

Why Must I Suffer Like This?

Text: Heb 12:5-11

1) How to rightly view our afflictions

Suggested Hymns:

2) The right use of our afflictions

Tan: 348, 415, 402, 290, 408

Ade: 348, 865, 415, 402, 408

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Hebrews 12:5-11, *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” ⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 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? ¹⁰ 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. 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. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“Why must I suffer like this?” is a common question that has perplexed people throughout the ages. It is the burden of the Book of Job. It aims to answer the question, *Why are the righteous afflicted while the ungodly man prospers?* The same question is discussed in Psalm 73.

The fact that there is such a thing as affliction in the world is due to sin.¹ Sin has made affliction necessary also for Christians. Now, since we are all sinners and all therefore must endure affliction on earth, it is necessary for us to have the right understanding of our afflictions. In our text God gives us Christians a lesson on affliction. He teaches us how to rightly view our

afflictions and how to rightly to use our afflictions. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. How To Rightly View Our Afflictions

The word which the apostle uses in our text to denote the afflictions which come upon the Christians means in a general sense *“the whole training and education of children.”*

In our text it refers especially to “chastisement,” or “chastening,” and refers to the afflictions which God sends to people for their betterment. It is the various trials and difficulties of life by which God trains His children.

If these afflictions are to accomplish their purpose in our life, we must, first of all, learn to view them rightly. Here many people fail at the very start. That unbelievers cannot rightly view affliction is self-evident. They do not accept God’s instruction, and are therefore *“proud, knowing nothing.”*²

The unbeliever views affliction with a sour pessimism. He may think that life has no purpose and this attitude often results in suicide. The unbeliever will have a big a question-mark: Why? But he will have no answer. He thinks that God is cruel because He makes people suffer. The unbeliever will also have a fatalistic resignation, *“Grin and bear it”* and make the best of it. Then he may simply think that *“God is punishing me”* and become sorrowful. We read in 2 Corinthians 7:10, that *the sorrow of the world produces death.*

However, not only unbelievers have false views of affliction but even Christians do, as we may see from Scripture. For example, the disciples. We read in John 9:2, ² *And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* And in Luke 13:1-2, ¹ *There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.* ² *And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?”*

It is a common view that even the Christian thinks that *“God has become his enemy.”* Job said to God in Job 13:24, ²⁴ *Why do You hide Your face, And regard me as Your enemy?* And in Job 33:10, ¹⁰ *Yet He finds occasions against me, He counts me as His enemy.*

It is also common for Christians to think that God is punishing them. For example the Disciples on the sea. We read in Matthew 14:26, ²⁶ *And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.* They thought that Jesus was a terrible ghost when He was coming to help them.

Even though we are under grace we always want to return to servitude under the Law. But this should not be so as we read in Romans 6:14, ¹⁴ *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.* And again Romans 8:15, ¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."*

Christians can also become despondent. Our text says *Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.* They become "faint." They think that God has turned from them. They begin to despair, then they begin to hate God, turn from Him, and seek help elsewhere.

So let us now learn how to rightly view these afflictions.

Firstly, we need to realise that they come from God. Our text says *"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.* They are not accidental. We read in Matthew 10:29-30, ²⁹ *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. ³⁰ "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

The Hymnist writes³

*For naught can come, as naught has been,
But what my Father has foreseen,
And what shall work my good
Whate'er He gives me I will take
Whate'er He chooses I will make
My choice with thankful mood.*

Secondly the Christian must realise that afflictions come from God, our Father. Our text says, ⁷ *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with*

sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ... 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?

God actually is our Father, reconciled to us by the death of His Son.⁴ Afflictions therefore are not evidences of our heavenly Father's wrath but of His love. *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*

Thirdly, in sending afflictions, God is not denying His character but is acting as like a human father correcting His children. The difference is that our heavenly Father does it perfectly.

Fourthly, in sending afflictions, God has a definite purpose. An earthly father uses chastening for training. It is to preserve and turn a son from evil. It may also be an incentive to good conduct. But finally it is "*to make something out of the boy.*"

Likewise with God. The first purpose is to curb the Old Adam. Verse 10 of our text says, ¹⁰ *For [human fathers] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but [God chastens us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.* Regarding the Old Adam the Lutheran Confessions state,⁵ "*However, believers are not renewed in this life perfectly or completely.... The Old Adam clings to them still*"⁶

Therefore, because of these lusts of the flesh, the truly believing, elect, and regenerate children of God need in this life not only the daily instruction and admonition, warning, and threatening of the Law, but also frequent chastisements so that they may be roused to holy living, and the old man is driven out of them and follow the Spirit of God.

We read in Psalm 119:71, ⁷¹ *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.* And in Hebrews 12:8, ⁸ *But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

The second purpose of affliction is to be an incentive to good works, "*that we might be partakers of His holiness,*" and *it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness* our text tells us. It is *peaceable* because the result of the conflict

exercised by the affliction and the victory is peace in God and peace of conscience. This is a peace which can be attained only by those who have used their trials as a discipline and have emerged victorious from the conflict.

For example, Jacob at Peniel.⁷ Such “fruit of righteousness” is listed in Romans 5:3-5, ³ *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*⁸

The final purpose of affliction is that we may enter into eternal life. Our text says “*and live.*” We read in 1 Corinthians 11:31-32, ³¹ *For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* And in 2 Corinthians 4:17, ¹⁷ *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Clearly all afflictions sent by God are for our eternal good.

2. The Right Use Of Our Afflictions

If afflictions are really to serve their purpose in our lives it is not enough to know their meaning; we must make the right use of them.

