

I. Intro

A. Consider Jesus

1. When you're doing well
2. When you're not doing well

B. Resting and wrestling

1. Both are part of the Christian life
 - a. Rest (Matthew 11:28; Philippians 4:6-7)
 - b. Wrestle (Luke 13:24; 2 Timothy 4:7)
2. These don't exist independent but are interwoven.
 - a. Main reason for wrestling is to rest in God and not money or position or looks or accomplishments; the point is to rest in the promises of God.
 - b. All wrestling is done with the deep understanding and restfulness that Jesus has already won and secured everything for us—inheritance!

C. Challenge:

1. Today you are going to be presented with God's truth and promise to you.
2. Wrestle: Are you willing to believe it? Or will you live in unbelief which begins the process of drifting, doubting, becoming dull to, and ultimately despising God's Word?

II. Discipline = Love

A. You have not yet ... shed blood. (v4)

1. Consider Jesus ... Joy was greater
2. Hebrews 10:34—imprisoned and plundered
3. It could get worse and probably will.
4. We've not shed blood, in fact we've not even experienced what they experienced.

B. The truth about you (v5-6)

1. Danger in forgetfulness
2. You are sons/daughters and participate as full heirs in the kingdom.
3. Discipline = love; chastisement = reception/acceptance
 - a. Discipline is not punishment.

1) Punishment: give someone what they are due; root is frustration & anger

2) Discipline: make something better; root is love

b. Chastisement covers training, instruction and correction.

C. Microscope: Discipline

1. Where is this suffering coming from?

a. One answer: Hostile sinners or sinful adversaries, both people and devils (Hebrews 10:32-34, 11:35-38, 12:3-4)

b. The bigger answer: God is in charge, He is in ultimate control of these afflictions and they are a result of the loving discipline of a perfect heavenly Father

1) Dual design (Genesis 50:20)

a) God is teaching, correcting and transforming us.

b) God rules over sinners and Satan and they unwittingly (with no less fault or guilt) fulfill God's wise and loving purpose of discipline in our lives.

**God redeems people, He designs circumstances. God has redeemed you and He has designed the circumstances of your life to transform you. The choice you have is how to respond to these circumstances.

2) Ok, but what about natural disasters and sickness?

a) Q: which would be more difficult to deal with, an earthquake or cancer, or a person with a will of their own?

b) So, it would not follow to suggest that God is not present in the natural fallen world.

**When we are talking about discipline in the life of a believer we are not just including consequences of sinful actions or persecution from sinful people but we are also talking about natural disasters and sickness. God has a design for His children in all those sufferings.

C. Love inherent in discipline

1. Called to endure the proof that marks us as sons/daughters

a. Real fathers discipline their children because they deeply love them - they don't just "deal" with them.

b. If we are not disciplined, then there is concern and questions about who we belong to.

2. Two choices (v9)

a. Surrender and humility = life

b. Rebellion and pride = death

****We don't choose our discipline but we do choose our response. You make that choice every time. Our response gives us control.**

3. Video

- a. I need to ask a question but first I want you to hear this story.
 - 1) It's a story about a family in our church.
 - 2) It's a story about a son of God who God disciplined.
 - 3) It's a story about God's deep and inescapable love for His sons and His daughters.
- b. Run video
- c. Reinforce
 - 1) Michael was and is a son of God - that's why God would not stand for his lifestyle or choices. God disciplined Michael, just like he is, and will discipline us because He loves us and it is proof of our belonging. In the process, he also disciplined Brianna - not because she did something wrong but because God loves her enough to transform her as well.
 - 2) Michael recognizes God's discipline in this and has accepted it as a gift of love and evidence of belonging to God as a son.

