

Who Will Suffer God's Discipline?

International Bible Lesson

Hebrews 12:1-13

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“And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It [Proverbs 3:11-12] says, ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son’” (Hebrews 12:5-6).

Some people take God’s everlasting forgiveness and adoption as one of His children for granted. They do not take their practicing sin very seriously. They do not ask God to help them stop sinning. However, the author of Hebrews refers believers back to the Old Testament to remind them that if God the Father accepts them as His child; then, because He loves them, He will discipline them. God’s discipline helps believers practice self-discipline when tempted to do wrong. If a true Christian continues to disobey God, the Bible says God will bring hardship and pain upon them until they repent and return to obeying God. Not all hardship and pain that believers suffer is the result of their practicing sin; but because God will always work their sufferings out for their good, believers can always learn more about God and themselves from their hardships and pain. God’s discipline will help believers fix their thoughts on Jesus, who will perfect their faith and by the power of His Spirit help them obey God. Because God loves those He accepts as His children, God will do whatever He sees wise and fitting to stop them from practicing sin. God treats unbelievers (those who do not see fit to acknowledge God) differently; God will allow unbelievers to do things that should not be done and experience the consequences of their choices (see Romans 1:28).

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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?