

## **The Purpose of God's Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)**

Scripture often uses earthly things, earthly analogies and metaphors, in order to illustrate spiritual truth. This is in fact what the parables are: Jesus taking earthly ideas, earthly stories, and using them to communicate spiritual truth.

Scripture uses symbols and metaphors, analogies. Many of the events of the Old Testament—the feasts and the festivals and the things that were connected with the old covenant and the Old Testament—those are themselves an earthly acting out of spiritual truths and spiritual realities. There were spiritual truths communicated through the things that the nation of Israel observed and celebrated. There are Old Testament events like the flood and the exodus and the Passover which are themselves not just stories in Scripture, but they are historical events with a spiritual significance and also spiritual parallels in and under the new covenant.

The history of Israel is filled with events that teach spiritual truth. This is something we are familiar with, as often we will point to physical things in the physical realm to illustrate and analogize spiritual truth in the spiritual realm.

In fact, we have such an analogy in Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 3 with the race that we are to run with endurance. Just the analogy itself of a race. A race is likened there in those verses to the Christian life and finishing with endurance and running with endurance. And so we are likened to runners who are running a race in a stadium, being watched by a large cloud of witnesses.

But as they say, every analogy limps. No matter what analogy you give, there's always a way in which the analogy falls short of the reality. Every analogy has its liabilities. And pictures and images have those limitations because they're not always perfect pictures or perfect images of spiritual truths and spiritual things. And as we've been discussing discipline in Hebrews chapter 12, verses 4–11, we have likened God's discipline to the discipline that is given to us by our earthly parents. And there is a way in which those similarities are very striking, in which we can draw very good analogies between the earthly discipline that our earthly parents give to us in this world and the spiritual discipline that our spiritual Father gives to us in our spirit, in our soul.

But there is a way in which that analogy can limp, and it does have its limitations. I am aware—and this is the limitation—I am aware that not everybody in this room had perfect parents who disciplined you perfectly all of the time, who always got it right.

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God's Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

Jesus did not have perfect parents. And if Jesus did not have perfect parents, there's nobody in this room who had perfect parents. I grew up in a home without a father at all. He never disciplined me because he was never there. The only thing my father ever did to me was lie to me. The five or six times that I saw him between the age of three and the age of twenty-one, I can associate a lie that he told me on every one of those occasions.

I know that there are people sitting here who have grown up in households and in homes and under parents that are abusive, or that were abusive, neglectful, absent, lazy, indifferent, unloving, inconsistent. Parents who disciplined you too harshly, parents who were far too lenient in their discipline, parents who seemed to care all too much, and parents who seemed not to care at all. There are people here today who grew up in such an environment.

And so when we talk about earthly discipline in the earthly realm with our physical fathers and we liken that to spiritual discipline that God does as our heavenly Father, we run afoul of the danger—I should say there is the danger—that we will take our experience in our imperfect environment and that we will translate that into our image of God. Often this is what happens in people's minds.

People who have grown up in an abusive environment cannot think of God as a loving, benevolent, gracious, and perfect Father because their only understanding of a father is somebody who was abusive or neglectful or negligent in some way in their upbringing and in their discipline.

So that is where the analogy limps. The author of Hebrews is aware that there are limitations to his analogy and he mentions them in verse 10. Our study of God's Word up to this point has drawn largely upon the parallels between the earthly and the spiritual. And yet the author is aware that earthly parenting has its limitations and all of us face them.

I wish it were true that I as a parent had perfectly disciplined all of my children perfectly all of the time. But that's not true. I did not do that. And I would never, even in discussing what good discipline is, want to communicate that I was flawless in it, because I wasn't. And I've talked to my children about this. They know that, my wife knows that, I know that, and anybody who saw us do that knows that. In spite of that, my children have somehow grown up to not be vagrants and delinquents and criminals. So far, so good. Tomorrow is another day. But so far so good. The imperfect parenting

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

that I was somehow able to instill in my own children's lives did not come from me in a way in which I was unaware of my own limitations.

