



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 12:4-11

“The Discipline of Life”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee with appreciation for the Scriptures and the way in which they minister to us. We thank Thee for the preservation of them, we know is the result of the power of great God in Heaven. And we thank Thee for the way in which they point so unerringly to our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for all that He is to us at this very moment. We thank Thee for His sovereign good pleasure, manifested toward us in the choice of us and in the constant blessing of us, day by day, and we know, from the Scriptures, will continue throughout eternity. We thank Thee for the word of God; we thank Thee for the living word, we thank Thee for the Holy Spirit, who teaches us the Scriptures, we thank Thee for the support we have in all of the experiences of life. We thank Thee for the preservation of each one of us to this point. We ask that Thou wilt direct our lives in a way that will bring glory to Thy name. And, Father, we ask as we study together this evening, that our thoughts may be directed towards the truth and that we may be responsive to it.

We pray, In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] I'd like to turn, first of all, before we look at the passage in Hebrews, chapter 12, to Matthew, chapter 6, and I'd like to read verse 24 through verse 34 of

Matthew 6. I know most of you are familiar with this passage as one of the great passages in our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” [Now, particularly, these verses, through verse 34.] “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

That’s a surprising rendering because we want to say, “Sufficient for his own things is its own evil.” But that’s the New King James Version rendering.

Now, let’s turn to Hebrews, chapter 12, and we’ll read verse 4 through verse 11. The author of the epistle writes.

“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our [own] profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

That word “trained” there is not the same word that has been rendered “chastened” but is a word that means something like “have been exercised by it.” In fact, it’s the word from which we get “gymnastics,” as a word.

Well, the subject for tonight, as we look at this passage is “The Discipline of Life.” We said last time that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews regards the Christian life as a race, not a dash, not a sprint, but something like a marathon at least, we’ll say more about that later on.

We said, also, that biblically the New Birth qualifies us to begin the race; that is, the New Birth brings us to the starting line. Endurance is necessary to reach the finish line; and that’s what he says here when he says, “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” The track, however, is not a straight way unhindered track. As a matter of fact, it’s an obstacle course. We know that from Christian experience. Not any one of us is actually led the same way. We all are led in different ways and all of us find our lives have plenty of obstacles.

In fact, the race might be likened to the Olympic three thousand meter steeplechase, that is, for men not for horses. There is such a thing and it is an Olympic event. And it's an event in which the individuals who are in this race, they race and they hurdle and then they leap over bodies of water and things like that as part of the race. That's the kind of race that we have here.

Now, I know, if you were looking at your text or at least listening as I was reading the Scripture, you noted how often the term chasten is found here. In fact, it's found in verse 5, “The chastening of the Lord.” Verse 6, “He chastens.” Verse 7, “If you endure chastening.” And then in verse 7, again, “Whom the father does not chasten?” Verse 8, “But if you are without chastening.” And then in verse 9, “Furthermore, we have had fathers who corrected us.” My recollection is, I don't want to turn to the Greek text, but that's the word for chasten translated differently in my text. In verse 10, “For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them.” And then, in verse 11, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present.”

So you might want to know precisely what this word “chasten” means. Now, fortunately, the English meaning is very close to the sense of the Greek verb and the Greek noun but the word means “to train as a child.” In fact, the root of it is “child” and so child train is really something of the sense of the word chastening. So as we train our children or try to train them as we train our children we are interested in their education, we are interested in their correction, of course. All of those things are involved in child training. Discipline, education, correction, well, that's the word that is used here; and it is used of all of us who are believers, as applicable to us.

In one sense, it's the term that refers to the whole range of life's discipline, training, child training. So all of these things, education, correction, all of that is involved in the disciplining of a Christian.

We live in a day, of course, in which almost all Christians that I know complain about the fact that the world has forgotten the significance of discipline. We see it in the

disciplining of our children. We see it in the discipline of our government. We see it in almost everything that we humans, as we near the 21st Century are lacking in. We do not practice discipline. And so the whole range of life's stern discipline is suggested by this and the Christian in God's family should realize, of course, that he's not like the men of our day who have neglected that. The fathers, the mothers, our government, all of those responsible for discipline, they are not doing their duty but God does his duty. And we are under his discipline.

We use that term “chastisement” but we should remember that chastisement, I think, in English has the sense it is God's way of punishing us or disciplining us for something that we've done wrong. That's not quite as full as the sense of the Greek word; because I think that word, and I believe the Bible as a whole supports it, also has the idea of education, and that is not necessarily because we are being punished for something. We are being educated.

