

Hebrews 12:3-4

We are again reminded to "consider" Jesus (cf. Hebrews 3:1). He lived a perfect life and all he did was for the benefit of others and yet "consider" what he put up with (endured) for the benefit of those who persecuted Him. This challenge is pivotal in the change of recipients this portion of the letter is addressed to. Verses 5-11 changes the illustration to one of a family and begins an entirely new thought.

This book was written to Jewish people in danger of going back to Mosaic practices because of the persecution occurring. The book shows how Jesus is better than all the things revered in Judaism - angels, Moses, priesthood, High Priest, the Law, Yom Kippur, etc. Faith has always been the method of pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6) and this book is calling these people to believe and follow God in His revealed will.

Some of these Jewish people only professed a belief in Jesus as Messiah - they weren't truly saved. To these, 4 warnings have been given to them not to go back to the old system but to come to true faith in Messiah Jesus (Hebrews 2:1-4; Hebrews 3:7 - 4:6; Hebrews 6:1-8; Hebrews 10:26-31; there is one additional warning to come in the twelfth chapter).

To the Jewish people who are truly believers the book is an encouragement to continue in their "walk" and growth in their Messiah. To go back to the Law would impede and hinder their growth and service for God.

Before we consider verses 5 - 11, let us remind ourselves of some basic truths.

1. God has disciplined Israel as a nation because of a father/son relationship (Exodus 4:22 "Israel is my son, even my firstborn") which no other nation has (Amos 3:2 "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."). He also disciplines his individual children such as David, Saul, and you and me.

The discipline of the nation of Israel has at times been direct:

- The Babylonian captivity - 2 Chronicles 36:15-20 and world- wide captivity - Luke 19:41-44

and at other times it has been indirect (such as when parents know a child is doing something wrong and yet allows the child to do it and reap the consequences so as to learn from the act and the consequences).

- The pogroms, Holocaust, and other atrocities through the diaspora - Deuteronomy 31:16-21

2. The purpose of the discipline has always been, as with all discipline, to get the nation to turn back to the Father and enjoy the benefits of the covenantal relationship - Leviticus 26:40-45.

40 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;
 41 And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:
 42 Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.
 43 The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.
 44 And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God.
 45 But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.

3. It is important that we differentiate between God's judgment as Creator; His discipline as a Father; and the "trial of faith" which children of God will also undergo for our sanctification.

The manifestations of each of these can be the same (illness, death, loss of job, financial setback, etc.) but the purpose is very different.

1) God's judgement

As Creator of all God has the right and authority to judge/punish all sin.

- He has done this with nations on earth (Egypt; Babylon, Isaiah 47:1-11; all nations at the end of the Tribulation period - Zechariah 12:9)
- He will judge nations at the second coming (Matthew 25:31-32,46)
- He will judge all unsaved people at the Great White Throne Judgement (Revelation 20:11-15).

2) Trial of Faith

1 Peter 1:7 "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

Job is an example of one of God's children going through a "trial of faith"

Abraham in Genesis 22 also was put through a "trial of faith"

Daniel went through "trials of faith" - Daniel 6:11-23

Peter and John went through a "trial of faith" - Acts 4:13-21

Hebrews 11

3) God's discipline of His children

God only disciplines His children. He does not discipline Satan's children.

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Hebrews 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

4. Discipline is vital in the life of a child. God clearly instructs us to discipline our children. To withhold discipline is to invite disaster into a child's life. In the same type of way discipline is vital in the life of God's children. All discipline is ultimately for the benefit of the recipient.

The command to discipline:

Proverbs 10:13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Proverbs 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13-14 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

In light of the possibility of God's children disobeying and straying, the next two verses implore us to consider our life in relation to Jesus and what He has been through on our behalf. If we don't, we can be defeated in our walk with the Lord.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

We are told to "**consider**" - focus our attention on what Jesus went through (for us)

Once again we are reminded that Jesus "**endured**" what He went through.

Endured "portrays a picture of steadfastly and unflinchingly bearing up under a heavy load and describes that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. The picture is that of steadfastness, constancy and endurance."

He "endured"

"such contradiction of sinners against himself"

The perfect God-Man allowed His creation, sinners who deserved His judgment, to carry out an unjust trial and then judgment against Him; to mock and spit on the Holy One of Israel; to enact a death penalty due common criminals not the unblemished Lamb of God!

Consider that it is He, the omnipotent God of the universe, that allowed the guilty to judge and kill the innocent. In fact, the opposite could have occurred - the perfect Son of God, who God has bestowed upon all judgment, John 5:22, 27 - with Jesus righteously condemning sinners to death rather than they condemning Him to death.

"lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

One of the most debilitating things in a believer's life is to get to a point of weariness that leads to giving up in our minds (fainting) or depression.

We are in a spiritual battle. Think of the issues we face:

1. An enemy constantly seeking to destroy us.
"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" 1 Peter 5:8
2. The infiltration of enemy agents into our camp.
"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20:29-30
3. The spread of misinformation (lies)
"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:3

An interesting parallel is the challenge to Israel when they went to war. Israel, when going to war, was commanded to not faint and be fearful as they were reminded that God was fighting for them.

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| Deuteronomy 20: | 1 | When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. |
| | 2 | And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, |
| | 3 | And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; |
| | 4 | For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. |
| Isaiah 40:31 | | But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. |
| Galatians 6:9 | | And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. |

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Resisted and Striving

"These two words, translated 'resisted' and 'striving' in our King James Version, are the two strongest words for conflict in the N.T." Robert Sumner, *Hebrews: Streams of Living Water*, pg. 434

The believers being addressed have not yet had to die for what they believed (else they wouldn't have been reading this letter), implying that the day could come where the decision facing them would be much greater.

The first 4 verses of chapter 12 set the stage for a challenge to believers about God's loving discipline of His children in the verses that follow.