline than an illegitimate child for whom no future of honor was imagined."

So to put it like this: Ishmael was not taken to Mt. Moriah, to undergo a possible sacrifice. Why? Well in a sense, he was illegitimate in the sense that he was not the promised seed. Ishmael's down in Egypt, learning how to work a new bow. He's meeting some Egyptian gals, dating perhaps, enjoying life—while Isaac is on the sacrificial pyre. Why? Because he's the true son.

So how do we handle the LORD's discipline when it comes upon us? I'll quote Andrew Murray, Scottish missionary ,who says this, "In every trial, small or great, first of all 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.' "

Ladies and gentlemen, your trial, this discipline in your life, is not on accident. It is personal. It is tailor-made to conform you into the image of Jesus Christ, by your Father, Who loves you and knows what is best for you.

Verse 9 and 10. "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."

What's the author doing here? Well, it's called a *a fortiori* argument. It's Latin, which means, 'from lesser to greater...' In essence He's saying this, 'If we submitted to the discipline of our earthly fathers...' (and in the Greek it says, "the fathers of our flesh". Now stay with me; that's not *sinful* used in that term. But the point of it is, these are our biological or adopted fathers here on this earth.) '...if submitting to the discipline of our fathers of the flesh brought good to us, how much more will it be submitting to our Father of the spirits?' —That's the LORD. He fully knows how to raise us up.

And note this, it says that "...He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness." (vs10). But the idea is that, not only 'in His holiness', but also that we would live. Did you see that? In verse 10, "we may share His holiness", but also that we may "live", (vs9). It's really probably better translated that 'we would receive life.' By submitting to the LORD, 'we *receive life*.'

Proverbs 6:23 puts it this way; "The commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life." Now if you're like me, when you go through incredibly hard discipline you would say, 'This is the way of death.' And the LORD is saying, "No, no, no." It's that Greek word *hupotassó*—'submit'. It means *to get under*. It's a military term and it's not derogatory in anyway. The idea is that, 'You get below your commanding officer.' You get below your commanding officer who is Christ, who then can give you *life*. Out here you don't have life. Underneath the discipline of the LORD you get *life*.

John Brown of Haddington, Scotland, in the 18th century: He was a pastor. He and his wife lost six kids, six children in infancy. Only two survive into adulthood. For those that have lost children before, you know what this man and his wife went through. He says this, "Let us keep on waiting on God and the way of His judgments; in patience possessing our souls seeing the LORD's hand in all that we meet with; humbling ourselves

under humbling providences; mourning but never murmuring under His hand; and ever remarking how the minutest circumstances of our lives are directed by the overruling providence of God."

I'll give you another verse of Scripture that makes this even more clear. Matthew 10:29, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father." And even "...the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (vs30). So we receive *life* as we get under His hand. We don't murmur, we don't faint, we don't take it lightly.

Note this,(vs10), "For they disciplined us for a short time...", is literally in the Greek, "for a few days, as it seemed best to them." Well, you may see that word *seemed*, "seemed best to them." What is that telling you? It's telling you that your parents didn't always do right. And also tells you that, 'You, as parents in here, don't always discipline your kids correctly, either.' "...but He", (*on the other hand*), "disciplined us for our good, so that we may share His holiness." That phrase, "for our good," is not there in the original.

Have you ever been to a symphony before? *Symphony*, it's really a Greek term. *Sym* means 'together.' And then the second part of that word, phony, is *phóné*—which means *voice* or *sound*. So what does a symphony do? It brings together the sounds in perfect harmony—and it sounds good. That's what a symphony does.

Right here it's the same sort of word; It's *sumphero*. And it's the idea is, that it 'brings together.' *It brings together* the horrible things of life and the things that we would consider, 'good things', 'happy things' in our lives, and it brings them together for "our good."

Huh, What's that sound like to you? I think we've heard that repeated before, haven't we? Romans 8:28, "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." That's what this text is telling you as well: He disciplines you, bringing it all together so that we may share in His holiness.

Today perhaps, you need to be reminded, as I do, of the LORD—of really what He is like towards us. Psalm 145, verse 17, "The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds." The LORD is kind. When He treats you the way He does, He's kind. He sees the *benefit* that you don't see.

Psalm 119, verse 71, "It is good for me to be afflicted, so that I might learn Your decrees." It's *good* for me to be afflicted. Psalm 119, verse 75, "I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." I hope you caught those terms, *kind, good, faithful*. Easy to say—but incredibly hard to live out. Especially for those who have suffered for so long, perhaps due to sins inflicted upon you or due to your own sins and regrets.

Those sometimes, I think, are the toughest, when we have the trials of life that our fingerprints are all over. But note this, even those, the LORD is working for our good. So, instead of accepting your trial as something to survive, [Which is what I do with that discipline that's coming upon me: if it's *corrective*, if it's *instructive*, if it's *educational*, or if it has to do with *edification*, I just try to survive this thing. Don't you?], I'm trying to tell you, survival is not enough. Surviving is not enough. It's *thriving* that we need to shoot for.

J. C. Ryle, British pastor in the 19th century puts it this way, "By affliction God shows us our emptiness and weakness. He draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our affections, weans us from the world, makes us long for heaven. We thank God for every storm." 'We thank God for every storm.'

Verse 11, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." —What a dose of reality that verse is!

