

Hebrews 12: 4-13

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[0 : 00] No, this is where we're going to be. Hebrews chapter 12, starting in verse 4, going through verse 13, is our text this morning. Hebrews chapter 12, verses 4 through 13.

So if you are physically able, and I will not have to read long before you know why I feel such way. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, will you join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God.

And all seriousness, it's not that I don't want to read the Word of God. It's not that I don't want to preach it. This is one of those passages that we tend to skip over if we are so inclined. But we will not because the Lord has put it here for our benefit.

Hebrews chapter 12, starting in verse 4, says, You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons.

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him. For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.

[0 : 59] It is for discipline that you endure, and God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

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. All discipline for the moment does not seem, or seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful.

Yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands which are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You so much for this day. And God, we thank You for the divine opportunity which You have given us together, together to read Your Word. Lord, as we have read it, Lord, our cry and our prayer at the moment is, Lord, speak.

[2 : 09] Speak to our hearts. Speak to our minds. Show us the truth. Lord, not that we may gain information, but that we may have lives transformed by it. And Lord, may You be glorified and honored through it. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Amen. The book of Hebrews is such a powerful book, and throughout the book of Hebrews, and I know that we continue to repeat this, but it bears repeating, because we need to be mindful of these things in each and every passage we study throughout the book.

Every time we open up the Word of God, it is very beneficial for us to remind ourselves of what is going on exactly where we are reading it, and what is taking place within the context, so that we do not take it out of context, and therefore make the text say whatever we want it to say.

So we always want to take it within the bounds that it is confined in the Word of God. But we understand the author of the book of Hebrews is writing to the Hebrew people. He is writing to those people more than likely that are scattered outside of the realm of Jerusalem or through the diaspora.

He is writing of people who have heard the gospel. They have seen it being lived out in front of them, more than likely through the missionary efforts of the early church. We don't know the exact timetable in which he has written this, but we know that they have at least heard the gospel, and some of them have made just a little bit of a response to the gospel.

[3 : 27] They had said, yeah, that sounds like a good idea. We'll try that for a little while. But in their response to the gospel, they did not crucify the flesh, so to say. They did not completely cut themselves off from Judaism.

Now, Judaism was a thing in which they were counting on to make them acceptable before God. And when the gospel comes in, it fulfills the law. That's what Judaism is, the keeping of the law.

It fulfills the law. It fulfills every type of the Old Testament. Now, I know I'm giving you a lot of information, but I want you to take this properly. So as the author is writing here, he is lifting up Jesus Christ, and he is showing us over and over and over again throughout the book of Hebrews that Jesus is better.

And the question really is, if Jesus is better, then why go back? Why go back to your efforts? Why go back to your works? Why go back to legalism? Why go back to trying this and trying that?

Why go back to doing all of those things? If Jesus is the best, then why would you ever go back? And then he really forces the question home in Hebrews chapter 10 and says, since these things are so, go all in, right?

[4 : 36] Commit your life to Jesus Christ. And he reminds them that to do this, and really the urgency to do this is because it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a living God.

He reminds them that someday they will stand before the living God and give an account of their life. And according to the law, no man is perfect. But according to the Christ, whosoever will may be free and forgiven.

So he says, Jesus is better. And since someday you will stand before the living God, forsake the law and all your legalistic efforts and commit totally and absolutely to Jesus Christ.

And then he gives a whole chapter of examples in Hebrews chapter 11 of what it looks like to live a life of committed to Christ. And then he opens up in Hebrews chapter 12 and says, now there is this invitation open to you.

And the invitation is to run the race of faith, right? It is not to take a short sprint. It is not just to go on a little quick trip. It is to have this marathon race of faith that you needed to persevere and have endurance and have all this consistency that you are to lay aside the burdens and the sin which so easily entangles us.

[5 : 46] And we looked at that last week, how we must lay aside some things that are good and definitely those things that are bad. And we must press on towards the goal of the upward calling, and that is faith in Jesus Christ.

Now you say, well, I'm glad that was written to the Hebrew people because therefore it has nothing to do with me. But that is not true because the Hebrew people are lifted up throughout scripture as an example to the rest of mankind.

And we understand this. What God is calling man to do is to quit trusting in your vain efforts and to quit trusting in the best of your ability and to dedicate your life and to commit your life completely to Jesus Christ.

And in that dedication to press on towards him in that enduring race of faith, to not always be perfect, but to be pressing on towards that which is perfect to each and every day to be progressing a little bit further.

But now I am thankful that the author of Hebrews does not stop there in Hebrews chapter 12, verses one through three. But then he comes into verse four and he makes this transition and he makes this transition into a life of greater discipline.

