

## **Christian Growth**

### **Week 10: God's Discipline as a Means of Grace**

#### **Introduction**

- God's discipline - God works through our adversity to promote spiritual growth and maturity.

Heb. 12:11\* All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- How is this MOG different?
- Everyone needs this, but nobody wants it!

#### **The relationship between God's discipline & God's grace**

- Discipline is NOT \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn. 2:2 He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

- The cross proves that God can work even through \_\_\_\_\_ suffering to accomplish His redemptive ends.<sup>1</sup>

Rom. 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 . . .

Rom. 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose<sup>29</sup> . . . to become conformed to the image of His Son . . .

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<sup>1</sup> “. . . every hardship in my life is allowed by God only because it serves His . . . purposes in me . . . The good news about my trials is that God is forcing them to bow to His . . . purposes and do good to me by improving my character and making me more conformed to the image of Christ. Preaching the gospel to myself each day provides a lens through which I can view my trials in this way and see the true cause for rejoicing that exists in them. I can then embrace my trials as friends and allow them to do God's good work in me.” Milton Vincent, *A Gospel Primer for Christians* (Focus Publishing, 2008), pp. 31,32.

- Several metaphors demonstrate that God’s discipline is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_:

*God is the* \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:1–2 (NASB95) <sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away [lit. ‘lifts up’]; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

*God is the* \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 12:4 “Those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

*God is the* \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 12:12 Therefore (cooperate with God’s discipline) . . . <sup>13</sup> that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

*God is the* \_\_\_\_\_

1 Pet. 1:6,7 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Prov. 25:4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there comes out a vessel for the smith.

## Four core convictions

1.

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

“Presenting myself to God implies a recognition that I am altogether His. This giving of myself is a definite thing, just as definite as (receiving Christ). There must be a day when I pass out of my own hands into His, and from that day forward I belong to him and no longer to myself . . . If we give ourselves unreservedly to God, many adjustments may have to be made: in family, or business, or relationships, or in the matter of our personal views . . . His finger will touch, point by point, everything that is not of Him, and He will say 'That must go.' Are you willing? . . . It is always foolish to resist His will, but it is a blessed thing to just hand ourselves over to Him and let Him have His way with us . . . My giving of myself to him must be an initial fundamental act. Then, day by day, I must go on giving (myself) to Him, not finding fault with His use of me, but accepting with praise even what the flesh finds hard. That way (leads to) true enrichment. . . I do not consecrate myself to be a missionary or a preacher; I consecrate myself to God to do His will where I am, be it in school, office or kitchen or wherever He may, in His wisdom, send me. Whatever He ordains for me is sure to be the very best, for nothing but good can come to those who are wholly His.”<sup>2</sup>

2.

John 12:24-26 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

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<sup>2</sup> Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Christian Literature Crusade, 1961), pp. 72,75.

2 Cor. 4:7-12\*\* But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 8 *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death works in us, but life in you. (NASB)

- Afflictions:
  
- Perplexity:
  
- Persecution:
  
- Struck down: unexpected disappointments

3.

2 Cor. 1:8 For we do not want you to be unaware of the affliction that came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life' 9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead

2 Cor. 12:7-10 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

“As we subject ourselves to the Word of God, the lordship of Christ, and the leading of the Spirit, the circumstances will combine to wean us from the old life of self-pleasing and to conform us to the image of Christ. Our Father loves us so well that He places us in positions of great difficulty and perplexity, withdraws some cherished object of love, places us to live and work with or among uncongenial people--all in order that we may despair of ourselves and learn to draw more on the resources which are for us in Christ. The process of Christ being formed in us usually progresses more rapidly in times of adversity than in prosperity. When all runs smoothly, we tend to forget our dependence on God, but in times of trouble we turn to Him and appropriate His grace and help. Some of the greatest saints have been those who have been tested most severely. Rightly received, the disciplines of life serve to reproduce in us the likeness of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

“This is what all the work of grace aims at—an ever deeper knowledge of God, and an ever closer fellowship with him . . . How does God (accomplish) this purpose? Not by shielding us from assault by the world, the flesh, and the devil, nor by protecting us from burdensome and frustrating circumstances, nor by shielding us from troubles created by our own temperament . . . but rather by exposing us to all these things, so as to overwhelm us with a sense of inadequacy, and to drive us to cling to him more closely. This is the ultimate reason, from our standpoint, why God fills our lives with troubles and perplexities of one sort or another—it is to ensure that we shall hold him fast. The reason why the Bible spends so much of its time reiterating that God is a strong rock, a firm defense, and a sure refuge and help for the weak, is that God spends so much of his time bringing home to us that we are weak, both mentally and morally, and dare not trust ourselves to find, or follow, the right road. When we walk along a clear road feeling fine, and someone takes our arm to help us, as likely as not we shall impatiently shake him off; but when we are caught in rough country in the dark, with a storm getting up and our strength spent, and someone takes our arm to help us, we shall thankfully lean on him. And God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing, so that we may learn thankfully to lean on him. Therefore he takes steps to drive us out of self-confidence to trust in himself . . .”<sup>4</sup>

4.

1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Rom. 8:28,31 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose . . . 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

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<sup>3</sup> Oswald Sanders, *The Best That I Can Be* (Singapore: OMF Books, 1984), pp. 56,57.

<sup>4</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 227.

**Various causes of suffering:**

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But ultimately we can trust God's sovereign wisdom in ALL types of suffering.

“We should not be . . . too taken aback when unexpected and upsetting and discouraging things happen to us now. What do they mean? Why, simply that God in his wisdom means to make something of us which we have not attained yet, and is dealing with us accordingly. Perhaps he means to strengthen us in patience, good humor, compassion, humility, or meekness, by giving us some extra practice in exercising these graces under specially difficult conditions. Perhaps he has new lessons in self-denial and self-distrust to teach us. Perhaps he wishes to break us of complacency, or unreality, or undetected forms of pride and conceit . . . . Perhaps his purpose is to draw us closer to himself in conscious communion with him; for it is often the case . . . that fellowship with (God) is most vivid and sweet, and Christian joy is greatest, when the cross is heaviest. Or perhaps God is preparing us for forms of service of which at present we have no inkling.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), p. 86.

## Respond properly to God's discipline!

- \_\_\_\_\_ suffering vs. being undone by it because you are surprised.

1 Pet. 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

- Focus on God's \_\_\_\_\_ and His promises vs. focusing on the suffering.

2 Cor. 4:16-18 We do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Don't . . .

- Express your \_\_\_\_\_ to God, and then choose trust/obey Him (Matt. 26:37-42).

1 Pet. 4:19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Don't . . .

- Ask,

Jas. 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Don't . . .

- Allow others to \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Cor. 1:3,4; 7:6; Gal. 6:2).

Heb. 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Don't . . .

- Rejoice in the knowledge of God's loving purposes \_\_\_\_\_ your suffering.

Jas. 1:2-4\* Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,<sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

<sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Don't . . .

### **Conclusion**

John 14:27 (NASB95)<sup>27</sup> "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

CS Lewis from The Screwtape Letters

"Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys."

### **Memory Verses**

Heb. 12:11\* Discipline is difficult, but produces good results in those who submit to it.

2 Cor. 4:7-12\*\* Various types of suffering will befall those who follow Christ, but God will sustain us and spread His life to others.

James 1:2-4\* We can rejoice in the face of suffering, knowing that God will use it to build character in us.

### **Assignment**

Study for the exam.