

SUBMITTING TO GOD'S DISCIPLINE

Submitting To God's Discipline

Key idea:

Christians, covered by the blood of Christ, can no longer be punished for their sins – but they will be tested and disciplined by their loving Father. Every trial both tests *and* disciplines us. The pain of discipline is worth it, but it will grow worse if we do not submit to it. We cannot be trained by God's discipline if we are discouraged by it or resist it. Therefore, we must take heart and endure the pain of God's discipline, trusting Him to heal us of the sins that cripple our hearts.

Key text:

Hebrews 12: 12-13

“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”

Key points:

1. As a Christian, suffering is only for the purpose of testing and discipline, *not* punishment. We who have Christ can never experience suffering for the purpose of punishment, but we will be tested and disciplined.
2. The pain of discipline is worth it. God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness, bearing the peaceful fruits of righteousness.
3. Suffering will not refine us if we do not submit to God's discipline. Therefore, rather than rejecting it and becoming discouraged, we should stand up under it in His strength so that what is lame may be healed.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. When have I wrestled with understanding the purpose of what I am suffering? Have I wrestled with the purpose of what others are suffering?

3. Are there things in life I believe God is punishing me for? How does that reconcile with the Good News that Jesus already “paid it all”?
4. Do I cherish my trials? Do I think they are worth enduring? What are some trials I look back upon with fond memories of how God showed himself to be faithful?
5. Do I understand the purpose of suffering through the lens of both testing and discipline?
6. Do I look for the sins that are revealed to be in my heart when I suffer, or do I more often have a self-righteous attitude that avoids taking responsibility for my responses during hard times?
7. Am I confident I can discern between testing and discipline?
8. When I am tempted to doubt God’s goodness and ability and grow discouraged? Why do I find it hard to trust God in that situation?
9. Do I recognize that weariness and discouragement are just as much a problem as outright defiance and despising God’s discipline?
10. How can I submit to God’s discipline in my life? What is lame in my heart that God can heal in His power?
11. Who will I call or see to encourage this week? Are there believers around me who are struggling to make sense of their suffering? Who can I encourage to worship the King this coming Sunday?