In fact, Job is the illustration that might come to your mind. Job was not disciplined because he was doing something wrong. As a matter of fact, the book begins with an approval of Job's life. But the disciplining of Job is for his further education. So that's involved in chastisement, as well.

In fact, biblically speaking, chastisement or child training, usually takes place for three reasons. First: retribution. I'm sure you can think of biblical characters who faced retribution. One that stands out, of course, is David. David and his great sin, that is spelled out in great detail in the Old Testament, his adultery with Bathsheba, and then you'll remember the Lord God disciplined him, in the sense of punishing him, by saying with reference to him that “the sword would never depart from his house.” That was part of the discipline of David's sin.

Now, in the Bible, we also have chastisement or discipline that is preventive. And one of the greatest of the illustrations constantly referred to by biblical students is the discipline of the Apostle Paul in chapter 12, Paul describes it, of 2 Corinthians. He says,

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” Twice, in that one verse, he makes that statement, “Lest I be exalted above measure.” Now, that was for Paul’s, that was to prevent him from further sin.

And then, of course, education and that’s, I think, what we have, primarily, here. Job is the one that we’ve already referred to, who stands out because you know, of course, at the conclusion of the book, Job tells us what he’s learned by virtue of what God has done in his life. He said, “I have heard of You,” the you is a reference to God, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees You, therefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” And this concerning one that God had said in the very first verse, I believe, of Job, that he was a man in whom God was well pleased but further education.

As a matter of fact, further education is really what God is doing with all of us, isn’t it? Even when we have been able to be pleasing to him in something or other, we are liable to face further chastisement. As believers, God designed to teach us further.

In Psalm 73, that well-known beautiful Psalm, “Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart.” You’ll remember. And then the Psalmist has great difficulty understanding why it is that the righteous suffer and the unrighteous seem to be doing so well. They are wealthy. They drive around in Mercedes and BMW’s and things like that. Some of them even have Lexus’. But as far as he is concerned, he doesn’t have any of that. And he’s so puzzled over it, he says, “When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me. [Have you ever felt that when a Lexus went by? [Laughter] Painful? Until [he said] I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understand [or understood] their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. Thus my heart was grieved, I was vexed in my mind. I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless, [Then he talks about

these marvelous promises that are his.] Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, afterward receive me to glory.” Marvelous education that the Psalmist received. And that’s why he began his Psalm with that one verse “Truly how good is God to those who belong to Israel.”

Martin Luther once said something like this, that his temptations were his “Masters in Divinity.” That is, it was those things that made him understand the truth as he came to understand it. One of his pithy remarks which Luther made and he made so many of them he referred to 1 Peter 5:7, “Casting all your care upon God, for He careth for you,” Luther said, “Oh, that we could learn this sort of casting.” “That kind of casting everybody knows about, but the casting of ourselves upon the Lord in the experiences of life, well, that’s the greatest kind of all. And the man who doesn’t learn it will remain a man who is down cast, out cast, cast off, cast behind, cast away.” Those are words that Mr. Sauer says in his exposition of Hebrews chapter 12.

So we want to look now at the discipline of life and I’d like to note first verse 6, where he says, “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges ever son whom he receives.” Cares and worries might seem to be contradictions of this. Those that have great cares, those that have great worries, those that are disturbed constantly by things in their lives that are really serious problems for them; you might think that that’s an evidence that God does not love you as he loves others. There are others who seem to go through life without any serious troubles at all. Does not that mean that God loves them more than he loves us, or you, who are passing through trials and tribulations? Well, you might think that; but that’s not necessarily true. So our author says, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord or be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him, for whom the Lord loves, He chastens.” So the cares and the worries that we experience are not contradictions to the fact of God’s love for us.

Now, turning back to our passage in Matthew chapter 6, for just a moment, I’d like to make a few points real quickly here. I’m sure you understand these things but it’s

good to be reminded of them. In verse 24, the author has said, Matthew 6, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Cares and worries are really, ultimately, idolatrous. They are the things that concern us, rather than the worship of the Lord God. They certainly are unworthy. In verse 25 and in verse 26, he says, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” For us to worry and to be disturbed as we are is really a denial of the nobility of man, as over against the animals.