Verse 10 talks about some of the fallible limitations that we have. Look at it. “For they disciplined us for a short time [that's a limitation] as seemed best to them [that's a limitation], but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.” Now, the things that limit and make fallible and imperfect our attempts at parenting and disciplining our children, those limitations like that there's sin involved in it, there's wrong motives involved in it, we are sometimes lazy and lax in doing it, sometimes we are inconsistent, sometimes we are too harsh, sometimes we are not harsh enough, sometimes we go into a situation not knowing all the details of that situation, and so our discipline of our children is limited by those things, none of those things limit God. He is not limited by a lack of knowledge, He's not limited by sinful motives. There's no foolishness involved in His discipline, no fatigue or frustration. He is not ignorant, He has no inabilities. All of those things that plague us in our parenting, none of them plague God, so that all of God's discipline of us in the spiritual realm, all of it is always perfect. It's perfect in its timing, it's perfect in its harshness, it is perfect in its design, and it is always perfect in its outcome. In fact, in God's discipline, He has intended for us the absolute best thing that can be given to us through discipline. And that is, namely, our good—that we would share His holiness. You see it at the end of verse 10: “. . . so that we may share His holiness.”

Now, there are a number of contrasts in verses 9 and 10 between earthly fathers and spiritual fathers. The author does not want us to think that everything that we might have experienced or received from the earthly fathers is perfectly analogous to a heavenly discipline that we have received from a heavenly Father. The earthly fathers disciplined us for a short period of time. God does so for the remainder, the duration, of our Christian lives. They did what seemed best to them, even with a lack of knowledge and sometimes even with impure motives. They did what they could as best they could. And yet, the author says, we respected them. And if we respected them, then how much more should we respect the Father of our spirits whose discipline is perfect? Always perfect in its design, always perfect in its intention, always perfect in its content, always perfect in its timing, and is intended to accomplish something that no human parent could ever give to their children, namely, that we may share in His holiness. Therefore, the author is giving a lesser-to-the-greater argument. If we respect earthly parents in spite of all of the limitations and the fallibilities of their parenting, if we respect them and submit to that, how much more should we do that to a perfect

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

heavenly Father who perfectly disciplines us perfectly all of the time? That's the argument.

Let's read together verses 9 and 10. Actually, before we do, I'll just remind you of the structure of our passage so far. In verses 4 and 5 we looked at the proper perspective on discipline. We saw that we are to embrace it by not despising it and not despairing under it. In verses 6 and 8, we looked at what it is that discipline proves, the proof of discipline, namely, that it is an evidence of God's fatherly love and an evidence of our adoption, our sonship.

And now, in verses 9 and 10, the purpose of discipline. God's discipline is perfectly fit to accomplish His perfect goal, which is our holiness. Verse 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? 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" (Heb. 12:9–10).

Now, verse 9 offers, as I said, a lesser-to-a-greater argument. If this, then how much more this? If this is true, then this thing which is far greater is also true and on a much greater degree. You see that in verse 9: We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much more respect a heavenly Father with His perfect discipline and His perfect wisdom? And the parallel is obvious. The earthly father trains his son, trains his child, by disciplining them. And in doing so, he not only *earns* respect, but he *deserves* respect. And this whole lesser-to-greater argument trades upon the notion, a well-accepted axiom of human life, namely, that it is the responsibility of parents to discipline their children and it is the responsibility of children to submit to and respect that discipline. That's the assumption that is behind verse 9. It is the responsibility of parents to discipline their children, and it is the responsibility of children to submit to and to respect their parents and their discipline.

Look at chapter twelve, verse 7. "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; [Then the rhetorical question:] what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" Do you remember that's such an obvious answer? There can be no son whom his father did not discipline. Which makes my father's neglect of me all the more egregious, because we gladly confess that it is the responsibility of a parent to discipline their children. That is the assumption of Scripture. It's a given; it is dictated by the nature of the relationship. It is only illegitimate children that were not due the education, the discipline that a parent was obligated to give them.