Trials are sorrowful. The discipline that we go through is painful, yet I can rejoice by faith because I believe it's working for my good. And isn't this what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:10? "...sorrowful, but always rejoicing." It's so interesting. He doesn't back away from the sorrow. Be wary of those folks, when you're going through trials,

and they come up and slap you on the back and smile and say, "The LORD's doing His work in you." We're supposed to 'weep with those who weep.' (Rom 12:15). And yet at the same time, we don't discount the sorrow, but we also can say "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

So it begs the question, 'Is God indifferent to it all?' I mean, He's doling out the discipline; is He indifferent to it? And I'll give you two points to remember. No, He's not indifferent. That's literally one of the points of Hebrews. God sent His Son: and He suffered, like us, more than us. Hebrews 5:8, it says, 'He learned obedience through what he suffered.' So all we're doing is literally jumping on the train of Jesus Christ; we're following in His coat tails. God suffers.—Yes!

And secondly, and Dan Duncan has been so helpful for me on this, he pointed this verse to me; and to you as well I believe, Lamentations 3:33, when it refers to God's discipline and His affliction of us, it says, "He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men." He doesn't get a delight in causing us pain and hurt—but He gets to see the *benefit* that you and I don't get to see right now. Dan, to quote him, talks about the discipline that the LORD gives us is, "A love that hurts—but does not harm." It hurts but it does not harm.

Continuing on, the last part of verse 11, "Yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." There's that word *trained*. And it really gets its meaning from the word *gymnasium*. It's by hard work and pain, terribly painful, the Holy Spirit is making you look like the Son. Let me give you a huge caveat right now, (and if you miss this then you've missed a large part of this sermon). You need to note this: **You presently, and completely, look like Jesus Christ today to the Father because of the blood of Christ that covered you in the day of your justification. You are perfectly righteous in God's sight. You have His righteousness now. Perfect.** Yet now the Spirit is in the midst of making you look holy; in the sense that He is sanctifying you in practice when you already have it in reality. Does that make sense?

2 Corinthians 7:1 talks about that. We are told to, 'Purify ourselves from all these things that contaminate us.' And some of us go, 'I thought I was already pure.' You are, in the sight of God, in reality. But in practice, the LORD is making you look like the Son. He's chipping off everything that doesn't look like the Son. You're on the team, if you will, but now you need to get out and work out. —And who knew more about that than Tom Landry? To quote him, he says 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." Because, you see what happens, right? That one word, "*afterwards*". *Afterwards* the result is to look like Christ.

And I know myself, after a time of trials, I looked at my life and I thought, "I think I'm worse now than I was before. I think I was more godly then, not that I was godly, but I'm getting worse from these trials." And I would tell you this, "Take encouragement. It doesn't happen overnight."

Spurgeon puts it this way, "Many believers are deeply grieved, because they do not at once feel that they have been profited by their afflictions. Well, you do not expect to see apples or plums on a tree which you have planted but a week. Only little children put their seeds into the flower garden and then expect to see them grow into plants in an hour." Philippians 1:6 says it better, "...He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion, (*or perfection*), to the day of Christ Jesus."

66 years ago this month, Elizabeth Eliot lost her first husband, Jim Eliot, along with four other missionaries, martyred by Auca Indians. She lost her second husband, Addison Leitch, to cancer. Elizabeth told of being in Wales, and watching a shepherd and his dog. The dog would herd the sheep up a ramp and into a tank of antiseptic, where they had to be bathed. The sheep struggled to climb out, but the dog would snarl and snap in their faces to force them back in. Just as they were about to come out of the tank, the shepherd used a wooden tool to grab the rams by the horns, shove them back in the tank, and hold them under the antiseptic again for a few seconds. Elizabeth asked the shepherd's wife if the sheep understood what was happening? Her reply, "They haven't got a clue." Elizabeth then said, "I've had some experiences in my life that have

made me feel very sympathetic to those poor rams. I couldn't figure out any reason for the treatment I was getting from the Shepherd I trusted. And He didn't give a hint of explanation."

Later on she points out that "We are ultimately called to trust and obey our shepherd, knowing that He has our best interests at heart. He sees the endgame. He sees the benefit that you and I don't."

Your trial, this discipline in your lives, is not an accident; it is personal. It is tailor-made to conform you into the image of Jesus Christ, by your Father who loves you and knows what is best for you.

Two groups of people in this room, believers and unbelievers. If you're a believer, I would tell you, you need to trust the Shepherd's heart today, even when you cannot understand why His hands keep holding you under. The LORD is doing His work. Leave Him alone. Trust Him. He loves you. He died for you. He's got you.

If you're an unbeliever today, I would tell you this. Your present shepherd who's holding you under is no shepherd at all. He's a hireling. He holds you under only to steal, kill, and destroy everything that you have—and everything that you would ever be.

My encouragement to you today is to see that you are a great, wicked, sinner: and you are not righteous in God's sight. You will be eviscerated one day and stand before Him, at least stand for a moment, before you fall on your face and He sends you to an eternity apart from Him in hell. Trust Him today.

Jesus Christ came to this world to pay for sin, to be the perfect, spotless Lamb. You cannot pay for your sins. We know that three days later He rose from the dead as proof positive that that is the Savior of the world. We can follow Him. He's the One. And one day He splits the sky open—and we look forward to that day.

***"You Have Forgotten The Exhortation" by Geoff Brown
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Father, You are our only salvation. Our only hope is in You. At the end of the day, we know You can be trusted, that You love us, You care for us and You won't let us go.

Now, may the LORD bless you and keep you. May the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. In the name of our LORD Jesus Christ. Amen.

(End of Audio)