[6 : 51] If you needed a title for this morning, it is a life of greater discipline. But let us put an asterisk mark beside that discipline because it is not your discipline, but rather the father's discipline of us.

It is not the discipline which we have, but the discipline which he has towards us. It is a life of greater discipline because the author acknowledges, and I love this about scripture.

The author acknowledges that if you enter this race, if you say I'm all in with Jesus Christ, that I'm going to go all the way, that I'm committing to the work in person of Jesus Christ, that my life is given over to Christ completely.

I'm going to quit trusting in my efforts. I'm going to quit trusting in the keeping of the law. I'm going to quit trusting in who my ancestry is. I'm going to quit trusting in all of these things. I'm only going to trust in Jesus Christ.

The author at least acknowledges it's not going to be sunshine, roses, and buttercups from then on. Sometimes, oftentimes, it's going to be hard because he says now you're living under the disciplining hand of the father.

[8 : 01] It is a life of greater discipline because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. And if that's what we're trusting in, now we're living in this life of greater discipline.

Anytime we share the gospel with someone, we need to be absolutely. And I didn't say if we share the gospel. I said anytime we share the gospel. Okay, again, words are important. So let's say this.

When we share the gospel with others, as we will, because it's good news. When we share the gospel, we need to be sure to paint the picture accurately.

Do not tell someone that if they accept Jesus Christ that all of their troubles will be taken away. Do not tell someone that if they accept Jesus Christ that everything will be good moving forward. Do not tell someone that if they accept Jesus Christ that life will be easy.

Do not tell someone that if they accept Jesus Christ they'll no longer have any worries or any problems or any struggles. Because if you do that, you're not biblical. Because the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 11 that they were stoned, they were sawn in two, they wandered around being destitute and abandoned and forsaken of this world.

[9 : 13] That the world was not worthy of them. And that it was not easy. But tell them that they'll enter into a relationship where a father like no father before cares for them.

And he will discipline them. And he will reprove them and rebuke them and correct them. And they're not going to enjoy it. But it's going to be oh so good in the end.

Because there's a greater discipline for them. I want you to see three things from this passage. As we live this life of greater discipline. Number one, we see the endurance that is needed.

Over and over in Hebrews chapter 12 there is this theme of you need to press on. You need to press on. Why is that theme there? Because the author is writing to people who tried Christianity for a while.

They tried faith in Jesus Christ. And they said, you know what? This is a little too hard. I'm going to go back. It was a lot easier being a legalist keeper of the law than it is to be a faithful follower of Jesus. Because at least according to the law I knew exactly what it is I could do and could not do.

[10:18] And as long as I did that and I put a check mark there, everything was okay. You'd be surprised how many believers today, they want to know these answers. Can I do this? And there's a blank out there. Can I do this?

Can I do this? Can I do this? Can someone please give me a rule book? Can someone please give me a log? I want to know what I can do and what I can't do. Therefore I can put a check mark and I can move on for the rest of my life.

And I love when I tell people that. I said, I can't do that for you and neither would Jesus Christ. Because Jesus didn't call you to keeping the rules. He called you to a relationship. And I always ask them this one question. Can you do that in Christ?

With Jesus Christ right beside you. He who died on the cross paid the ultimate price. If you can do it in Christ, then do it. If you would not do it with him, then why are you asking?

And often I get met with a blank stare. Well, that's not the answer. I wanted, Pastor. I wanted to know. Could I or could not I? And I always say, go talk to the Lord and master himself.

[11:17] Because he is the one who is over you. Paul says, each man will stand or fall according to his own master. Right? It is not up to us to decide. But these people have tried it and said, oh, that's so hard.

I don't want to do that anymore. I want someone to tell me what I can and what I can't do. So they were going back. But the author says, you must press on. Look at what verse 4 says. You have not yet. Don't we wish that word yet wasn't in there?

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood and you're striving against sin. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood and you're striving against sin.

Because this is what we find out. Now, this is from my own personal experience. Maybe your experience is so totally different from this. When there is an invitation to enter the race.

As Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 tells us. That there is this race set before us. As we enter that race, we do not know everything that that race has in store for us. There are surprises, we would say, along the course.

[12:17] Right? It's not just some oval track that we're going to run around. It's this thing called life. And there are twists and turns and hills and valleys and all these things. There are surprises along that race that we are unaware of.

Much like when God led his people to the edge of the promised land. Those that are with me on Sunday night and Wednesday night, you understand this. We're seeing this in the Old Testament. God brought them to the promised land.

