

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Have you ever been to a prison? Where you saw men and women behind bars, locked up because the criminal activities? If you haven't been to an actual prison, perhaps you have seen on the news convicted criminals being led away in handcuffs, a thief, a rapist, a murderer. When you see such people being led away has the thought ever occurred to you that someone raised this man, someone raised this woman? This man in handcuffs was once a baby in someone's crib. He was once a child in someone's swing and someone's sandbox. He was once a boy who played, laughed, climbed trees, caught frogs in the pound and played soccer. The woman being led away in handcuffs once played with dolls. She laughed, sang, jumped, skipped and ate candy, and yet there she is being led away from the courtroom to the prison declared guilty and sentenced to serve time in a miserable jail. Someone raised that man, someone raised that woman. And the person or the persons who did are either utterly heartbroken by the rebelliousness of their child or utterly careless and heartless about the condition of their child. I submitted to you brothers and sisters that our prisons are filled with many men and women who are punished by the authorities because they were never taught to fear and honor God in their homes. They were never loving and firmly restrained and corrected. I read sometime ago that our modern society has produced mass murderers, perverts, rapists and lifelong criminals per capita than any other society in recorded history. And the experts ask what did their parents do to them when they are young? Were they abused? Were they severely mistreated? Did they do something to create this evil? Sometimes people who are abused become abusive. Sometime people who are beaten become violent. But congregation, many criminals thieves, rapists, murderers do not become that way because of what their parents did to them. Rather they become that way because what their parents did **not** do to them. Why are we hearing about violent crimes being committed by those who have not even entered their teen years? Much it is because of the hands-off parenting style that has become popular in our society. Restraint and correction of wrong behaviour have become unfashionable today. Consequently, many children grow up to be self-centered men and women who have no regard for God, for God's law or for their neighbors. The violence we are seeing today in schools is not merely the result of what parents do to their children but it is also the result of what parent do not do to them. No discipline, no correction, no chastening, no consequences for sinful behavior. This afternoon I want to consider the importance of discipline and the chastening in the covenant home. I also want to focus on three things: 1. The **necessity** of discipline, 2. The **privilege** of discipline , 3 The purpose of **discipline**. In these verses of Hebrews 12 we are reminded that sometimes it is necessary for God our Heavenly Father to discipline, to chasten his children. The Hebrew Christians were suffering, and their suffering had tempted them to become weary and discouraged in their souls. Their suffering was threatening them to lose heart. Losing heart is a great spiritual danger, and these believers were facing that danger. We know from Hebrews 10:34 that some of them were in prison and some of them had been plundered. It was truly a difficult time for many Christians, they were under tremendous stress. Because of the stress they were in danger of becoming weary in the battle, becoming discouraged in their souls. We learn from verse 3 their suffering came from hostile adversaries. As Christ endured hostility from sinners, so these Christians were enduring hostility from sinners. Opponents of the gospel were making life difficult for them. But brothers and sisters what we need to see in these verses is this: yes their suffering is coming from hostile adversaries, yes their suffering is caused by hostility of sinners, sinful adversaries, but ask the question again: Where does their suffering really coming from? Who is in charge of their situation? Who is directing and controlling the events in their lives? It is the Lord. He is in control of all their sufferings. The Lord is in charge. The message we find in these verse is this: all the afflictions you have experienced are not merely the work of hostile adversaries; these afflictions are in fact the loving discipline of a perfect Heavenly Father. God is directing all these things for your chastening. The reason these Christians were growing weary and discouraged is in verse 5 and 6: *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.* In another words, what your enemies are doing to you out of sinful hostility, the Lord is doing as fatherly chastening. Now congregation, why is necessary for God to discipline his covenant children ? Why does God chasten us? Why does God rebuke us and punish us? Does he enjoy to watch his children suffer? Does he take pleasure in hurting you? Does he want to wound you and put you out of his family? Does he want to harm you and disown you? Does he take pleasure in your weariness and your discouragement? May we never have such thoughts about God! He is not a abusive, ruthless, sadistic, father, he is a loving, caring faithful, merciful Father. Then why does he discipline his children? Why does he chasten and rebuke and

