

## Review of the Context

- 10:19 – 25 Admonition to Hold on to Your Faith
- 10:26 – 31 Warning of Final Judgment if You Fall Away
- 10:32 – 39 Exhortation to Not Cast Away Your Confidence
- 11:1 – 40 Persevering Faith Leads to Final Salvation
- 12:1 – 3 Jesus is the Supreme Example of Faith

## The Athletic Metaphor

It is important to keep in mind that our author is using the metaphor of athletic competition and the physical training and moral education necessary to compete.

The “chastisement” or the “discipline” of the Lord should not be understood as punitive or punishment, but rather as the discipline a father would require of his legitimate sons (12:5). The discipline here is not as a result of sin. It is a result of sonship. It is an indication of love, not anger or wrath (12:6).

The discipline here is corrective and educative. It is not necessarily a response to sins committed so much as it is a preparation to overcome sin and to be drawn away from it.

## The Necessity of the Lord's Discipline: 12:4

Part of that discipline includes “the struggle against sin” (12:4). The author calls this “a great fight of afflictions” in 10:32. The sin is specifically the sin which tempts us to cast away our confidence, to lose heart, to be wearied and faint in our minds as a result of the afflictions we are enduring as followers of Jesus (10:32-34). Those trials include:

- Imprisonment (cp. 13:3)
- Confiscation of property and possessions
- Reproach, Slander, and Ostracization (cp. 1 Peter 4:14)

To drive home his point that the discipline of the Lord is not due to sin, he points to Jesus who himself endured suffering, but not because of his sin (12:3). But unlike Jesus, the readers of this letter have “not yet resisted unto blood.” In other words, they themselves have not been martyred as the ultimate end of their afflictions, in contrast to Jesus who went to the cross and suffered the ultimate shame.

As we endure very real afflictions, we must fight against the sin which would tempt us to fall away from the faith. This is what makes discipline (not punishment) necessary.

## The Motive of the Lord's Discipline: 12:5 – 9

The discipline in view here is the discipline which a father requires of his legitimate sons, not a punishment which a father metes out to his sons: 12:5-6

- The author cites nearly verbatim Proverbs 3:11-12, which Jesus also cites in his letter to the church at Laodicea (3:19).
- He will come back to Proverbs later when he speaks of “making straight paths for your feet” in verse 13 (Proverbs 4:15)

It is as a father that God lovingly disciplines (corrects and educates) his sons. The entire context of 12:5-9 is language about fathers and sons. Six times he refers to “sons.”

The Lord's discipline is the proof of sonship (12:7-8).

There are two responses we are to have to the loving discipline which God as our Father puts us through (12:5):

- Do not despise it
- Do not faint as a result of it (cp. 12:3)

In other words, do not be discouraged by the Lord's discipline because it does not signify his anger with us but his love for us. God is dealing with us as his sons, and such discipline serves as proof that we are part of his family. Since we are God's sons, it follows that we will be disciplined and trained by him as our Father.

In verse 9 the author contrasts the discipline of earthly fathers with the discipline of our heavenly Father. Keep in mind that throughout the letter the author has been contrasting the earthly with the heavenly, and he does so here.

- Earthly fathers discipline their sons according to their best understanding of what is necessary, and because their understanding is limited, their correctives are imperfect and flawed.
- Our heavenly Father disciplines us with perfect knowledge of what is necessary, and therefore his correctives always have the intended effect: our holiness.
- Earthly father imperfectly discipline us, and yet we respect them.
- Our heavenly Father perfectly disciplines us, therefore he is worthy of our submission.

#### **The Objective of the Lord's Discipline: 12:10 – 11**

And so, the motive of the Lord's discipline is love, but not just any kind of love. It is the love of a father for his sons, who disciplines (not punishes) them for their benefit and ultimate good.

What is this ultimate good? Righteousness or holiness. But not just our sanctification. The objective is a participation in God's holiness.

But the Lord's discipline isn't pleasant (v. 11). And because it isn't pleasant we have to keep our eyes fixed on the long view. What is our suffering ultimately working in us: "the peaceable fruit of righteousness," a righteousness that is peaceful and satisfying which makes the struggle against sin worthwhile.

This "long view" mentality is the emphasis throughout the letter and is the key to endurance. It is the essence of what it means to "live by faith" (10:38). The "long view" is what grounds our hope in Jesus (2:9; 3:6; 4:14; 6:17-20; 12:2).