

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Hebrews 12:1-13

New Revised Standard Version

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, October 30, 2016

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, October 30, 2016**, is from **Hebrews 12:1-13**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the **International Bible Lesson Forum**.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Hebrews 12:1-13

(Hebrews 12:1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,

The cloud of witnesses includes those with faith in God that we read of in the Old and New Testaments (and perhaps believers in Christ for the past 2,000 years). These witnesses live in paradise with Jesus, and we might think of them as believers in a giant stadium watching believers still on the playing field of earth. They have witnessed to us through the Bible, and they may witness how we express our faith in word and deed on earth. Therefore, we need to turn from practicing any sins and put forth the energy and faith required for a race and fulfill God's will for our lives as taught in the Bible and led by Jesus, who is our Shepherd.

(Hebrews 12:2) looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

We run towards Jesus, who sits on the throne of God in heaven, and who leads us as our Shepherd through the Holy Spirit, who indwells us. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, sits on the throne of God. From the throne of God, Jesus helps us to trust Him and live according to what He taught

as recorded in the Bible when He ministered here on earth. As we believe in Jesus and show by our actions and speech that we believe His commands and teachings, He will perfect our faith. When Jesus thought of how much His suffering and shame would mean for us and to us, our salvation was a joy set before Him.

(Hebrews 12:3) Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

If we follow the way of Jesus in this world, in some way we will suffer affliction, persecution, and perhaps a martyr's death. We need to remember this fact and not be surprised when sorrows come, because sorrows will cease with the presence and work of Jesus in our lives and in the future. If we will remember how much He suffered to save us from our sins and sins' consequences, then we will not lose heart when we suffer the pains of living in this world just as He did. Jesus always lives to intercede for us, so we have many good reasons not to grow weary in doing well and losing heart.

(Hebrews 12:4) In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Up to this point, the recipients of this letter had not yet suffered as Jesus had suffered, or as the apostles would suffer, or as many Christians in Rome would suffer as

persecuted Christians. Unbelievers want to suppress the truth and the teaching of truth about God and our world; therefore, they will bring persecution upon all true believers who live on the basis of their faith in Jesus and His teachings.

(Hebrews 12:5) And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—“My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him;

Since we do not yet live perfect lives before God and others, and since Jesus is the perfecter of our faith, some of our suffering is the discipline of Jesus to help us perfect our faith. He can use the persecution of unbelievers to strengthen our faith and teach us more facts of faith to encourage us and enable us to teach others and be good leaders in the faith. If as children of God, we sin and refuse to repent immediately, and instead begin to practice any sin, we will become subject to the Lord's discipline and will be under the Lord's discipline until we repent. We should not lose heart; the Lord's discipline is an indication that we are children of God. God's discipline will be painful, but not all painful experiences or suffering in our lives is the result of God's bringing under His discipline; some of our suffering is caused by the devil and his children.

(Hebrews 12:6) for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.”

When we suffer God's discipline, it is a sign that God loves us. When we suffer persecution, it can be an honor because unbelievers recognize the sincerity of our faith. It can be the result of God knowing us so well and trusting us so much that He wants to show Satan and others the depth of our Christian faith and commitment to Jesus as our Lord and Savior; much as Job had to suffer in order for God to demonstrate the unselfish sincerity and depth of Job's faith in God.

(Hebrews 12:7) Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?

When we endure trials, we show God and others that we will accept the discipline of God as one of His beloved children. Discipline can include suffering, but discipline also involves strength training (mentally, physically, and spiritually). Discipline can include learning to work with God and others as a team that God has brought together to accomplish God's high objectives.

(Hebrews 12:8) If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children.

God the Father disciplines His children. God does not discipline those who are not His children. Paul wrote that God gives unbelievers over to suffer the consequences of

their choices rather than discipline them (see Romans chapter 1). If we are truly God's children, we need to be willing to submit to the discipline of God, which is always for our good and the good of others, who may be protected from our continuing to sin or learn from our example as God disciplines us. We become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ and God our Father, but sometimes we do not learn early in our faith that God will use discipline and strength training to perfect our faith and obedience.

(Hebrews 12:9) Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

The writer used an analogy regarding the role of human parents to help his readers understand. Good parents discipline their children, which is a sign they love them and want them to behave in ways most helpful and happy for all concerned. Usually, children who receive good discipline from their parents will respect their parents. God does the same, for the same or similar reasons, in behalf of His children. If we reject God and His discipline, we will not live rightly and happily, and we will suffer God's punishment.

(Hebrews 12:10) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he

disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness.

Parents are not perfect in the discipline of their children, but good parents try their best to discipline their children rightly. God is perfect in the discipline of His children. Good parents do what seems best to them, and their children mature or come of age when their parents can no longer discipline them. Thankfully, God's perfect discipline will last our entire lifetime and is always for our own good. We can affirm that God discipline's us because we are His children and so we will live rightly and well; that is, consistent with the moral purity of God and His moral law. We can repent and rejoice whenever God disciplines us, because we know that He is making us better people and preparing us for the joys and moral purity of all those who live in heaven. Among other reasons God disciplines us, He is helping us be better servants of and better examples for His other children on earth.

(Hebrews 12:11) Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Discipline is sometimes painful and often requires hard physical work and spiritual sweat. If we learn the lessons God wants to teach us, our lives will be more pleasant and so will the lives of others around us. Right living leads to

peace with God and peace of mind and spirit. Living right often leads to peace with others, or suffering with a conscience that confirms we are suffering because of our faith and obedience to God.

(Hebrews 12:12) Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,

Suffering, whether from God's discipline or from fighting against evil or the consequences of sin, naturally weakens us, just as strenuous exercise can leave us feeling weakened temporarily. Therefore, we need to thank God for His discipline or for His considering us worthy to suffer in His name and for His sake; and then we need to do what will both physically and spiritually strengthen us while we trust in God to help us.

(Hebrews 12:13) and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

By removing rocks and filling holes that make a path difficult or dangerous to follow, we help others and will help ourselves the next time we walk that path. By removing sins of commission (the rocks) and by refusing to ignore any longer our sins of omission (the holes) and by returning to obeying God with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to move more quickly and safely while walking with Jesus toward heaven. Furthermore, those who have become spiritually lame because of their

sins or the sins of others against them will find a smooth and true path to God through repentance, faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and future obedience to God according to the Scriptures.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What joy do you set before you that makes suffering for Jesus worthwhile to you?
2. What are some of the ways that believers can still suffer persecution for their faith in Jesus and living according to His teachings in a country where believers supposedly have the freedom to practice their faith without fear of persecution?
3. God will teach you how to live through Bible study, but are you also truly willing for God to train or discipline you to make your faith more perfect?
4. How might you define God's discipline because of sins in contrast to God's punishment because of sins?
5. How many times do Christians invite new believers to come to faith in Jesus Christ with the promise that God will train and discipline them, perhaps painfully, so their faith will grow and mature and become perfect in Jesus?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.
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