****Ok, sure, but what about when I didn't make a bad choice and still experience suffering? Do we really believe that there is a point that you and I are presentable to a holy and perfect God? It is the height of pride and arrogance that says that I'm good enough as I am and don't need refining. So the question is: Are you willing to believe and accept that God's discipline in your life is because He deeply and unconditionally loves you? Will you let the Word of God settle the issue of suffering for you, even when you cannot find a reasonable explanation?**

D. The why (V10-11)

- 1. Why God disciplines us
 - a. For our good: vs "as it seemed best," a subjective judgment which may or may not conform to the fact.
 - b. For our holiness: we are by nature unholy, that we would be partakers/share in God's holiness
 - c. Our peace: through discipline God grants us peace, good discipline leads to peace not unrest
 - d. Our righteousness: the trade from continuing in sin for a desire to striving to obey and trust God

****This is God's design in all discipline!**

- 2. The present experience of discipline

- a. Joy is covered by a cloud of pain.
- b. "Seems" suggests that there is a joy of hope that exists beneath and after the cloud.
 - 1) Consider Jesus: The joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross.
 - 2) The same applies to us as God's sons and daughters.

III. The line in the sand

- A. God has made promises to all who belong to Him.
 - 1. To never leave nor forsake them
 - 2. To finish the work of transformation which He began
- B. Discipline is the design of our loving Father that comes to us through the hostility of sinful people and the natural hazards of a fallen world.
 - 1. You may have been active in causing the discipline.
 - 2. You may have been passive in causing the discipline. (i.e. Job 23:10)

“But He knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come out as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and have not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food.”

Job 23:10-12

- C. The Question:
 - 1. Are you willing to believe that the suffering that you face is God's unique design for your good, your holiness, your peace, and for your righteousness?
 - 2. Are you willing to not only believe, but to trust God in your persecution, consequences, sickness, loss, and when you seem to be in the wrong place at the wrong time?

**Jesus calls us to consider Him when we get tired, frustrated, sad, afraid and angry. If all those listed in chapter 11 could make it, then so can you because you are empowered by the same Holy Spirit they were.

The Drunken Sailor With A Dysfunctional Family Who Saved the World

April 18, 2016

Noah is known by most as the man through whom God saved the human race. When all others had turned to evil, God turned Noah's heart toward faith and righteousness. We hold Noah in high esteem because of all the men on Earth, He was the chosen one through whom the human race would escape extinction. But too often, we idolize these heroes of the faith, as if they lived on a different level than we do. But Noah was just like you and me.

Read Genesis 9:20-25

Let's get down to it. Noah didn't know when to say "when." He abused alcohol and embarrassed himself by passing out in a naked heap in the living room. And we're not sure what the deal is with his son Canaan, but something happened and it wasn't good. It was so not good that Noah cursed him. Noah's family was not ok.

But this is the man of whom it is said:

"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." Hebrews 11:7

Noah was very imperfect and his family followed suit. But he was a reverent man of faith who trusted God even past the boundaries of "crazy." He built a boat on dry land. God used a broken man, who might have been prone to addiction to save humanity.

And God isn't done with you. He will finish what He started.

The Kind of Brave, Kind of Cowardly Father of Faith Who Said His Wife Was His Sister to Save His Own Skin

April 19, 2016

As far as faith goes, second to Jesus (a very distant second!), Abraham is the poster-boy. Much of the New Testament ties the roots of our faith back to Abraham's relationship with God. Abraham left everything he knew and believed God, and God made Abraham righteous in His sight. That's the Gospel!

But Abraham was not a man of faith, at least not naturally.

Read Genesis 12:10-13

Read Genesis 16:1-2

Read Genesis 20:1-2

Without a doubt, it took faith for Abraham to leave his home and follow God into the unknown. But it's not like Abraham had faith and stayed faithful like a rock against the storm. He passed his wife off as his sister to save his own neck—not once but twice! And when God's promise to give Abraham and Sarai children was taking too long, he took the awesome advice of his impatient wife to sleep with her maid and then claim the maid's baby as their own. Two words: Jerry Springer.

But here's what the writer of Hebrews says about Abraham:

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." Hebrews 11:8-10

Giants of the faith aren't giants because they were born that way. It's the grace of God that chisels the cowards, the impatient and the weak into pillars of granite faith. You will trust and you will fail. And then, you will trust again. This is path of anyone who would leave everything for Christ.

And God isn't done with you. He will finish what He started.