Wednesday night, we usually while we are eating a light supper before coming here, turn on channel 13 and Marty Stauffer talks about the fish and the animals and all of that. It's a marvelous little program. Thirty minutes. And the one thing that comes through so often is, this whole world about us is a world that is going on and illustrates all of this. How, ultimately, God cares for his creation. It's all his creation remember. He's responsible for it all. And he cares for the fish, for the animals, for the birds in the sky. All of those things are illustrations of God's care for us. And, as our author says, the Lord Jesus, himself, “Are not you of more value than they?” And so if he should care for the trout and the condors and the ospreys, that was on tonight ospreys, then he surely will care for you. And so, if we take the attitude that we're going to be concerned and worried, we are, though we may not realize it, denying the nobility of man, himself, or herself. He says cares and worries are useless. It does not really help. It does not do anything more for us than add physical stature to us. Cares and worries are un-filial, if I may put it that way.

Verse 32, “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” Almost as if there is a lack of recognition of where

we stand in the rank of God’s creations. Cares and worries are heathenish, he says. These are the things that the Gentiles seek after. Now, he’s speaking, of course, in the context of the children of Israel. The Cross has not taken place yet. The Gospel has not gone out to the Gentiles, as it will with the Apostle Paul. Our Lord was the minister of the circumcision, to confirm the promises made to Israel. And so he writes in this way because the Gentiles did not have the Gospel. They were the heathen. And so to be careful and concerned is just like those who don’t know the Lord. So it’s foreign to the kingdom of God. The cares and worries are earthly. He says in verse 33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Point us to food and raiment alone. And the cares and worries are injurious. Verse 34, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

If we’re going to worry about our troubles, then we experience them twice. We have the troubles and then worry about them. So we have them twice. Who wants a trouble twice? So in my notes, I have a little, a little statement here, and I don’t know where I got it. But it reads like this: God’s heart loves us, we are his elect. God’s hand holds us, we are under his protection. God’s mouth teaches us, we possess his living word. At God’s feet we are resting, we enjoy his peace.

Well, now, let’s turn back to our passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 12, and I want now to turn to a section, verse 7, where the author makes the point that discipline of life is the proof of sonship. I’ll read again this verse, “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”

Oh, how much more true that was in the day in which our Lord spoke these words. Look at it again. “What son is there whom a father does not chasten?” Why, today, I don’t know the percentage, but we know that there are countless sons who are

not disciplined by their fathers. Characteristic of our age. Even the world recognizes that. But it's true also in our Christian families, sad to say.

The world influences us so deeply. We often don't realize it. We sit down in front of the TV screen all day long and look at it; and then our lives begin to reflect the world, and we wonder why. Now, I'm not making a decision about whether everything is that's wrong in our society is traceable to channel 4 and channel 5 and channel 8 and all those other channels. Channel 33 is where Rush Limbaugh is. We'll leave that out, at least from 9:30 to 10:00 [Laughter].

But it's what the author is trying to, the point he's trying to make is that if you want to know that you really are a son, the discipline that we receive from our fathers is the proof of it. Discipline comes because of not in spite of fatherhood.

I have, also, in my notes here, part of an editorial and the first paragraph of it is, “Sometime ago,” I know this was something I cut out a long time ago, and I've seen it so often, looking at a TV news report. “Sometime ago, a young woman was murdered in sordid surroundings of her own choosing; confronted with the tragedy, the grieving parents said, in bewilderment, ‘We gave her everything she wanted.’” Think of that. “We gave her everything that she wanted.” Little did they realize that it's likely that that very fact is the reason for the trouble. But they understand it as why it should never have happened. “We gave her everything that she wanted.”

Let's put it this way, we gave this little sinner everything that this little sinner, rebellious person, wanted. Set it in its theological context, of the depravity of all of us, and then we'll understand why it's necessary for discipline to take place.

Many years ago, I was in a Bible conference when I was really young, forty years ago, over forty years ago, forty-two years ago, July the 28th, 1951. I listened to Alva McLain. He was at that time President of Grace Theological Seminary; a marvelous man, a theologian and also a fine Bible teacher. He was giving a message at the Erie Side Bible Conference, and I was the other speaker. And he was much older man than I was. He

was about the age of Dr. Chafer, so he was about thirty years older than I, at the time. I was counted it a great privilege to be in that conference with him and I think I was with him in one other conference. And I learned something in every message that he ever gave.

