

## An Honest Encouragement for the Weary and Faint-Hearted

*“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.”*

Hebrews 12: 12-13

1. We are all acquainted with suffering. Some of us certainly to a greater degree than others, but there is not a man, woman, or child here today who hasn't suffered through something.
2. We've all been frustrated and confused trying to make sense of what we are suffering. We've wondered in tears, why is God allowing something this awful to happen?
3. The Christians addressed by the writer of Hebrews in this passage were asking similar questions.
4. Recently, I have been brought to ask these same questions myself!
5. If you remember the book of Job, these were the same type of questions that Job wrestled with! He had lived an honest, generous, faithful life but God had allowed Him to lose everything.
6. Brothers and sisters, if we cannot discern correctly the purpose of our suffering, our tendency will be to become weary and discouraged. Our hands will droop, our knees will grow weak. Our tendency is to become angry at God, upset, confused, discouraged, and depressed. And in this condition, we cannot see clearly. Our vision is clouded and we will not make any progress so long as that is our condition.
7. We cannot rush forward without taking the time to understand what discipline is and what it is not. Do not be like Martha who busied herself with many things and many distractions but was unwilling to sit and learn at the feet of Jesus. Clear your minds for once. Quiet all of the thoughts you've had this week, take a break from turmoil in your heart and see if perhaps if you have missed something before you draw any more conclusions. What is the purpose of your suffering? Are you confident about it? Or are you still wrestling with it?

**I. ALL DISCIPLINE IS PAINFUL.** *“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant”*

1. Suffering is often compared to fire in the scriptures. Suffering, like fire, may be used for different purposes.
2. Suffering can serve three purposes according to Scripture: punishment, trial, and discipline. The same pain and suffering that comes upon one person in judgement, may also be used to test someone, or to discipline them.
3. (PUNISHMENT) When I say punishment, I mean punishment in the judicial sense. The legal punishment that breaking the law deserves. Punishment is not simply a consequence. Punishment is the legally required and just consequence for a crime. Punishment is execution of God's wrath and justice. *Malachi 4:1 “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them.”*
4. Now without Christ, this would be the end of our discussion! This would be the only purpose of what we are suffering! *“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” Romans 3:11-12*
5. But with Christ, by the shedding of his blood, those of us who are covered by his blood are no longer subject to God's punishment though we deserve it fully! *“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” Hebrews 10:14*
6. (TESTING) Now we know that the children of God cannot be punished, but through suffering they can be tested. And God promises to do so! *“The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.” Psalms 11:5*
7. Suffering provides us the opportunity to test the genuineness of our faith like gold is tested for purity. Christ is called the “refiner's fire”, and like a refiner of gold, He tests his people in the furnace of affliction so that they may know with confidence whether or not they are in Him. *“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes*

*though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:6-7*

8. Many of you appear from the outside to have a faith and character of pure gold! And in your untested, solid state untouched by the heat of affliction, you might fool anyone and even yourself that you are a true follower of Jesus.
9. Don't you cherish your trials, those of you who trust in Jesus!? Was this his first command to you, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."? *"For it has been granted to you that for sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake."* Philippians 1:29
10. (DISCIPLINE) But once again, our text does not say "all testing seems painful rather than pleasant", but that "all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant". How are we to distinguish, then, between testing and discipline?
11. Testing reveals the true gold of faith, while discipline reveals the black impurities of sin. Every trial and suffering we go through that tests our faith will also be used to discipline us.
12. Now if discipline isn't punishment, if discipline is done out of a heart of love, then why is discipline painful? Well, in the first place, discipline is painful because the sin you are being disciplined for wounds your soul. *"Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices."* Proverbs 1:31

**II. THE GOOD PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE.** *"but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness"*

1. Our hope is in the wonderful purpose of discipline, yielding "the peaceful fruit of righteousness"! Righteousness is the very essence of Heaven. If you are in Christ, you have not simply been saved to go to Heaven, you have been saved to be HOLY. *"...but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness."* Hebrews 12:10 This, above all others, is the burning passion that fills the reborn heart of a true Christian.

**III. AN IMPORTANT CONDITION.** *"by those who have been trained by it"*

1. Just because you are in the furnace of discipline does not mean you are being trained by it. Just because you feel the blows of the rod does not mean you are going to yield the peaceful fruit of it. *"A rebuke*

*impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool."*  
Proverbs 17:10

2. When tried in the furnace of suffering, the Lord provides us the opportunity to see clearly the sin that still remains in us. And under that discipline, we *may* be trained by it – but only if we acknowledge that great mass of slag that surfaces in our hearts and beg our Lord to remove it by His grace.

**IV. AN HONEST EXHORTATION TO THE FAINT-HEARTED.**

*"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."*

1. Why do we become weary and discouraged under by our suffering? It cannot be because we are being punished, for that is an impossibility for the children of God. It cannot simply be because of the difficulty of your trial. If our hearts were full of the pure gold of faith, we would be singing for joy in the chains of the dungeon with Paul and Silas after having been whipped and beaten. Martyrs have been burnt at the stake with praises on their lips. The only option remaining is this: We are discouraged and weary because we have not truly submitted to His discipline. *"If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."* Proverbs 1:23
2. I have met with some who are convinced that the pit of their despair, weariness, and depression is so deep that there is no coming out. It should be no surprise to us that when a Christian becomes discouraged, their despair may very well become far deeper, far blacker than the despair of others. To know to true freedom of life with Christ is to know the true horror of life without him.
3. So long as we are weary, faint, and discouraged we shall never be trained by the Lord's discipline. **You can never be trained by God's discipline if you are discouraged by it.** Because if you do not earnestly submit to God's discipline you will experience a painful result, "What is lame will be put out of joint".
4. Where does each one of us need to make straight paths for our feet as we submit to God's discipline? How have we responded sinfully to

your trials? Where have you given into the temptation to be discouraged or bitter? What desire in your heart is causing this?

- a. God is not asking us to not grieve what we have suffered unjustly. If you do not know what it means to lament, please talk with an elder or our pastor about godly grief.
5. If you do earnestly submit to God's discipline you will experience a wonderful result, "What is lame will rather be healed"! *"Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood."*  
*Hebrews 12: 3-4*
6. To close, I must finish with a word to those who have never known the discipline of Lord. If you do not submit to Christ, if you will go on sinning deliberately after receiving a knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for your sin, but a fearful expectation of judgement.