

The Privilege of Being Chastened

SR: Hebrews 12:1-13 (NKJV)
Text: Hebrews 12:3-8

Sufferings are the norm of the Christian life. Christ suffered, so too the Hebrews who the author is writing to. The cloud of witnesses, the heroes of faith from chapter 11, they suffered for their faith. This opposition is the backdrop of their faith. We don't really understand the strength of their faith, nor can we appreciate its reality unless we see by what things their faith was tested.

Like these Old Testament saints, these Hebrews were to endure in their faith in their troubles. But the apostle lays before them an argument in a compassionate, pastoral manner to say that suffering for the person of faith is not just the norm for us in this world, but it is a privilege that God gives. What should we learn from it? How then should we receive suffering?

Heb. 12:3-8 *For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (4) You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. (5) And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR BE DISCOURAGED WHEN YOU ARE REBUKED BY HIM; (6) FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." (7) If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? (8) But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

I. The Believer's Example of Suffering

1. The Degree of Suffering of these Hebrews: They had not *yet resisted unto bloodshed*. Yet they were being sorely tested.

2. The Type of Suffering of these Hebrews: They were being persecuted for their faith. The Greek word for striving against, means to agonize against. In order to not deny faith in Jesus Christ, they had to agonize. In Hebrews 10, this letter-writer commends them for how earlier on, *they endured a great struggle of sufferings* (10:32), they were made a spectacle by their tribulations, and they allowed themselves to be stigmatized as helpers of those who were persecuted. They even joyfully accepted the *plundering of their own property*. In the suffering they now experienced at the writing of this letter, they were becoming weary.

3. Our Suffering: We experience scoffing, ridicule, even disadvantages if we loyally follow Christ. But there is also suffering that God calls us unto: a disease, a medical condition or diagnosis. Or perhaps financial, family trouble, loneliness.

4. Christ's Suffering: Christ endured strife and hostility from sinners against Himself.
- a. Its degree: He was targeted by them, He was the victim of malicious attacks. He went willingly under this and in this He is an example. He was regarded as cursed by men, as something unclean, sinful. His suffering went beyond the plundering His property--His blood was poured out on the cross.
- b. Its undeserving nature: He was innocent, undeserving of this.
- c. Its effect: He bore the full penalty of sin and death from God in order to gain the victory for His people. You are released from your sin if you believe in Him. He bore your sins so that the suffering you experience is not a punishment for your sin, but for another purpose. Further, He suffered that He might be able to help and intercede for those who are being tempted and suffering. He understands and strengthens believers in their troubles.
5. The exhortation: Consider Him and believe on Him and you will see how He is with you to help you and bring you through. You have certain hope then in sufferings and no need faint nor be discouraged.

II. The Believer's Lesson in Suffering

Lesson 1: What Our Suffering Is

- A. What Suffering is Not: Suffering is not God delighting in causing us pain. Its not His pleasure to see you wince when the agony is great. He is not sadistic. Nor is He punishing you. The suffering of believers is not because God is angry with them.
- B. Chastening is part of the Lord's nurture for us. The word for chastening here is nurture in Ephesians 6:4: *Fathers bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* It is the word for instruction in 2 Tim. 3:17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for instruction in righteousness.* It embraces the responsibility of the parents toward their children.
- C. Chastening is a teaching tool. The psalmist in Ps. 73 sees the wicked flourishing, carrying on in wickedness and prospering at it, while he suffers. But God used affliction to cause him to seek the Lord and see the life, satisfaction and blessedness of being the Lord's. God used affliction to part of His nurturing of His child.
- D. Chastening involves pain. Chastening is applying a bit of pain, a bit of hurt to help lead us in the right direction. It might be a rebuke that humbles us.
- E. We often have a wrong perspective regarding chastening. We often think of it as a punishment, as almost always the result of one particular sin, which it may indeed be. But this is not always the case--ex. Job. We are all full of sinful tendencies and weaknesses. With patience and mercy God uses adversity and pain break down our pride, to bring us back, to draw us close to Him. He is jealous for our love.

Lesson 2: Who Our God Is

A. Chastening is evidence that we are God's children, and that He is our Father. He is dealing with us as His children. A father will discipline his own child, but another child he will not. If we believe in Jesus Christ, God is our Father who will chasten us.

B. Chastening is a privilege we have because we are God's children. Children have the privilege of being chastised by their parents. May other children receive this? You children are privileged to receive discipline from your parents. This means that they are acting towards you as true parents. Many children today do not have this. It is the responsibility of parent to discipline their children. *Pro. 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.* Parenting is to be modelled after the Father's nurturing of us. The Father chastens those who are His.

Lesson 3: What Our God Is Like

1. In His love, He's given Jesus Christ for us. Rom. 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

2. In His love, He desires what is best. Because of this He allows us pain and will deny us some of our longings. He knows that this will help you.

3. In His love, He cherishes His plans for us. If He didn't love you, He would give you over to all your desires just as He does for the wicked.

III. The Believer's Outlook in Suffering

1. We are called to endure it as Christ did, supported by the grace that comes from Jesus Christ.

2. We are comforted in knowing what God is doing in our suffering. Our sin has brought a curse on everything: our education, our work, bearing and raising children, our relationships. But for the believer, God in His sovereignty has reversed these curses in our lives, and uses them for our good. *All things work together for good for those who love Him!* He sanctifies our troubles and makes them a blessing for us.

3. We are warned because if we do not trust in Christ for salvation, there is no relief from our sufferings. Rather our miseries here are a small taste of judgment here that God will give us in full for eternity.

3. We are called to not despise our troubles and challenges. Rather we thank God for these. In these, God is reaffirming His love for us and bringing us closer.