He said in this message that he was raised on a ranch in Iowa. And across the road there lived a man by the name of Frank Wills, whose father was a very successful farmer. His father, Frank, was his friend. His father always won the prizes. He raised a bumper crop of wheat each year. The children loved to play in the grain, and they did when their father left home one day. They played, he said, Fox and Geese. Now, I didn't grow up on a farm, so I don't know what Fox and Geese is. Cops and Robbers, yes. But Fox and Geese, no. But, at any rate, it had something to do with trampling in the grain, which they were not supposed to do. And so when Mr. Wills came home, he grabbed Frank, Dr. McLain said, “by the ear, and dragged him off.” Grabbed him by the ear and dragged him off. But he turned and said to Alva, “I'll attend to my son, and your father will attend to you.” And Dr. McLain said, “And he did!” [Laughter] I'll never forget that, and he said, “And he did!”

Well, that was a proof of sonship. He left Alva there. He left him to his own father. The very fact that he took Frank off was a sign of relationship. They belonged together. Frank and his father. But not Alva, he'd be left for his own father.

Well, the other day I was reading a fresh commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there was an interesting paragraph in it. It had to do with John Perkins, who is a remarkable black preacher and social activist. Now the excerpt from a book that John Perkins has written, has been given by Kent Hughes, who is the pastor of the College Church at Wheaton. And this is what he says, “John Perkins, the remarkable preacher and social activist, gives a poignant and deeply instructive account in his book “Let Justice Roll Down,” of his father's deserting him when he was a boy. “I knew then that Daddy was going away without me, but I still didn't turn back.” That is, his father

was going away, leaving him, he sensed that he was leaving him, deserting him. And so he was chasing after his father. He didn't want to see his father go.

And then he said, “So once more he,” his father, “came back and ‘whopped’ me a last time. Just then my Auntie came up. She must have missed me, and followed after me. I stood there between the two of them; neither one saying anything. Then she took me by the hand and dragged me away, back down the tracks toward home. I looked back once, but Daddy was already gone. And with him went my newfound joy in belonging in being loved. In being somebody, for just a little while. Years went past before I would know this joy again. I cried all the way back to the house, holding tightly to Auntie with one hand, and carrying my heart with the other.

“What was Daddy really thinking? What was in his mind that day that he left me? I never found out. I never, ever really had a chance to talk with Jeff, in the few times I saw him again before he died. But I do know that even when he punished me for following him that afternoon, he was admitting that we have some sort of relationship.”

What an interesting, poignant experience for a young black boy, who saw his father desert him, realized he was deserting him, but came to understand that when he came back and whipped him, it was evidence of a relationship and it meant something to him.

So our author here, “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” So if you are being chastened, draw comfort from the fact that that's an evidence that you belong. You belong to God's family. He's the one who is responsible for that in your life, as a believer. The discipline of life is the proof of sonship; it's also the product of the Father's wisdom. Notice the 10th verse, “For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.” So the Father's wisdom, men discipline after their own pleasure. That is, what they think will be good for us. But he, for our profit, “that we may be partakers of His holiness.”

Now, I know, that it's hard for you to believe this, but I used to have many fights with my sisters. They were younger than I, they were not as wise as I was, of course. [laughter] One is two years younger and one is five years younger. And I should have won all of those fights but I did not win fights. As a matter of fact, my father was a very, very fair man. I got all the blame. [More laughter] And it really is righteous discipline. Sometimes, however, I felt that he should have been stricter with my sisters and I nursed a little resentment against him, particularly when they laughed at me when I had to go to my room, when he sent me away from the dinner table. And it was unfair of them to laugh but since it was in the presence of my father, I couldn't do anything about it. That was one reason, incidentally, why I was so slender when I left home. [More laughter] I missed so many meals. But, God never errs. He is always fair. And he disciplines us for our profit, “that we may be partakers of his holiness.”

Now, the Apostle Paul you would think would never need any disciplining like that, but we've already read the passage. It says that God disciplined him, “lest he be lifted up by virtue of the magnificence of the revelations that he had experienced.” I can understand that. It's very difficult for a Christian who has had an experience, a Christian experience that is rather deep and rather personal, it's very difficult for him to tell it, without having any, teeny weenie bit of pride in telling it. And so, twice, Paul has told us, that “lest he be lifted up over much, God gave him that thorn in his flesh.”