scourge and punish? Because we are children that have a tendency to wander from the Father. We are children who have a tendency to break his rules and go our own way; we are sinners who need correction; we are sinners with a natural bent toward evil. We would destroy ourselves. In Psalm 89:30-34 we read: *If his sons forsake My law, And do not walk in My judgments, 31 If they break My statutes, And do not keep My commandments, 32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes. 33 Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, Nor allow My faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant I will not break.* When God chastens his people, his children, he is not driving you out of the family; He is not rejecting you. He's not disowning you, he's not hating you. No, brothers and sisters, he is protecting you from your sinful inclinations. He visits you with the rod so you may hold fast to his word. So that you may walk in his judgments so that you may keep his statutes, so that you may cling to the Saviour. When God disciplines you he is restraining you from going in a direction that would destroy you. He is restraining you from following the deadly inclinations of your evil heart. He is restraining you from the devastating consequence of sin, he is training you and helping you to mature in Christian character. He disciplines you to protect you from something much worse. And to train you for more faithful service. Congregation, isn't that exactly what we are called to do in our covenant homes? When we baptize our children, we promise as parents to lead our sons and daughters to the Lord and teach them the way of life. In order to teach our children the way of righteousness and peace one of the things God requires of us is that we discipline our children when they are wayward. When they are stubborn. When they wander from the truth. When they break God's law. When they disobey his word. When they follow the natural inclination of their evil heart we are called to administer discipline. Heb 12:7 says: *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?* This teaching is not popular in our culture. Many parents are afraid today to administer loving discipline lest they receive a visit from the Children's Aid Society. Corporal punishment is considered to be totally inappropriate, counterproductive, and even detrimental to the development of the child. A few years ago a group of researchers said this "I quote" We suggest that reduction or elimination of corporal punishment could have major benefits for children and reduce anti social behavior in society". Another anti-spanking psychologist wrote "I am part of that non-spanking group both as a mother and as a psychologist, I believe that spanking or tapping, or slapping, or cuffing, or shaking or beating or whipping children is actually wrong." I also believe that far from producing better disciplined people, spanking makes it much more difficult to teach children how to behave." Now as I see it there are at least two things wrong with this psychologist's statement. First she equates spanking with slapping, cuffing, shaking, beating and whipping. Any Christian that knows the bible knows that harsh, angry, uncontrolled hitting of children is wrong! And always wrong! But there is a big difference, a huge difference, between that and the controlled rod of discipline administered in love. Brutal acts of anger and violence by parents against their children are sinful, harmful and un-biblical. Cruel punishments and brutal acts of violence are wrong. We declare that clearly as the church of Jesus Christ. No one has the right to angrily wound his children. Parents do not have the right to angrily batter their children. As Christians we should be the first to speak against such things. And we must repent of it if we are guilty of it in our own home. No, the bible doesn't condone physical abuse and brutality. But brothers and sisters, properly administered, controlled loving discipline is not abuse. It is meant to inflict pain, not injury. It is not meant to injure the child but to impress on him the seriousness of disobedience, and the consequences of sin so that the child may remain within the boundary of God's blessing. The second problem with the psychologist's remark is that it flatly contradicts what God says in his word. Prov. 22:15 says: *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.* Why is loving discipline necessary in a covenant home? Why? Because foolishness is bound up in the hearts of your adorable children! And if they are simply left to go their own way, it will create much grief in later life. Children must learn that when they violate God's standard they set themselves against a holy God. And the consequences for those who violate his principles are terribly bad. Folly must be removed from the hearts of our children or they will grow up to defy the authority of God. As God our Heavenly Father disciplines his children, so earthly fathers and mothers must discipline wayward disobedient rebellious children to keep them on the path of righteousness and protect them from the consequences of sin.