He told them this was a land flowing with milk and honey. He told them it was a land full of houses and gardens and wells. And all of those things were there. But God did not tell them the giants were there. God did not tell them they would have to defeat cities that had walls that ascended to the heavens.

God did not tell them the Anakim were there that would make them look like grasshoppers. Because God is not compelled to tell us everything. God just calls us to trust him that the things he is telling us is right.

So when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. You need to know this on the front end. He is not compelled to tell you everything he's going to take you through. He's just compelled to tell you that as you go through it, I'm going to be with you.

[13 : 19] I will go before you. And if he goes before you, that is okay. And we see this. He says, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.

And as we walk with him, the longer we fellowship with Christ. And the longer we go, more and more and more of our life becomes conformed to more and more and more of his image. And we understand there are things.

Listen, I am now 21 years, what, 20 years and some months into my walk with Christ. Okay? So 20 plus years into my walk with Christ. I came to Christ shortly before my 21st birthday.

I turned 41 this year. So, you know, there you go. We can do the math. And I was just a little bit further. But I will tell you, things that were acceptable to me then are no longer acceptable to me now.

Because he's taken some things away. And that's okay. We call that sanctification. Right? One thing I'm glad he took away was the tie. I used to wear a tie all the time when I preached.

[14 : 17] And he took that away. He told me it was choking me. And he said, just get rid of it. I don't want to hang you with a tie anymore. Get rid of the tie. So I'm saying, thank you, Lord. That's okay. It was sinful for me to wear a tie. He told me not to wear a tie. Just thought I would lighten the mood for just a moment.

But what we understand is he is molding and shaping and conforming and trying against us. And it gets harder things. I don't know about you. Some sins, I easily give up.

Say, okay, God, you can have them. Other sins, I hold on to tight-fisted, white-knuckled. I like that thing. It seems to be fun to me. And I really, really, really enjoy that.

And we understand this. But here's the reminder. The author tells us, in our battle against sin, we are not through until we have resisted to the point of death.

So I'm tired of fighting all these sinful temptations. I'm tired of fighting all this thing. I'm tired of putting it aside. The author says, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood. You have not paid the price for your sins that Jesus has.

[15 : 16] So why give up? Why quit? Because our sins, when Jesus fought the battle for our sins, he shed his precious blood.

Yet, the moment it gets uncomfortable, we are tempted to say, that's too hard. It's inconvenient. It's difficult. It doesn't feel that good. Oh, but when Jesus bore our sins.

Go read the book of Isaiah. I believe it's Isaiah 53 and 54. His face is marred. They plucked the hair out of his beards. He became unrecognizable.

His back was brutally beaten. Every part of his body. His blood was spilled. His side was pierced.

Why? Because of the battle for my sins. So who am I to give up? Aren't you thankful that our Lord and Master had endurance?

[16 : 21] Aren't you thankful that our Lord and Master didn't quit when it came to a battle against sin? He says, you have not resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.

We need endurance. And the Bible tells us, who for the joy set before him, he endured the cross. Why should we fight such a battle against sin? Listen, friend. I know the enemy is strong.

I know the enemy has many, many fiery darts and he throws them. And the darts he throws at you are not the darts he throws at me. And the darts that stick in my shield of faith are not the darts that stick in your shield of faith. Because our enemy is not only strong, but he's also cunning.

And Satan knows exactly which darts to fire your direction. And I know he gets tiresome fighting that battle. And I know he gets hard. And I know he gets... And it's so difficult. And you're like, I just want to stop fighting.

But listen, the joy set before us is worth the battle that surrounds us. We have need of endurance. May we not be those who say, that's enough.

[17:19] I'll give in. May our life never be one who gives in and stops the battle. We need endurance. Secondly, we see the encouragement that is offered.

So how do we do that? I'm so thankful that the author doesn't stop here again. Because sure, there is this call to endure. But he encourages us because how can we endure? How can we keep pushing on and striving against the sin which entangles us?

Because we know it's a battle. God has not called us to a watch stand, right? He has not called us to a place to sit and watch. He's called us to a field to go fight battle. He's called us to be in the Lord's army, as it says.

And there is all of these things. And he's called us to fight against the powers and principalities of the air and the spiritual forces of darknesses. What encouragement is there in the midst of that? He says, and have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons?

By the way, I want to go ahead and say this here. I don't think this is gender neutral, but this is also gender inclusive, which means it is addressed to you ladies as well.

[18:18] I think the Bible very clearly says sons here because there was such a greater benefit for sons than there were daughters. So ladies, don't let this offend you. But it's a good thing that he's including you as sons because you have the benefit of sons, even being daughters.