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

"The Purpose of God's Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)" by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

Illegitimate children who were outside of the family in that way, they were the ones who were neglected, and there was no legal obligation upon them to discipline or to provide for those children. But a legal child who was a son indeed, it is understood, it is given, it is assumed that that child will receive discipline and training and instruction from his father. That is just the nature of the responsibility. Look, parents, you created a human being. You created a human being. The fact that you did that means that you have certain moral and ethical and biblical responsibilities to the human being you created. If you are not prepared for those responsibilities, don't create human beings. Don't do the thing that results in human beings being created. But if you're going to create human beings, then you have a moral obligation to those human beings. That is simply assumed. We could say that's a natural law. It's also biblically revealed that that is the assumption. You have a legitimate, moral, social, ethical responsibility for the moral, social, ethical, and spiritual formation of the children whom you beget.

Likewise, it is the duty of every child to respect and submit to their parents. Discipline should teach respect to children. That is part of discipline in growing up. And again, I did not do this perfectly, but in my house, you were not allowed to disrespect your mother. Now, I allowed my sons a little bit of back and forth with me because I like that stuff. But when it crosses the line into disrespect, we always knew that that was the line you do not cross. You respect your parents, you respect elders, you respect adults. This was something that we expected. We expected respect. And I would sometimes say to my children, "You will not speak to my wife that way. (Not "your mother," but "my wife.") You will not address my wife that way. Because now you've gotten into an area of disrespect." It is expected, it is required of children that they submit to and respect their parents for disciplining them.

Sometimes parents are hypocrites and liars, they're inconsistent, they're harsh, they're abusive, they're negligent. I understand all of that. But even in spite of those failings, parents are still due respect. When I said earlier that my father never did anything but lie to me, I didn't intend to suggest that I was whining about that, that I wanted your sympathy, that on Father's Day I wanted a card from everyone in the congregation expressing sorrow, none of that at all. I don't hold any animosity or hostility toward him for that. He's dead. He died years ago. So I don't hold any hostility or animosity toward him for that; it's just a reality of what transpired. And even when I did see him, I tried to give to him the respect that he would deserve as somebody who was older than me, because that is something that fathers, even neglectful and negligent fathers, are due from their children. We are called to do that.

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

"The Purpose of God's Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)" by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

Now, this correction that the author gives us in verse 9—we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; how much more our heavenly Father who does this perfectly?—that analogy trades upon this assumed relationship between the father and the children, that the children are responsible to submit and that the parents are responsible to discipline.

And verse 9 corrects a lot of the incorrect responses that we might have toward discipline. And if you were disciplined as a child, even if it was properly as a child, there were times when you got reprimanded or spanked or had a responsibility taken away from you when you would respond with anger toward your parents, even deep-down, deep-seated hatred and hostility toward your parents, frustration and bitterness, and you would want to be angry with them for hours on end. It's the natural inclination of the wicked and sinful heart to respond to discipline like that. So every child who has ever been disciplined has had a response like that.

Well, this passage corrects that in terms of our spiritual response to God and to His discipline. We should not despise it. We should not complain about it. We should not question it. We should not assume that He has ill intentions. We should not question His love. We should not doubt our sonship. We shouldn't give up all effort. We shouldn't respond with bitterness or anger or frustration.

What does the lesser-to-the-greater-than argument of the passage require of us? That we respectfully submit to God's gracious hand of discipline. That is hard. That is hard for any child to do. It is hard for us as adults to do who are children of God, to respectfully submit, to place ourselves under His gracious hand. The argument is very clear; since we do this and are expected to do this with earthly parents, how much more a God whose every stroke of discipline in our lives drips with divine love and only divine love? There is no admixture of sin or ill motives or wickedness in any of His strokes that He gives to us, not a bit. There's nothing but love, deep and abiding divine love, redeeming love, familial love. There is nothing but love. He does not discipline us out of frustration or anger over our sin. It is not dripping with wrath.

It is love, and only love, that intends only our good. God does not discipline us for His sake, but for our sake, because He is producing in us something good. So since the outcome is good, the motive is good, and the Discipliner is good, that means that the method of the discipline, the means of the discipline, the timing of the discipline, the extent of the discipline—all of it is good, and all of it can *only* be good. And if all of it is good and can only be good, then how much more should you and I willingly, gladly

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

submit ourselves under that divine rod and receive from His hand everything that He has decreed for us? That's the responsibility.

