

## The Wise and Gracious Purpose for Our Suffering

Hebrews 12:9-10

"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."

### I. There are contrasts between teachings from our earthly father and that from our Heavenly Father.

The word discipline has the root word "disciple." To discipline means to make a disciple. Punishment is not discipline. God took the punishment we deserve and placed it on Christ. Now He instructs us.

#### A. The instruction of our earthly father is short – "a few days" (KJV).

God invests in you a lifetime. Every morning His mercies are new. Every day His grace is real.

#### B. The instruction of our earthly father is weak – "what seemed best to them."

What seemed best to them may not actually be best for you. This is a contrast with God's teaching that should cause you to rejoice. His discipleship is always and only for our good.

#### C. The instruction of our earthly father is respected – "Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father?" The phrase "be subject to" translates a compound word which means "abide under His instruction." This instruction is every event that enters your life. It is "of the Lord."

### II. There are concerns that our Heavenly Father has as He daily, personally, and effectively disciplines.

(1) He is concerned *that we share in His holiness*. (2) He is concerned *that we really live*. How do our trials make us "partakers" (KJV) of His holiness and bring us to a place of really living?

#### A. A biblical understanding of holiness ...

The root meaning of the Hebrew noun "holiness" (*qodes*) and the adjective "holy" (*qados*) comes from a word that means "to cut" or "to separate," and thus to be distinct from and set apart. The term did not originally refer to ethical purity as seen from its use in describing prostitutes(!) who were "set apart" to pagan deities such as Baal and Asherah (see Gen. 38:21). The point is that God is separate from everyone and everything else. God is in a class by Himself. We often speak of something that is outstanding or has superior excellence as being "a cut above" the rest. That is what God is. As R.C. Sproul put it, "He is an infinite cut above everything else" (*The Holiness of God*, p. 55). Holiness, then, is primarily a reference to transcendence. In all of life there is unconditional love, transcendent selflessness, and personal satisfaction.

#### B. A biblical understanding of life ...

How would your life be if you shared in the "holiness" of God? What kind of person would you be, compared to others, if you loved without conditions, were selfless without expectations, and had a life filled with personal satisfaction? You are taught this through your afflictions!

### III. There are callings we have when we begin to see the incredible purpose of our suffering and trials.

If everything we have studied so far in Hebrews 12 is true: Our Christian life is like a wrestling match, there are good days and bad days, and we have a teammate who has lived life in a fashion that we should keep our eyes on Him, who can help us when we are ready to give up, because He knows and will help us know that every affliction and trial is "of the Lord" and is designed for our good, then:

1. Do not waste your sorrows. In everything give thanks for this is the purpose of God in your life.
2. Do not worry over the future. For the God who created the world is involved in your life today.
3. Do not diminish life by focusing on physical comforts. Comfort may be a desire, but is no need.
4. Do not fret over the problems in your loved ones' lives. God is using them all for their good.