

Proverbs 3

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[0 : 00] In September 2011, the Daily Mail published an article from which I'm going to read a section that says as follows.

Quote, Officer Cadet Elizabeth Eldridge is crawling through a stream. Her arms are bloody, her face is black, she's drenched and bone tired, and her helmet appears to have sprouted branches.

To cap it all, her color sergeant is gelling at her platoon, you are pathetic, get a move on, and it's raining. Think of a big, sweaty blacksmith in a forge bashing a metal rod.

I feel like that rod being hammered into an army officer, says Elizabeth. At the start of my training, I was weak and weak, never wearing makeup.

Dressing in an unflattering uniform and looking like a tree in her camouflage gear. The hardest thing was the sleep deprivation. On one exercise, we were digging trenches.

[1 : 09] We weren't allowed to sleep until they were finished. It took us 48 hours. Your mental and physical limits are being tested.

You are walking around feeling that you are in the film Apocalypse Now, and you are reenacting it in your head all the time. Close quote.

When I was reading this, I was thinking in my mind, why people subject to what it seems a very, very unpleasant form of...

In the case of Elizabeth, she answers the question she asks by saying, quote, Close quote.

It is really interesting to see how much we value the effort that we put in fulfilling our goals. we are willing to deprive ourselves from many things that we love things that we cherish like family, food even in the case that we just read sleep and so on and so forth we are willing to put aside many things when there is a goal ahead of us when there is something that we really want to accomplish we have many I mean I think this is common knowledge but can be as numerous as you may think getting a PhD like in my case you need some form of commitment to complete that task or becoming a minister implies a lot of sacrifices and personal effort buying a new house, dropping some stones losing some or as in the article graduating from a reputable military academy but as diverse our goals are and as different the means to achieve those goals are there is one thing in common there is a commonality among these things something that is essential for reaching the objective that we have ahead that is discipline discipline discipline this word that implies so many things we know that and yet we are not may I say naturally keen when it comes to taste the flavor the flavor I'm sorry of disciplinary actions taking against us as believers we know that that is the case time of unsolicited unrequested divine correction we cry out in despair why me God why me been there done that

[4 : 01] I don't know you but that has been my case up to this point I do not reckon that I would be mistaken if I say if I assert that we all here this evening at Bonacore we love to achieve our goals I imagine that most of us or all of us we have goals different goals but goals in the end and we love we dream to accomplish those goals we all somehow have achieved something and hence we have been we have been subjected we have subjected ourselves to some form of discipline otherwise it will be impossible to reach the goal that we have established for ourselves and at the end of the process we are proud of it we are proud of the sacrifices that we are making to buy a new house because we have been diligent in saving money and not to spend too much money on

I don't know movie nights or whatever is your hobby and we we should be proud there is nothing wrong with that but what about divine discipline should we really long for God's discipline in our lives should we really value divine discipline as much as we value other forms of human discipline should we really value and and respect and encourage others to be under God's discipline as we appreciate the discipline that many other people engage in order to accomplish their goals well let's

see what the author of Hebrews in chapter 12 says about this subject of discipline so let's go back to our Bibles in chapter Hebrews chapter 12 and we are going to concentrate our sermon on verses 5 to 13 particularly we are going to concentrate to the section in which the author of Hebrews exhort us concerning the subject of divine discipline this is a subject that we normally tend to avoid we normally tend to skew if not in theory in practice we all talk about

God's discipline and how beneficial it is but when it comes to faith in the flesh in person we tend to avoid we try to avoid the aim of God's exhortation this evening is to explain in light of this section in the book of Hebrews three main things about divine discipline the character of the discipline the intention of divine discipline and the results the outcome of being subjected to divine discipline in addition to that there is another aim which is to remind us of the unavoidable need of divine discipline in the life of the true children of God if we are children of God we need to acknowledge the necessity of divine correction the thing is introduced in the first four verses of Hebrews 12 so let me let me just we're going to concentrate on verse five and forward but the introduction is given in the first four verses of chapter 12 and the way that the author is introducing this subject is by using four verbs in verse one we have the number one is we have the verb throw off he says to throw off of everything that hinders that is to remove the sin that is entangled us that is preventing our growth verse number two in the same verse verse one to run to run but not only to run but to persevere run just a few I think it was two weeks ago it was the you know the commonwealth games and I mean you are familiar with all the athletes running and doing the effort and perseverance is something that is essential for those who want to finish the race so the author of