Verse 9: “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?” Father of spirits. That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? It's only used here in all of the New Testament. No other place in Scripture, actually, is God called the Father of spirits with a phrase like this. Now left to itself, isolated probably in any other context, the word “spirits” would refer to angelic or heavenly beings. If you just saw “spirits” by itself, that's the way that the word would be used, of angelic or heavenly beings. In this context, since he's not talking about angels and he's not talking about heavenly beings, it is human beings that he is referring to here.

He refers to God as the Father of spirits or our spiritual Father. So what is he doing there? Why does he call God the Father of spirits? Look at the context, the beginning of verse 9: “We had earthly fathers to discipline us.” Notice the contrast: earthly fathers and the Father of spirits. This is the author's way of drawing attention to two realities. Number one, it highlights the nature of our relationship with the Lord. We are not His by physical birth. Nobody's born into God's family in a physical sense. You must be born again. This is what John chapter 3 says. If you are not born again, if a man is not born again, he will not see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Because, 1 Corinthians 15, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50). There is nothing about our natural birth, even if you are a descendant of Abraham or a descendant of a ninth-generation Christian family, there is nothing in your physical birth that gives you any claim upon divine blessing or any claim at all upon spiritual or eternal life.

So in order for one to have God as his spiritual father, then he must be born again. You must receive a new nature, a new heart. If you have never been born again, I do not care how much you know about Christ, how Christian your home is, or how much truth you understand from Scripture, how much you can follow along with everything that's going on up here. If you have never been born again, you are outside of the covenant, you are outside of Jesus Christ, and if you die right now, you will perish everlastingly. You must be born again. You must have a new nature, a new heart, born from above by the power and the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. That takes place when you understand your sin, you turn from your sin, and you believe upon Christ, His sacrifice, His death, burial, and resurrection on behalf of sinners. Then you are born again to a living hope.

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

God causes you to be born again. It's a regenerating act. And so those whom God disciplines are not children of His according to the flesh, but children of His according to spiritual and new birth. So it is appropriate for him to refer to God as the Father of spirits, because we are His through conversion and regeneration and salvation, which are spiritual realities. That's why He's called the Father of spirits, in contrast to our earthly fathers. We have a spiritual heavenly Father to whom we are related in a heavenly or spiritual relationship, one that is the result of a brand-new birth. Not a birth according to the flesh, but a birth according to the Spirit.

Second, that phrase highlights the nature and goal of His discipline. The nature and goal of His discipline. See, the emphasis here in this passage is not on the outward behavior or the outward discipline that God brings into our lives. The emphasis here is on the soul-affecting spiritual element of God's discipline. In other words, God in His discipline is not producing holiness which is an exterior or fleshly or physical attribute or trait. You can't look at somebody's picture and just say, that's a holy person. You can't know that because holiness is not something that is physically manifested in terms of an outward reality. Holiness is something that is wrought in the spirit by the Spirit of God. And therefore, discipline is not something that God does outward physically, to just modify our physical outward conduct and shape and appearance, but something that God does in the inner man. The physical parent can take the rod and spank a child and modify their behavior, but there's something that a physical parent in the earthly realm cannot do. He cannot produce holiness in that child. Cannot do it. No amount of beating could beat holiness into my children. Not that I ever beat them, but no amount of swatting could ever put holiness—I can't rub holiness on my hand and then apply it to the seat of learning and expect that they are going to absorb holiness. I can't do that. That's a limitation of earthly parenting.

Oftentimes as earthly parents, our desire is behavior modification. But if that's all that you desire as a parent disciplining your children, you're falling short of really what the goal of discipline is even in the earthly realm. You can modify behavior through discipline. In fact, when your children are young, this is what you do. When they're one, two, three, you're seeking to modify behavior through training, sometimes through discipline. Not harsh, but you're seeking to modify behavior. A two-year-old who acts up in Walmart needs their behavior modified. You're not going to explain the gospel to a two-year-old in the aisle at Walmart, but you will modify their behavior. But if they're twelve and you're still trying to only modify their behavior, you have failed as a parent. Because that's not the goal of discipline.

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.