The greatest anger of all is when God is not angry with us, when we sin. That is the worst thing because it raises questions about the relationship. So the discipline of life is the proof of sonship, it's the product of the Father's wisdom. Earthly fathers may err; he never errs. And our experiences are experiences that are evidence of his wisdom as well as of our sonship. The discipline of life may be grievous. He says, verse 5 and 6, “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged,’”

Now, the Authorized Version renders that “or faint.” Well, some of us have experiences that reach that stage, do we not? Almost fainting? Just recently someone, a Christian man, telling me of what has happened to his wife. And, after, when his thoughts turned to what had happened to his wife, he couldn’t say anymore. He couldn’t say anymore except the tears coming down his face. His throat was so constricted, he couldn’t say one word. I understand, “When whom the Lord loves He chastens,” and I know, too, that the son, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor ‘faint’ when you are rebuked by Him.” Those are natural experiences of us, that discipline may be grievous. They are two difficult things that often accompany the discipline of the Lord; the agonizing affliction and the apparent absence of his presence. In the midst of those experiences, often, the apparent absence of the presence of the Lord, and yet, we belong to him. We’re not expected to disregard trials, then they wouldn’t be trials. They hurt in order that we may be helped. That’s the point of them.

Some years ago, I visited a lady here in Dallas, who listened to our tapes, the radio ministry. She did not attend the chapel. She would have loved to have attended the chapel but she was in such a condition and in a family that she could not make her way here. She was about fifty years old, at the time. She worked in the office of government personnel in Washington for over twenty years. She was born with curvature of the spine and had, finally, after an operation, become paralyzed from the waist down. She managed to make a living by teaching music twenty-seven hours a week. She had all the humiliation of having to live with a nurse for most of the day and the resultant problems of the bladder. She said that her sister was happy to have her home, but she now feels some sense of rejection by her and her husband. She is a Christian. Her father was a Baptist minister, incidentally. She said she’s often troubled by depression and sensed sometime the absence of God in her life.

In my visit to her, she asked me if she could expect healing from God. And I had to express to her the fact that as far as I could tell, in the New Testament, that healing was

up to the sovereign good pleasure of God, and that she did not have, so far as I could tell, from biblical teaching, reason to expect such healing, though she certainly had the freedom to pray and, also, the possibility of such healing. But she did not have, as far as I could tell, the sense of certainty that she would be healed if she prayed.

I read to her this passage, finally, before we left and had a word of prayer with her. I was reading along in Hebrews 12:5 through 11, because it seemed to me to fit her so well. And as I was reading it, she interrupted me several times, when I said, I was reading the Authorized Version, “Nor faint,” she interrupted by saying, “I often do that.” As I was praying. “I often do that.” And then, when we came to the word “joyous” she said, “It surely isn’t.” And “grievous, it really is.” Those were her comments, her exposition, as we read through the word of God for them. The discipline of our life is, at time, very grievous. But that is not in any way an indication that we do not belong to him, nor is it any indication that we are not loved by him. There are other purposes that God has in mind.

The discipline of life is also under God’s control. Notice the kind of language that is used. “He disciplines us for our profit.” And then in verse 11, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” So it yields. That is, it has this result. That’s what we may expect. He overrules the actions of enemies so that they are really sent by God.

I guess, there is no one in the Bible who is a better illustration of the sovereignty of God in his divine providence than Joseph, in our Sunday morning Bible Study, Wilford Webb is teaching Joseph. And, of course, that’s one of the great truths that comes out; the providence of God. I don’t want to anticipate what he may be saying in his class because many of you attend that class. But in Genesis, chapter 45, when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, it’s interesting to notice the language in the light of the discipline of life. “So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God,” he said. These were his

words to the brethren. Now, I know the brothers sent him. They sent him into slavery. They sold him to the Midianites. They made it absolutely possible to go down to Egypt, where he was. And Joseph says, in verse 4, “I am Joseph, your brother whom ye sold into Egypt.” But three times, he also says, “While you did it, God did it.” “God did send me before you,” verse 5, “God sent me before you,” verse 7. “God meant it unto good to bring to pass, as it is this day to save much people alive,” chapter 50, verse 20. Thus faith in the last analysis accepts nothing from the hands of men. Faith accounts all things from the hands of God. If He is a sovereign God, ultimately, he is responsible for the experiences of our lives. It’s under God’s control, our lives.

The discipline of life is temporary. So he says, because he says in verse 11, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward,” Those are two great words, aren’t they? Bible teachers have often underlined them. “Nevertheless, afterward,” marvelous words, nevertheless, afterward.