Hebrews is also using here a metaphorical language that is he is presenting an allegory to resemble the games in this case the athlete running so run and persevere in the race that is ahead of us in verse two we have another two verbs first one is to fix fixing our eyes or to fix our eyes in Jesus Christ as the author and perfecter of our faith he is the one he that's the reward that is ahead of us to be like him why because he is the archetypal of this run he is the perfect runner so let us fix our eyes in him because he is the author and perfecter of our faith and the final verb in verse two is consider to consider what to consider Jesus' cross that is

[9 : 53] Jesus' sacrifice so that in the midst of our cross in the midst of my and your sacrifice we will not grow weary and lose heart so the admonition up to this point is to look at him he's the reward but look at the example that Jesus has given us so that when we are in the midst of this storm we will not lose heart we will not grow weary now let's go into verse five but before before I began discussing the character of the divine I was going to say divine simplicity I was thinking about the theological stuff but divine discipline it will be unwise on my part just to skip or not to stop for a moment on the initial admonition that is on verse five the admonition and the warning is about those who are unconcerned with

God's word those who have become indifferent impassive dispassionate apathetic with God's word and this this is important because this admonition the one that you have in verse five functions as the framework of the whole teaching in chapter 12 and you have forgotten says the author of Hebrews verse five and you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons that's the problem so he's presenting the problem after the introduction in verse one to four and this is the problem you have forgotten and not a particular admonition you have forgotten an admonition that calls you sons and then we will see what kind of admonition he's talking about notice one thing about this admonition the author of

Hebrews is not referring to something that is new he's not saying you have forgotten something that you just heard last week right he's saying you have forgotten something that you have heard before as you were referred as they are being referred as sons and why he's saying that because the admonition that he's referring is the one that we read in Proverbs chapter 3 verses 11 and 12 so remember the audience of the author of Hebrews are Hebrew Christians right so the assumption is that they must be familiar with the Old Testament very familiar with the Old Testament and therefore the the the the chart against them is that you have forgotten something that you should remember but you have forgotten you have you have allowed to become indifferent towards God's word and the exhortation they had forgotten is this my son do not make light of the Lord's discipline and do not lose heart when he rebukes you this is a quotation a direct quotation from the Greek translation of the Old Testament the Septuagint and it's almost a quotation word by word which is interesting so the author he wanted to be really precise on this quotation so the implication

is that the price to pay when we become indifferent towards God's word may be too costly or perhaps it is it would be too costly for our spiritual health in this case for instance in the case that we are discussing in the book of Hebrews the price that they were about to pay is the complete abandonment of the faith in other words they were ready to commit apostasy that's how serious was this issue they were facing persecution they were facing persecutors of the church and they were under

I mean the danger of even losing their lives so they were being questioned in their faith and many of them were thinking about well I think I'm going to abandon the faith and keep my life so that's the issue that he's facing here the call at this point is unambiguous we should not take lightly God's discipline and we should not be discouraged when he rebukes us but why why because of the nature of the one who disciplines and the nature of the one who is making this rebuke it is no other than the Lord of hosts it is God himself who is exercising discipline it is not the referee in the football pitch who is exercising some discipline it is not my coach it is not my father my early father it is not any other human being as important as he or she may be it is

[15:48] God himself who is exercising his divine right to discipline his sons that's why we need to listen to the admonition and this leads us to the first inquiry this evening which is what is the character what is the nature of the Lord's discipline the first important clue to answer this question is to look at the biblical term that is being translated in our Bible discipline the word that is being used is the word paideia it's a Greek word I mean maybe we are not familiar with the word as it is rendered in Greek but I am pretty sure that you have heard words like pediatric right that's the origin of the word because the word paideia means it literally means instruction for the kids but pies means children kids and the primary meaning of the word paideia that is translated discipline that's one issue with the translation because the word discipline by itself does not convey the whole meaning of the word paideia because paideia literally or primarily conveys the meaning of the whole education and training of children which relates to the cultivation and mind and morals and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions now reproof and punishment so punishment or discipline or instruction by itself could be part of paideia but it's not the whole thing about paideia paideia is much more it's divine instruction that comprises punishment and so on and so forth so in the biblical sense divine discipline may contain a punitive action but in the whole is much more than that it would be simply wrong to say that