The goal of disciplining the children as they grow older is to be an instrument and a tool in the hand of God to teach the child holiness. To teach the child spiritual truths about violating God's law, falling short of His standard, and the reality that there is punishment for these things. So the goal of a parent when children get older is not behavior modification. It's not just shaping the outward aspect of your child's life. It is to use discipline to try and address the heart. That's the goal of it. You don't just spank for the sake of spanking. You spank for the sake of instructing in righteousness and training them through that so that they will begin to reflect upon the condition of their own heart, and their own desire for disobedience, the reality of sin, and what that might mean for them for all of eternity. That's the goal of that.

So, when the author refers here to the Father of spirits, he is simply calling our minds and our hearts toward this higher reality that God is not after behavior modification. God is shaping and molding your soul in discipline. Don't miss that. It's the Father of spirits, not the Father of your flesh. God can make you suffer physically. He could do that. He allowed that to happen to Job. He causes that to happen in people's lives all of the time.

Who do you think is ultimately behind our physical afflictions? It is the hand of God. That is the rod that He brings into our lives. And so God can cause you to suffer physically; yes, He can do that. But in the process of that, it is more than just physical affliction. It's soul shaping that God is doing. He is intending, the end of verse 10 says, to conform us to the image of His Son "so that we may share His holiness." That's the goal of discipline.

So calling Him the Father of spirits is a way of describing the spiritual realities that are going on in discipline and what God is after. He is after conforming your spirit and your soul to the image of Christ so that you may attain your highest good, which is sharing in His holiness.

So, the author says, verse 9, that we have respected earthly parents; "shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?" Hold on a second. Live? Now that's kind of an interesting word, isn't it? What's the opposite of that? Did you even notice the word *live* in the text until I suggested to you that there might be an opposite of that? We respectfully submit, and live. Or, disrespectfully reject, and what? Die? Perish? Is it possible that the author here, without really being too overt in his warning, is suggesting that one of the ways that God can discipline His children is to take their earthly physical lives from them?

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

"The Purpose of God's Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)" by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

There are two ways that that reference to living could be understood. It could be—and some have suggested this; this is possible, but this is not what I would suggest—it could be that what the author has in mind here is a contrast with the true sons and the illegitimate sons that is mentioned in verse 8. “If you are without discipline [look at verse 8], of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.” In other words, what the author might be doing is using *live* here as sort of a symbolic reference to the fact that—you remember there are illegitimate children who perish. Those illegitimate children are not disciplined. They are not given the training, they're not given the love and the inheritance. And so, in a spiritual sense, they're kind of cut off. They're dead, as it were, to the family. Well, if you're a true child, then you will be disciplined along with true children, and then you will live. You will be part of that family, welcomed in that family. So it is possible that the author here is simply saying that as true sons, in other words those who live in terms of the covenant and in terms of God's inheritance and in terms of our relationship to the family—the true sons live because they submit and respect. But those who are illegitimate children, they are cut off because they're not really given that discipline. That's a possible contrast.

I think that what is intended here instead, and this is the second option, is to contrast here respectfully submissive children who live—and it's physical life that I think is in view—with rebellious children who are punished with death. Now, let me make the case. The context is encouraging us to embrace God's discipline. Verse 1: “Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us.” Verse 5: Do not despise God's discipline. Do not despair under His discipline. Run the race that is set before you and endure it all the way to the end (verse 1).

You say, “But that involves hostility. I face hostility and I face persecution, and I face trials and tribulations.” That's right. So fix your 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 . . . God. . . . Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:2–3). Keep your eyes on Him. And yes, cast off the sin and run that race. Don't despise the discipline. Embrace the discipline. Embrace the affliction. That's the message all the way up to this point.

