

Heavenly Spankings?

Hebrews 12:1-11

Reality Carp o4.18.o9

Verse 1

- Imagery
 - A great cloud of witnesses
 - Running in a race
 - Ancient Olympic games
 - They used to compete nude
 - Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us
 - What is hindering you from running?
- Run with endurance
 - From when you get saved until you die
 - Christianity is not a spectator sport
- The race set before us
 - 1 Timothy 4:7
I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

Verse 2

- Fixing our eyes on Jesus
 - This means we look away from anywhere else (Cf. laying aside encumbrances)
 - And we look at Jesus
 - How do we do this?
 - The Word
 - Worship
 - Prayer
 - The Church
 - Christian community
 - It means we make Him the goal/finish line
 - That gets us through
 - Cf. who for the joy set before him
 - Despising/disregarding the shame
 - Sat down at the right hand of the throne of God
 - The prize/goal outweighed the difficulty!

Because of that example we are told to consider Jesus in verse 3

- So that we may not grow weary and lose heart

Then the author of Hebrews starts to hit hard

- Verse 4 (it isn't that bad... it could be a lot worse)
- Verse 5 (Your not thinking biblically)

If you were thinking biblically you would realize that nothing escapes the sovereignty of God

Though this persecution you are experiencing seems senseless, there is more to it

So, don't give up on the process

Verse 5^b

- Do not disregard (**regard lightly**)
- Do not be dismayed (**faint**)

In reality this is proof that God loves you (**verse 6**)

Discipline like death takes on a new meaning in Christian life

- It is necessary to the Christian life

Read verses 7-11

Some obvious points (Principle, reason, result)

- **Whom the Lord loves He disciplines** (v. 6)
- **He disciplines us for our good** (v. 10^a)
- It causes us to **share in His holiness** (v. 10^b) and it **yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness** (v. 11)
 - **Holiness** here meaning a separation from sin and a commitment to righteousness
 - **Righteousness** brings peace into our lives (Duh!)
- Principle, reason, result

But there are some problems aren't there?

They were being persecuted by the Romans... it was evil.

- But this passage says it is also the chastening of God for their good.

Which is it? It is both!

- Think of Israel being invaded by Assyria and Babylon
 - People and God
- Think of Paul and his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7)
 - **A messenger from Satan to keep me from exalting myself**
 - Satan and God
 - Not in a partnership, but in the sense that nothing gets through God's sovereignty
 - What Babylon, or the devil means for bad, God can work for good
 - We see that God is so powerful and in control (sovereign) that even the devil becomes His slave
 - And God is able to work the devil's work against the devil
- It is not always both, but it can be

How do we tell the difference?

- When is it evil, or God, or both?
- That is not necessarily and easy thing to discern.
- But then again, it is?
 - It is not easy because they often look the same (persecution was persecution)
 - But call to mind the whole point of the book of Hebrews: Stay close to Jesus!

- If we do that, then we may be able to discern between evil, chastening, both, or just life
 - Because we will experience the conviction of the Holy Spirit
 - Accompanied by conviction
 - A sense that we have gone wrong and need to get right
 - My daughter Daisy does not have to wonder if the devil spanked her or if daddy did—because she knows daddy’s voice.
 - Jesus said, “**My sheep hear my voice**” (Jn 10:27)

So, again, how do I know if this *flat tire* is the Lord, or the devil, or... just life?

- The Lord deals with us differently than the world or the devil
- He loves us
- His disciplining of us is not an expression of displeasure, but of love (v. 6)
- If we are walking with the Lord, then at some level, it is going to be revealed:
 - 1. Convicting
 - 2. Loving (in the sense of “this is going to hurt me more than you”—it was true)
 - Conviction is not synonymous with rejection
 - Therefore we should not be discouraged.
 - But rather it is an evidence of our belonging to God.
 - Kate and I always embrace our children after disciplining them
- If it is from the Lord it will have a **good effect** in our lives (v. 10 & 11)
- Satan looks to destroy
 - Both may be painful and difficult in the physical (suffering)
 - But one will bring life and light and the other the things of death and darkness
 - **Judas vs. Peter**
 - Luke 21:31-32
 - 31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;
 - 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."
 - Satan picked the fight, but Jesus finished it.
 - Even though it was a trying and painful experience, and there was failure
 - Their was fruit after Jesus met Peter on the beach (John 21)

What is the difference between being punished and being disciplined?

- In one sense God does not punish the Christian (The Cross)
- But in another sense He does
 - In this sense it is always instructive and transformative
 - He is training us for righteousness (Cf. 2 Timothy 3:16)
 - 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
 - 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Coach Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys is reputed to have said, “The job of the coach is to make them do what they do not want to do so that they can become what they have always wanted to be.”

Sometimes this disciplining will involve pain

- Pain is a mechanism designed by God to get our attention and teach us something
- Cf. Physical pain does this (it yells: “stop”)

C. S. Lewis: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to arouse a deaf world.”¹

- Many can testify that they turned their attention to Jesus only after some difficulty.
- That is not to say that every bad thing that happens is God trying to get our attention. It is too easy for the Christian to say that and we need to be careful not to do that.
- But the pain is not the whole story: *the peaceful fruit of righteousness* is

Psalms 119:67, 71

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.

71 It is good for me that I was afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.

Martin Luther once said: “Affliction is the best book in my library.”

Sometimes, God may need to break us

- The little wondering lamb and the shepherd
- That lamb would always be near
 - The whole point of the Book of Hebrews

We experience God's education through hardship or affliction

- Romans 5:3-5
 - 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;
 - 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;
 - 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- Though the diversity of God's discipline is not spelled out in this text, if we look at the whole of Scripture we see God has used:
 - War, plague, illness, rebuke, “thorn in the flesh”, bereavement, loss of status, personal opposition, persecution, and more

What can we say to these things?

- This is tough
 - The Bible doesn't pull any punches (v. 11)
- This is good
 - Only the worst parents don't discipline their children
- Be a humble learner

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 1978, p. 81