And then you could see, second, the **privilege** of chastening. The **privilege** of discipline. Notice what our text says about God's chastening, in verses 6-8: *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.* V7 If you are disciplined God is treating you as sons. V8 If you are not disciplined then you are illegitimate children and not true sons! The Christians to whom this letter was written should consider it a privilege that they were being chastened by God because God's chastening is a sign of his fatherly love. Those whom the Lord loves he disciplines. The pain that God inflicts upon them is not a sign of God's hatred but a sign of his love. They were being treaded as loved children of God. Congregation, when you feel the chastening hand of the Lord upon you remember, he loves you. He loves you! He cares for you. When you suffer under God's discipline praise God for the love of your Father, he wants you to be righteous, obedient and faithful, he wants you to be a son who reflects his own character. He wants to draw you into the close fellowship of the family of God. When we suffer we often have a hard time seeing the good that God is working in our lives. We have a hard time understanding what God is doing. But our text reassures us that while God may inflict pain on his children, he does not inflict injury His chastening may hurt us but it will not harm us. He is a loving Father who corrects us but he does not crush us. In the midst of life's troubles remember your Father's love. And praise him that the pain you experience is proof of his love. Our Heavenly Father's discipline reminds us that we are sons, we are not slaves, we are not enemies, we are not strangers, we are sons, we are family. Those who are not chastened by God are not his children. You know, some times we look at unbelievers and we almost envy some of them, don't we? There are unbelievers who are healthy, strong, prosperous, and seem to be trouble free. They have no trials, no pain, no disease, and as the Psalmist says, they increase in riches. Psalm 73 speaks of the prosperity of the wicked. They're not in trouble like other men. Nor are they plagued like other men. Their eyes bulge with abundance. They have more than a heart could wish. For a moment the psalmist was envious of the unbeliever. And sometimes we Christians today become envious as well. But brothers and sisters we should not envy those who never experience the chastening of the Lord. For if they are without chastening they are illegitimate and not sons. We need to bear in mind that the supreme affliction is to never know the discipline of the Lord in this life. For if you never know the discipline of the Lord then you are not loved by him, and you are not his son. And people of God, just as it is a privilege to be chastened by the Lord, so also it is a privilege to be raised in a home where loving biblical discipline is administered. Parents who fail to correct their wayward children are showing a shameful lack of love. In fact, Proverbs 13:24 has some very strong words for parents who neglect responsible discipline: *He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.* Parents who truly love their children will not ignore sinful behavior. If we love our children we must correct them when they disobey. The message of scripture is loud and clear: Proper, controlled, loving responsible discipline is an act of true compassion, and it is in your child's best interest. The bible does not condone a superficial love that is always lenient. It does not approve of a superficial love that is indulgent and permissive. When we ignore disobedience and sinful behavior we are allowing our children to walk along a very dangerous pathway that may very possibly end in spiritual disaster. Prov. 23:14: *You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell.* Parents who neglect discipline expose their children's soul to death! Spiritual death! A true act of love is to rescue them from death by means of loving discipline. Brothers and sisters what we are seeing today is a very sad neglect of these principles. What children need is committed parents who love their children enough to say "No, you cannot continue on this pathway, for it will be your destruction, it will be your ruin!". Brothers and sisters, what a privilege it is to have parents who are willing to show that kind of discipline consistently. It is a privilege to be under the chastening of the Lord, for it is proof of his love and proof of our son-ship. And it is a privilege to have parents who love us so much that they were willing to inflict pain upon us to deliver our souls from death. Parents must take the time to correct their children, and to lead them to the Lord who alone has the power to change rebellious hearts, and alone has the power to forgive our sins. Through discipline parents can lead their children to the cross of Christ. There we find healing. There we find restoration. There at the cross we find hope and grace abounding! Biblical discipline should lead our children to the cross. Through discipline our children see their need of Christ's forgiveness, his grace, his mercy. They come to realize they cannot change their own heart. They need the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord raise us up today to be parents to reflect to our children the love, the compassion, the righteousness and justice of our Heavenly Father. We need to stop listening to psychologists who contradict the word, and we need to start listening to him who made us and our children, and knows what is best for us and for them.