Then he says in verse 9 that we are to respect and to submit to God's discipline. And I think that the opposite of that is not respecting; that is, to despise or to reject or to despair under His discipline. And if the opposite of respecting and submitting is

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God's Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

disrespectfully not submitting and rejecting it, then the opposite of living is dying. I think that that is the warning that the author intends. He is saying, “Don't reject, don't resist, don't become bitter. Embrace God's work of purifying your soul through these afflictions that He has appointed for you.” And if the child of God remains hard-hearted, impenitent, and stubborn in the face of God's loving discipline, you run the risk of mortal danger. Don't skip by it. You run the risk of mortal danger. You are playing with fire. Keep your neck stiffened, keep your heart hardened, keep resisting, don't submit, reject it, despise it, become embittered by it, and if you will not let go of the sin in your life that God is bringing discipline into your life to correct and to rid you of, then you run the risk of mortal danger.

There was a provision in the old covenant in the Old Testament for rebellious children to be executed. Remember that the author was writing to a bunch of Jews who had grown up under that covenant, who understood that law. They knew it well. They could recite the passage that I'm about to read to you from memory. They knew it because it was part of their culture. It was the expectation that if you had a rebellious and stubborn child that you could take them out and you could execute them. In fact, it was incumbent upon the parent to do this.

Now, before you lose your hair, your face turns purple, you get upset, and you think, oh, man, next Sunday is going to be wild here at Kootenai Community Church because we have a child who disobeys like this and we're going to take them out in the parking lot and stone them—before you lose your hat over all of this, that provision was not for little two-year-old Johnny, to whom you said, “Johnny, clean up your Lego”—notice how I pronounced it correctly with the right enumeration—“Clean up your Lego,” and he gets all of them but two of them, and two of them he just kicks under the couch, and you say, “OK, that's it. That's the second time this month. Get the city elders together. We take him out to the gate of the city and we're stoning this child right in front of everybody.” Or little Levi pulls his sister's hair for the second time this month, and you think, “I've done it. Six-year-old needs to die. I'm tired of disciplining.” That's not the type of provision this was. OK? Listen to the description.

Deuteronomy chapter 21, verse 18:

18 If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him [Listen to that. There's discipline involved. “When they chastise him”], he will not even listen to them,

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown.

20 They shall say to the elders of his city, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.” [Does that sound like a two-year-old? No. “He is a glutton and a drunkard.”]

21 Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear. (Deut. 21:18–21 NASB)

That was the provision of the law. Not little Johnny forgot to pick up his Lego or neglected to do so. “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, and we have chastened him. We have done all of this. He will not listen. He will not obey. And he continues to persist in God-dishonoring sin and rebellion.” The parents will take him out. The parents will be the first ones to bring those charges against their son. That is how serious God took obedience, children obeying their parents.

Now listen, children. We're not going to stone any of you. It's not what this is about. So calm down, breathe easy. Listen to what is being described. It presumes that there are godly parents in this equation who have sought to instruct the child. They have chastened him. So it means there has been discipline, proper discipline. He continues in his stubborn rebellion, and he is emboldened in his sinning, his drunkenness, and his gluttony. And even in the face of death and these charges by his parents, he remains hard-hearted and impenitent. And he will not turn from that iniquity. And notice the lack in that passage of submission and respect for his parents. “He will not obey us, he will not listen to us, he does not receive discipline.” He stiffens his neck, he hardens his heart. He persists in his rebellion and his unbelief. In order to rid the nation of Israel from men and women like that, God required that they be stoned. This demonstrates how seriously God takes obedience to parents and how important respectful and proper submission to parental authority was and how important it is to receive gladly discipline given in love.

So if you will not respectfully submit and live, and stiffen your neck, harden your heart, then you are in mortal danger. Because one of the tools that God can use in discipline—it is within His purview—is to take your life.

I've known of people, and I have known people, who I think were children of God, who persisted in sin, and God took them. It happens. In fact, it happened in the first century. Remember 1 Corinthians chapter 5—the man who persisted in his sexual immorality by

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

having his father's wife? Paul said he would be turned over to Satan for what? The destruction of the flesh. That is, you put him outside that protection and you say, "Devil, have your way with him." And he becomes outside of that protection. And God allows the devil to do to that man what God allowed the devil to do to Job, except, in this case, the entire flesh is destroyed and the man is killed.

There is in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 this reminder concerning the table of the Lord: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep" (1 Cor. 11:27–30).