The purpose of affliction is to lead people to repentance. This is clearly the purpose of Jesus words in Luke 13:1-5, ¹ *There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³ “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴ “Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”*

Since unbelievers do not understand the true nature of afflictions, they cannot properly use them. In their case they refuse to repent, to see real purpose of affliction, and they use them in the wrong way. Some people think they will get to heaven because they are suffering so much on earth. That is, of course, wrong. We read in John 3:36, ³⁶ *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting*

life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”⁹ It is faith in Jesus Christ that saves, not afflictions.

Some people grumble against God because of afflictions. They blame God for everything. That will not save anyone either. Then there are some people who despair and commit suicide because of afflictions. We read in 2 Corinthians 7:10, ¹⁰ *For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

So how are we Christians to use our afflictions?

Firstly, we are to use them **NEGATIVELY**. These are the “do not’s.” Our text tells us, *do not despise* (or regard lightly) *the chastening of the Lord*. We are to recognise their importance, that they are sent by God and that God is aiming to tell us something. Therefore pray. Pray like Eli said to Samuel,¹⁰ *‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.’* Then also be like Job in Job 5:17, ¹⁷ *“Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.”*

Also do not *be discouraged when you are rebuked by God*. The other word for discouraged is “faint.” Do not become despondent in view of the afflictions. Do not think that God is your enemy. We read in Psalm 77:7-9, ⁷ *Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? ⁸ Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?* The answer to all of those questions is, of course, no.

Secondly, we are to use afflictions **POSITIVELY**. That is what we are to do.

Firstly, accept them as a training which God is bestowing upon you. We show earthly fathers this consideration. Our text says, *Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect*. Even though their training is imperfect in many respects, *For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them*. From this we learn that it is “for a few days,” that is, during the brief period of youth. It must cease when manhood is attained, whether or not it has attained its purpose.

Human fathers *chastened us as seemed best to them*. This can be subject to misconception both of the purpose to be reached and the means by which it can be attained. In an earthly parent there is often much that is the result of hasty emotion, of an irritable temper, or perhaps of the mere love of power. There is much that is inflicted without due reflection, and that produces only pain in the heart of the parents themselves.

Yet with all this imperfection of parental government, we were patient and unmurmuring. How much more ought we to show such consideration and respect to our heavenly Father, *“the Father of spirits!”* Note that the contrast is between “spirits” and “flesh.” The soul is more important than the body. The earthly father is a parent to the man as a mortal. God is the Father of man as immortal.

Hence we need to realise that these afflictions are needed. Our text says, *for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?* ⁸ *But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.* Accept them as evidence that you are God’s children.

Note the word *receives* in verse 6. *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.* The word receives means “whom God takes to Him as an actual son, receives in His heart and cherishes him” ⁷ *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons.*

Affliction from God is to be regarded as evidence that God loves us, *For whom the LORD loves He chastens*. Show God the confidence that as our Father He knows best. Remember that He is all-wise, and makes no mistakes. He does these things *for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness* and will do what is right because He loves us.

He will lead us on the right path. We read in Psalm 23:3, *He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake*. This is even so, although His ways at times seem dark to us. We read in Isaiah 55:8-9, ⁸ *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.* ⁹ *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

This means that we are to patiently bear them as we read in Romans 12:12, ¹² *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.* And

in Job 23:10, ¹⁰ ***But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.***

Secondly, permit the afflictions to accomplish their purpose in you.

Afflictions are to lead us to repentance. Our text says, ***Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.*** And we read in Revelation 3:19, ¹⁹ ***“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.***

Say to God, ***“Be merciful to me, the sinner! O Lord, it grieves me that You have to chasten me, that my transgressions have so greatly offended You. You have been so good and gracious to me, but I have been so unthankful, have so often ignored Your holy will, and disobeyed Your commands. I must humbly admit before Your almighty throne that I have deserved a thousand times more.”***

Remember the story of the prodigal son. ¹⁷ ***“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!’¹¹*** And we read in Hosea 6:1, ¹ ***Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.¹²***

Thirdly, the purpose of afflictions are to sever our affections from the world. We are told in Colossians 3:2, ² ***Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*** The hymnist writes,¹³ ***“Let heaven to me be ever sweet, And this world bitter let me find.”*** We read in 2 Corinthians 1:9, ⁹ ***Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.***

Fourthly, afflictions are to drive us to God in prayer as we are told in Psalm 50:15, ¹⁵ ***Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.*** When a child is scared or hurt it runs to its father and so we run to our heavenly Father.

Fifthly, afflictions exercise us in righteousness. Our text says ***But [God] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ... nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*** In days of tribulation we learn lessons in righteousness which we ignore or overlook at other times, for example, becoming more charitable and more concerned about our soul.

The final purpose of afflictions is so that we may obtain eternal life. We read in James 1:12, ¹² *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.* And in 1 Peter 1:7, ⁷ *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

In concluding, we should, thank God for chastising us. We are to rejoice in tribulations here on earth. It is in heaven that we shall fully realise what our Father's chastening accomplished in us. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Romans 5:12

² 1 Tim. 6:4

³ ALHB 545 v 3

⁴ Romans 5:10, 2 Corinthians 5:19

⁵ Triglotta, p 965, FOC, Thor Declaration VI, Third use of God's Law

⁶ Rom. 7:18ff.; Gal. 5:17

⁷ Gen. 32:24-30

⁸ See also John 15:2; Isa. 26:16

⁹ Also Mark 16:16

¹⁰ 1 Samuel 3:9

¹¹ Luke 15:17

¹² See also 1 Kings 8:33, 47-50

¹³ ELHB 544 v5