I think of Mary, standing before the empty tomb, weeping. What a picture. What a picture, Mary Magdalene weeping before the tomb. Now, I could understand that if it were weeping for joy. But she wasn’t weeping for joy. She was weeping in sorrow when she should have been weeping for joy. The Lord has been resurrected. He is the Living One, that they believed. But she, in front of the tomb, is weeping.

One of the problems I think we all have, I surely have it, is that we tend to look at things and not look at them in the light of the teaching of God’s word. If she had just remembered some of those promises. “I’m going up to Jerusalem. I’m going to be put to death. I’m going to be buried. I’m going to be raised from the dead.” But, I can understand how she didn’t believe. Luke goes out of his way to say they didn’t, the men, the apostles, they didn’t understand any of those things. He was telling them plainly. Ah, isn’t that just like you and me? He tells us plainly in the Bible, what he will do for us. All these great promises, they are plain words from God for us. And we act just like Mary, in front of the empty tomb. The magnificent promises. They’re for us. The discipline of life

produces fruit. Notice verse 9, “Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?” Live fully? Holiness? In verse 10, “That we may be partakers of His holiness.” And then, “Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.”

Life, holiness, righteousness are trials. They’re not a cave, they’re a tunnel. Our hindrances are, in the long run, really furtherances by which God reveals himself to us.

Job learned that pain is more profitable than pleasures or possessions, because he had them all. But oh, how ignorant he was of himself. And so having lost everything and having had the pains that he had, he then has come to really understand the Lord God.

Well, how then shall we meet the discipline of life? Let me just make some suggestions. Our author has largely made them, but I’ll just lay a little emphasis upon them. Number 1: Do not consider the sufferings; consider the Savior. That’s what he says in verse 3, “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

Kent Hughes says, on this text, he says, “What he’s really trying to say is “Cut the melodrama. I don’t see any bodies lying around.” That’s pretty much our language today, isn’t it? “Cut the melodrama! I don’t see any bodies lying around.” You haven’t yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin, like our Lord did. Your sufferings cannot be compared to his. An hour at the foot of the Cross steadies the Christian soul, as much as anything ever could.

I remember one thing that Amy Carmichael says in one of her books, which I have always loved to read. She said, “Oh, Christ, Beloved, Thy Calvary stills all our questions.” If you just think about Calvary, and think of what that meant. All questions of God, all questions of His care for us, all questions of His love for us, all questions of His providence in our lives, all of those questions are stilled when we reflect on what Calvary

represents. The death of the Son of God for me. For me and for you. Love that loves like that can be trusted in this, that we are experiencing. Second, do not be dejected; be subjected. That’s what he says. “Don’t faint.” And, in verse 9, he says, “Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?”

There was a day in Martin Luther’s life, when the day grew rather dark and threatening. Death seemed very near. One of the cardinal’s legates said, “The Pope’s little finger is stronger than all Germany. Do you, Martin, expect your princes to take up arms and defend you, a wretched worm like you? I tell you, no! And where will you be then? Tell me? Where will you be then?” And Luther said, “Then is now, in the hands of Almighty God.” That’s what he was.

And, third, do not despise the disciplines of life; be exercised by them. Verse 5, “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as sons. ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens.’” He expects us to be exercised by it.

Verse 11 says, “Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been “exercised” by it.” Trained by it. Don’t despise; be exercised by the experiences of life. They are filial experiences. They are spiritual experiences. They are beneficial experiences. They are the ways by which God ministers to us and makes us a better servant and worshipper of the Lord God.

Someone wrote a couple of stanzas. I’d like to read them and close with this. “I walked a mile with pleasure, she chattered all the way, but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say. I walked a mile with sorrow, and n’er a word said she, but oh, the things I learned from her, when sorrow walked with me.” Discipline. The discipline that God gives to his saints is for our profit. May God help us to learn from those experiences.

Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the experiences of life and at this moment because there are a number of people in Believers Chapel who are suffering very much, at this present time. We know them. We pray for them. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt sustain them in the experiences of life, may these things really count in the light of eternity. We know Thou art our sovereign God. We know that the experiences of life are for our profit. But we know, also, that they are grievous. And we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt speak in a special way to those who are suffering. We bring them before Thee. We know Thou dost love them. We know that Thou dost care for them. We ask, Lord, that their needs may be met. And lay them upon our heart that we may continue to support them at the Throne of Grace.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.