There were people dead in the Corinthian congregation because they came to the Lord's table with their sin in one hand and took the cup in the other. And without repenting or dealing with their sin at all or judging their body at all, they instead held onto that sin and persisted in it with hard hearts and impenitent souls, and then partook of the Lord's table in an act of blasphemy against the body and the blood of the Lord. And Paul says, "You have done this, and for this reason some of you are sick and a number of you are dead." God had executed a number of the believing Corinthians. We can assume that they were believing Corinthians in the church who had persisted in that rebellion while taking the Lord's table.

So, Paul says, if we judge ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. God taking the life of some who persisted in that sin was an act of His discipline. They had profaned the table of the Lord.

Let me give you a third example, and that is the sin that leads to death in 1 John chapter 5. John warns us, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death" (1 John 5:16–17).

Now, that is not some mysterious, unnamed sin that you might commit. You know, walking out of here and you get angry because somebody parked wrong right next to your car and you can't get out, and you think, "Man, Shepley [the speaker's son] did it

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

"The Purpose of God's Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)" by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

again!” You get upset in your heart. God's not going to strike you dead right there. That's not the kind of sin we're talking about.

I think that John is describing a high-handed rebellion against God, and he is describing one who knows it is sin. He has been confronted with this sin and he is experiencing discipline from the Lord, but he holds on to that sin. He will not submit to it, he will not receive that correction, he will not lay aside the sin that so easily entangles us, and run his race. And instead he wants to cling to that sin and have it both ways. He wants to enjoy the blessing of God and the delights of his sin. And when you do that and you have somebody in that situation, John says, “There comes a point where I don't even say that you should pray about that because he has committed a sin that is going to result in death.” I think that that's what John could be describing. Under the old covenant, a child who would not receive discipline and forsake their rebellion was punished by death as a warning to others and as an ultimate discipline. And we know then that we should respect and submit to God's discipline because it is within His disciplinary toolbox to use physical death to bring about that correction.

Now, you may be wondering, how do I know if I'm close to that? How do I know how near that I am? Is the guillotine of God's discipline hanging over my head like the sword of Damocles at this very moment that could come crashing down at any time? If you read the text, you're not going to see any checklist of “here's how you know when you've committed that sin or whether you're in danger of that.” There is a solemn warning here. But notice that the warning that the author gives here is a warning that is stated in a positive way, right? Submit, respectfully submit, and live!

You and I are left to sort of step on the other side of that sentence and say, what if I disrespectfully reject it and I continue in my unbelief? It is possible that God may kill you. That is something we have to come to grips with if we continue in that sin. So what should our response be? I'll tell you this, when the Lord begins to discipline you, to convict you of a sin, deal with it and deal with it right away. Get it out of your life. Make whatever sacrifice, make whatever effort, you do whatever you need to do to get rid of that, to go to war against it, to kill it, to shed it from your life, to turn from it every time you see yourself doing it. That's it.

Just go to war with your sin! Don't play games with it. Don't say to yourself, I'll just keep my head down; certainly the pain will pass, and once the pain is over and I'm on the other side of this very difficult time, then I can get back to the delights of my sin. It is not your attitude and should never be our attitude. We see a sin and we say, I'll go to war

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.

with this. I'm going to kill it, I'm going to mortify it. If I have to do this for the rest of my life, then that's the battle I'll fight for the rest of my life. I'll do it. Because I will cast off every sin which so easily entangles us and every encumbrance that keeps me from running my race. And when God brings affliction into my life, He does so to make mortifying that sin easier. Never more difficult, always easier, because then we draw near to Him. We embrace that discipline, gladly welcome it, respectfully submit to it, and live.

What does God have in mind by living? That we may have our souls so shaped and formed and molded that we may share in His holiness. That is the goal of it. The goal of mortifying sin is not just so we can struggle and kick and fight and resist all the time, but so that we may share in His holiness, which is itself our highest good and our delight.

Copyright © 2023 by Kootenai Community Church

“The Purpose of God’s Perfect Discipline, Part 1 (Hebrews 12:9–10)” by Jim Osman, pastor/teacher.

Available online at: <https://kootenaichurch.org>

You may reproduce this content as is for noncommercial purposes. You may not create or use edited versions of this publication without permission.