God's discipline is always due to sin or it is always due to a form of retribution for wrong doings that's not the case that if we assume that that is true we will have to say that every time that God instructs us is because we are doing something that is wrong and that's not the case I mean we have biblical examples of that situation the book of Job is perhaps one of the perfect examples so in the first place regarding to the character of the Lord's discipline divine discipline is an eternal act of perfect love divine discipline is an eternal act of perfect love by which God's sons and daughters are instructed by different means including suffering as is in the case of

Hebrews chapter 12 instructed for what to be acquaintance to be ingrained in God's ways one biblical commentator put it in this way quote the imposition of God's discipline is an evidence of God's responsible love and commitment when it's imparted by God is just a sign of love on his part towards his people second divine discipline guarantee of sonship and as such the validation of divine grace and forgiveness I repeat divine discipline is the guarantee of sonship and as such the validation of divine grace and forgiveness let's remember what the verse six says because the Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son and verse seven endure hardship as discipline because God is treating you as sons for what son is not disciplined by his father of course this is a rhetorical question but how do we explain the punishment that God exercises towards the unbeliever yes I just I don't want to contradict myself and I just a few minutes ago I said that divine discipline is much more than punishment but punishment is part of divine discipline okay so how do we explain when God exercises his divine right of punishment of wrath or judgment towards the unbeliever are the unbeliever somehow included under the umbrella of sons of

God after all God is the father of all creation isn't he so in one sense we can say well probably he's also the father of the unbeliever well I don't think that that's the case at least not in this particular context although unbelievers experience some form of divine discipline this is better explained as a manifestation of divine judgment is more the exercise the divine right the divine right of exercising God's wrath towards the unbeliever than an expression of divine love at least again within this

context the immediate and larger context of these words in the book of Hebrews confirms that the reference sons wheels in Greek is directed to believers only this is a reference to believers and believers only two quick reasons to support my point here is number one an unbeliever could not care less about the words said in verse five the word of encouragement in proverbs five i mean an unbeliever is completely blind his death his debt towards god's word so you have forgotten the admonition of god an unbeliever would say so what that's that's i mean it's completely meaningless he's blind to god's word and number number two the warnings that are included in the book of [22 : 50] Hebrews i'm talking about Hebrews chapter three Hebrews chapter six Hebrews chapter ten those warnings the warnings of apostasy would not make sense at all and they make sense only if we consider that the recipients of the letter are true believers on the other hand please notice that the father's reluctance to operate instructed discipline makes of his sons false sons if you are verse eight if you are not disciplined and everyone undergoes discipline then you are illegitimate children and not true sons illegitimacy here means to be outside of the filial covenant covenant that god has been eternally established with his people through christ of course and therefore it means that those who are outside of this covenant will not have protection will not have inheritance will not have blessings as the true sons have you see that's that's an important thing to keep in mind number point number three about god's the character of the divine discipline divine discipline is compulsory is mandatory is not optional just as no human being is exempted of being subjected to external discipline at one point if you go to school you have to be obedient and you have to submit to the discipline of your teachers if you are at home you don't go to school that happens the same with your parents if you go outside even the police officer is exercising some form of discipline over you in the same way the true children of

God are not exempt of the Lord's discipline is completely unavoidable number four divine discipline is exceedingly superior to any form of human discipline in verse 10 we read our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best notice that the last words of this verse is it says clearly that they are trying to do their best of course the idea is that human discipline is not perfect it's fallible it's limited it's arbitrary sometimes so human discipline in the end is at best the best attempt but it never reached perfection if you don't believe me ask Vivian and Andres my kids and they will corroborate my point here human discipline will always have a margin of uncertainty is it too much is it too little is

I'm being too rough too soft or maybe perhaps the motivation for us to exercise discipline is anger or really really instruction what motivates what originates us to exercise discipline and so on and so forth you can make different questions about this point but in contrast this is the total opposite God's instructive discipline is always determined by perfect wisdom always by perfect wisdom and always motivated for our own sake divine discipline is always based on perfect wisdom and for our own sake New Testament scholar F.F.