She laughed at God ... Then She Trusted Him

April 20, 2016

Even though she was elderly and had been unable to conceive her whole life, Sarah (aka Sarai) trusted that God could give her a son and that her son would be the start of something amazing. But before she trusted, she schemed and she laughed.

Read Genesis 16:1-2

Read Genesis 18:10-15

Sarah must have believed God's promise to start a family through Abraham. But God's way and timing obviously didn't fit her plan, so she schemed, she plotted and she prodded her husband to take a second wife, in order to force God's plan into action. This didn't work out well and she was left with deep regrets. Her deep regrets led to deep cynicism. When God reiterated His promise to Abraham and Sarah, her reaction was to scoff. She laughed in God's face. I can't be sure of this, but I wonder if she laughed so that she wouldn't cry. She had waited for a very long time—too long—and her hope was likely all but gone. If God had left her to her own devices, all Sarah would have ever been was a controlling cynic. But God did not fail her.

The writer of Hebrews says this about Sarah:

“By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

Hebrews 11:11-12

Sarah's hope was all but gone, but that's not where it ended. God's faithfulness lit a fire of faith in Sarah, and a controlling cynic was transformed into the faith-hero great (to the 42nd power) grandmother of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

And God isn't done with you. He will finish what He started.

The Royal Murderer Who Ended Slavery

April 21, 2016

Moses never anticipated what his life would be like. All he ever knew was favor and opulent wealth. As the adopted grandson to Egypt's pharaoh, Moses would have been educated, respected and famous. This was the whole trajectory of Moses' life, that is until he committed murder to save a Jewish slave.

Read Exodus 2:11-15

This wasn't manslaughter and this wasn't 2nd degree. Moses planned his crime and attacked without mercy. If Moses had lived in this day, he'd be wearing an orange jumpsuit. This one act of anger and malice changed Moses' whole life. In an instant, he went from the favored, royal grandson of a king to a wanted fugitive. I think it's safe to say that after his escape to the wilderness, he had resigned himself to a quiet, under-the-radar life of a poor shepherd. He'd thrown it all away. That was until God called him. Moses was minding his own business, making an honest living when the Father broke through the mundane and called a failure into the extraordinary. Moses was timid, he was tongue-tied and he had zero confidence in his abilities. But Moses had faith. And it turns out, that's all that's needed for God to turn a murderous failure into a slave-emancipating hero. The writer of Hebrews remembers Moses this way:

"By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned." Hebrews 11:24-29

Moses wasn't a great man. He was a humble man. He surrendered, he trusted and he obeyed because he knew that the One Who called him was greater by far than his deficiencies. Heroes aren't born, they're broken. God is faithful to use the foolish things of this world to build His masterpiece.

And God isn't done with you. He will finish what He started.

The Insecure, Arrogant, Foolish Rebel Who Became a Loved, Treasured and Adopted Child

April 22, 2016

You. If you've been reading these devotionals, you may not have expected your name there. Because you know you. You know the evil and heartache and insecurity that lurks within. When you look in the mirror you don't see a hero and you certainly wouldn't add your name to the list of Noah, Abraham, Sarah and Moses. That's probably wise. Because it's not your job to add your name to that list. It's Jesus' job.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1-2

You don't perfect you. Jesus perfects you, just like He did with Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses and every other hero of faith that we've read about. We live in a culture, the human culture, that says the way up is up. But you were made to need. You were made to receive. You were made to be lifted up by bowing low. The way of Jesus is humility and surrender before the Father. Faith is not a nebulous spiritual philosophy. Faith is accepting reality—that you were created to need Jesus from the moment of conception until the last day of eternity. Faith is humbling yourself and saying "I can't, but Jesus will." I know you've failed. I know you're insecure. I know you think, "If people really knew me, they would never expect great things." But your future is not dependent on you doing great things. Your future is dependent on Jesus being faithful to finish what He started. Your job is to surrender in humility every moment of every day. And when you don't, guess what? Jesus won't quit. Because ...

God isn't done with you. He will finish what He started. Always.