Because in Bible times, the daughters didn't really inherit much, right? So your inheritance is not a daughter's inheritance. That is, you're not going to get wed off to someone else and hopefully that family is okay.

Your inheritance is the son's inheritance and that's okay. So don't let it kind of be off-putting to you, but let you understand that. So this is speaking to all the children of God, the sons and daughters of the king.

We are reminded first of our position. We are encouraged because we are addressed as sons and yes, and daughters. And we are addressed to people who are in deep fellowship and communion with the king.

And he quotes Psalm chapter 3 here. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by him. For those whom the Lord loves, he disciplines and he scourges every son whom he receives.

[19:21] Do you see this? He scourges every son whom he receives. So that means that if we are children of the king, if we are children of the father, then we can't expect a scourging every now and then.

That's okay. That's an expectation, right? Kind of an expectation that was at my house growing up. You just get a scourging every now and then. And that's kind of an expectation around a number of houses.

We need to understand that. And it's out of love. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons. Listen, this is encouraging. The reason sin's battlefield is so strong and the reason that we have this thing called conviction over sin and the reason there's the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in us to make us sick over our sin and we have to keep striving and pushing and fighting against these sinful temptations is because God is disciplining his people.

He is calling us to himself. He says, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? But look at this. But if you are without discipline, I just wish God would leave me alone.

I wish that it wasn't so difficult. I wish there wasn't such thing as conviction. Oh, I wish that God would, you know, that churning in my stomach, that I begin to get this weight that falls on my shoulders and I begin to be convicted of my sin.

[20 : 35] I wish God would just leave me alone. Be careful. Because it says, if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

See, the conviction, the very presence of conviction is a testimony to relationship. Often throughout my pastoral ministry, I've had people come to me.

Inevitably, they're reading through the Gospels, and they come to that place of the unpardonable sin. And they come to me with this downcast look, and they come to me with this worried, worried expression on their face, and they say, Pastor, I've got a question for you.

I say, okay, what is? They say, how do I know if I've committed the unpardonable sin? So what do you mean? What if I've committed the unpardonable sin? What if I have sinned in such a manner that God can't forgive me?

What if I have committed the unpardonable sin? And I always give the same answer. The very fact that you're asking me that tells me you haven't. And I say, what do you mean? The very fact that you're asking me if you have committed the unpardonable sin tells me you have not.

[21 : 50] Because what is the unpardonable sin? The unpardonable sin is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy means to be the denier of or to put someone else in the place of. Now, conviction of sin comes by what?

John chapter 15, the power and presence of the Spirit, right? The Holy Spirit brings about conviction. So how can you deny the Holy Spirit and yet be convicted by the Spirit that you've committed the sin to deny the Spirit?

You can't. That's called circular reasoning. So if you have a conviction that you might have done it, then it is the Spirit himself that is convicting you of that. Therefore, you have not denied his existence because he is active in your life and you have not done it.

Because he is presently convicting you of a sin which you have not committed. Now, he's not convicting you of that. Usually it's Satan trying to step on your shoulder and tell you that. But the fact that we could be worried about such things.

But there are some people who say, you know, I would love to have Jesus, but I don't want to change my life. Well, that's not possible. Because then when Jesus comes, Jesus says, I will send a paraclete along with him. That is the Spirit.

[22 : 50] And the Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin and righteousness. And it is this thing, all the legitimate children. No one says that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by what?

By the Spirit. And it is the Spirit that convicts us of that sin. So it tells us that God is dealing with every one of his children and he's calling them to fight these battles and he's reproving us and he's correcting us and he's disciplining us.

But he says he's doing it because we are his children. And we are encouraged through the relationship. We enjoy. Because he doesn't discipline.

We're often mindful of this reality. We don't need to be surprised when sinners act like sinners. What is shocking is when saints act like sinners.

Because God is not disciplining those who are not his children, but he is actively disciplining all of his children. Now, I know some of you are thinking, well, I don't care whose kid it is that comes to my house.

[23 : 53] It could be your kid, their kid, or my kid. Everybody in my house has got the same standard. Oh, no, they don't. We can say that all we want to is dads, but we know if it's your kid, that discipline's a little bit different than if it's somebody else's kid.

Because I may spank them and send them home, but if they're my kids, they get spanked and they have to stay home. That's a little bit different.

You can ask my kids if you want to. It's a little bit different. But we understand here that it is a position of sonship that leads to this life of discipline.

And therefore, listen, if we are children of the king, may we be encouraged even in those greatest moments of discipline.

Third, and finally, we see the expected outcome, because all discipline from the Father has an expected outcome. He is doing it for a reason.