Bruce put it in this way quote the man who accepts disciplines at the hand of God as something designed by his heavenly father for his own good will cease to feel resentful and rebellious he has stilled and quieted his soul which thus provides fertile soil for the cultivation of a righteous life close quote second point what is the Lord's discipline what is the intentionality of God by putting us under his discipline in one word I will be able to respond to answer to this point just by using one word sanctification our sanctification but let me let me just dissect this in two parts let me put it in two parts according to what we are reading in

Hebrews 12 the intention is to teach us submission to the lordship of God that's part of sanctification of course verse nine moreover we have all had human discipline us and we respected them for it how much more should we submit to the father of our spirits and live the logic in this rhetorical point that the simple is not too complicated if we respect the discipline that has that is being imposed to us by our early fathers fallible arbitrary imperfect capricious sometimes in rational grounds are we going to object the perfect and always instructive discipline of

[28 : 55] God think about it we respect our parents especially when we are older we start oh I was a terrible kid so on and so forth you know reflections about our rebellious days right but we respect them we appreciate the discipline that they impose on us so the logic that the author of Hebrews is using here is on which grounds are we going to object now the discipline that is being imposed by not our early father but the father of spirits the supreme God the almighty God there is no ground no justifiable ground to reject God's discipline additionally in addition to teaching us submission to God the intention of the Lord's discipline is to make us stronger verse 11 no discipline seems pleasant at

the time but painful divine instruction carries with it an apparent burden and I say that for a reason it is just unpleasant when it is observed from the temporal frame in which we are experiencing the discipline let's say that we are facing the discipline now of course it is painful but it is painful because we are just limiting our view to our present context and we are not fixing our eyes in the glory ahead after all no child believes when his parents says to him this hurts me more than it hurts you when we exercise discipline however the call the exhortation here is to that once we fix our eyes not in the present suffering but in the glory to come is when the strength of

God's training became evident to us the apostle Paul says in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 verse 17 he says for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal way of glory all comparison I don't think that it requires more comment than that I think it's crystal clear what strongest Christian is the one who has been seasoned who has been treated in divine instruction she who knows the will of God is the one who has been disciplined by the cross that's the expression that John Calvin used for this when he preached when he his commentary on the book of Hebrews disciplined by the cross the title of this sermon is in reference to that expression that caught my attention when I was reading Calvin on this on the book of Hebrews instructed by the cross so the stronger Christian the mature Christian is the one who has been seasoned instructed disciplined by the cross of Christ put it in this way in Psalm 119 verse 71 he says it was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrease it was good for me to be afflicted that's the final recognition after the storm yes it was good for me to be afflicted it was good for me to be under your discipline because now increase and what are the results of the Lord's discipline that's point C the third point on the structure of the sermon what are the results of the

Lord's discipline number one divine discipline produces life quite important life nothing else but life verse nine says how much more should we submit to the father of our spirits and live so submission to the discipline imposed by the father of spirits is in other words to possess life right it is preparation for the glorious age to come in an eternity before God on the other side of the coin however and this is the warning here we must say also that to do other things that to submit to God's discipline or to submit to God's instruction is to renounce to life itself I think it is I am not stretching this verse by making the implication if by submitting to

God I am the possessor of life by rejecting God's discipline what would I get number number two divine discipline produces righteousness and peace verse 11 later on however it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it both righteousness and peace do in relation to time what I mean by that righteousness and peace is something that we experience now here right at the moment that we became part of God's family that we became God's sons and daughters we are justified the righteousness of Christ is being imputed to us so we are called righteous which means that we are in peace with

[35 : 09] God his wrath is now being satisfied by Christ vicarious sacrifice so at this moment the present for us Christians we are enjoying partially enjoying this fruit of the Lord's discipline which is righteousness and peace but there is another aspect of this righteousness and peace that it comes as a promise in the future in which by the time that we reach eternal glory and we face God face to face we will be partaking of his holiness not as if we are going to be part of his nature in a kind of a ontological aspect it's not like we are becoming God but we are going to really share to fully appreciate the divine nature particularly his holiness in any case present or future or both the certainty of the results are beyond question it is unquestionable that those who have been trained by discipline by the discipline of

God they are going to enjoy divine discipline allow us to partake in the holiness of God verse 10 God disciplined us for our own good so that we may share in his holiness to partake in God's holiness is those who have endured hardship as discipline on this earth which means that one day we will enjoy perfect fellowship with God by participating in the very life of our creator this is a picture that goes beyond at least for me it's a picture that goes beyond human comprehension there is no way that we can picture that moment in which we will be facing the full blast of God's glory that's beyond that's the promise that's the expectation that's the that's the future that is ahead of each one of us through children of

God so in conclusion let me close in the best way at one voice with the author of Hebrews how by quoting him as follows therefore strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees make level paths for your feet so that the lame may not be disabled but rather be healed let us pray