We come then finally to the **Purpose** of chastening. We've already touched on this somewhat, but I want

to point out to you a few things just briefly from our text. Why does God chasten his children, and why do we chasten our children?

1) **Discipline produces respect.** Look at v9a: *Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect.* The disciplined child of God learns to respect his Heavenly Father, and the disciplined child of human parents learns to respect his human parents. Now some people say if you discipline your children you will lose their respect. Right? You've heard that. If you discipline your children you will lose their respect. The bible teaches the opposite: Prov. 29:15. *The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.* Prov 29:17. *Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul.* The best way to lose the respect of your children is to let them go their own way without correction. You want to lose their respect? Let them go their own way. It is the child who is fairly and lovingly disciplined who respects his father and mother. Children understand that parents who don't bother taking the time to correct them are parents who don't really care about them. Lack of proper discipline produces lack of proper respect.

2) **Discipline produces life.** Discipline produces life. Look to verse 9b: *Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?* The disciplined child of God enjoys a spiritually rich life in this world and he inherits eternal life in the world to come. The discipline of the Lord keeps us from the way of spiritual death and eternal death. Likewise the faithful discipline of christian fathers and mothers is designed to produce a spiritually rich life in this world and eternal life in the world to come. Eternal life through Jesus Christ. Discipline produces 1) respect and 2) life.

3) **Discipline also produces holiness and righteousness.** Look at verse 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.* One of the purposes of God's discipline is that christians may become conformed to the image of his Son. He disciplines us to make us holy. He disciplines us to make us more like himself. v11 tells us that discipline produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. When God disciplines his children his goal is to make us partakers of his holiness, his goal is to produce in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Notice 4 words in v10 and 11. Our *good*, our *holiness*, our *righteousness*, our *peace*. This is the intent of our loving heavenly Father. The pain that he inflicts upon us is with this gracious intent. Our good, our holiness, or righteousness, our peace. And dear friends, that should be the intent of all parental discipline. Discipline is not pleasant. V11 says: *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.* Discipline is not pleasant. But a faithful use of discipline is very rewarding. It builds christian character, it creates Christ-like qualities in our covenant children. Some people insist that the use of corporal punishment in the home perpetuates violence in the next generation. But what does our text say in v11? What does it say? It produces **peaceable** fruit. Biblical discipline, rightly practiced, does not perpetuate violence at all. It produces peace. Brothers and sisters, go to a home where biblical discipline is practiced and what do you find? You find peace. Go to a home where biblical discipline is neglected and what do you find? You find children that are restless, self-centered and unmanageable. Discipline your son and he will give you peace. He will bring delight to your soul. Peace for parents, peace for children. Peace for the glory of God. What is the purpose of loving discipline? It produces *respect*, it produces *life*, it produces *holiness* and *righteousness*, brothers and sisters, it produces *peace*.

Discipline reminds us and our children that if we forsake the living God, if we rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ, if we resist the work of the spirit, we will suffer eternal pain under the eternal punishment of God. Then let us thank God for his chastening. For through it he brings us back to the cross of Christ, the way of life. And let us be faithful in our covenant homes so that by the grace of God we may yield a harvest of righteousnesses and peace and joy in the Lord Jesus. May the Lord bless the families of this church as we lead our children in the way of life. And may we experience the joy of children who submit themselves willingly to the Heavenly Father. The one who is altogether gracious, altogether kind, altogether righteous. May our families experience the joy of seeing sons and daughters devoting their lives to their faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, our Lord. Boys and girls, submit to the discipline of the Lord. Find refuge in the cross of Christ, and you will be richly blessed. Let us pray.