[24 : 52] God does not bring about conviction of sin. He does not bring about this wrestling within ourselves for no apparent reason. He does it for a purpose. It says here in verse 10, For they disciplined, speaking of earthly fathers, for they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them.

Listen, as an earthly father, there are times when my discipline is way off course. At the moment, it seems best. Later on, I think about it, I go, I probably messed up a little bit, and I've had to go back and apologize to my children because of that.

I'm not ashamed to admit it, because if we mess up, we need to ask for forgiveness, right? We're human. We do that. We understand. And we understand that as earthly fathers, we try our best, but we are going to fall short.

But we do it for a short time as seemed best to them. But he, look at this, but he that is our heavenly father, disciplines us for our good. Everything that comes upon us is for our good.

Listen, I want you to understand this. The father has nothing to gain from us. Right? God is not hoping to have fellowship with someone.

[25 : 54] God is not longing to have communion with someone. God has nothing to gain. It is love. And the reason I say this is because he is holy, holy, holy, self-existent, self-contained, self-perfect.

If he needs fellowships, he is surrounded by cherubim and seraphim and all these things around him, right? He is surrounded by a heavenly host of angels and all these obedient things that are with him in the courts of heaven.

But it is grace and mercy that extends that fellowship to us. And every aspect of discipline around our house, it was, well, your last name's Calvert.

Therefore, you're going to represent this family. Right? And that's just kind of how it is. When people see you, they see me. And that's how it is. And we understand that. Well, God doesn't look at us and say, well, your last name is Christian.

And therefore, you're going to look like a Christian. No, he says, I'm doing this for your good. For your good. He disciplines us for our good so that we may share his holiness.

[26 : 54] Greatest gift that God could give us. This is the expectation here is that we will be partakers and sharers of his holiness. Well, how will we ever attain holiness if we do not suffer discipline for our sinful consequences?

How will he ever lead us to holiness if he will not rebuke and correct us in the midst of our sinfulness? That's called sanctification. So he is leading us to his holiness, to his perfection.

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful. Let's be honest. Sometimes when God's dealing with us, it stinks. Right? It's not fun. We'd rather not be walking through those valleys in the moment.

We'd rather not be dealing with that in the moment. But look at what it says. Yet to those who have been trained by it. Here is all I want to get to. Here's how you're going to respond to the Lord's discipline of you as his child.

You will either be trained by it or you will resist and hate it. I like dogs. I know some of you like cats.

[27 : 58] That's okay. I can pray for you. Cats are strange animals. Cats could care less if you have anything to do with them. Except for some. I know cats are good.

I like having cats around. They have a purpose. I understand their purpose. I like dogs. Around our house we have a couple of dogs. Big dogs. Well, one to be a big dog.

But I didn't just let my dogs do whatever they wanted to. Still don't. With dogs it's kind of like, you know, somebody's got to be the alpha. So I was always the alpha.

You had to set it early because my dogs were big enough that they could hurt me if I didn't. And I disciplined them. Don't go turning me into anything. I didn't do that. Okay. I didn't do that.

But I always correct my dogs. What I always found out is that when they were trained by proper discipline, they were so much better dogs.

[29 : 00] And it was for their good. Because a dog that couldn't be trained ended up becoming a nuisance to everybody.

And it was always for their good. But look at what it says. For those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Righteousness means to be in a right standing with God. I have dogs now at my house that are in right standing with me. That means I trust them.

I let them get closer to me. I let the big ogre who weighs about 90 pounds jump up in my lap and lay all over me. Because we're in right standing. Because if I tell him no, he knows no.

But we understand what God is doing with us as his children. Because he's doing things for our benefit. And he wants us to get to that place of right standing. Because listen, there is peace in the life that is in right standing with the Father.

[30 : 06] I don't know where we're at today with this message. But I do know this. That if any of us are going through a time of discipline, it's not really pleasant.

But what God is doing is bringing us to that peaceful place of being in right standing with him. So that when we sit down with him for fellowship, all discipline is behind.

All corrective measures have already been taken. And now we are living and sharing in his holiness for his glory and for his alone. The Bible says, Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down and the knees which are lame.

Straighten up. Straighten up. God's correcting me sometimes. I want to take that correction. I want to take that discipline.

Because he's doing it for my good. And he's doing it that I may have greater fellowship with him. And I want that. I want that.

[31 : 14] Because that's worth more to me than anything else. Let's pray. Lord, thank you. Thank you for this day. Thank you for the gift of your word.

We pray that your word would speak to our hearts. We pray that it would draw us closer to you. We pray, oh God, that we would respond faithfully to it for your glory and yours alone. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 32] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.