
To Wound and to Heal

Job 5:17-18

Many people today do not grow up knowing what a real family is like.

Many grew up without a father...

Many grew up with parents who don't really parent...

Some grew up with parenting that is so dysfunctional that family is not a pleasant place...

Some grew up with abusive parents and particularly with abusive fathers...

So, our talk this morning may be hard for many of you to hear. I want to talk to you today and next week about what it means to be part of the family of God, part of the Christian family. And sometimes people bring their baggage to hearing this.

An important aspect of being God's children is that we are disciplined by God. If you are going to believe and bow to God, then this is an important truth for you to know. My friends, God will be your Father – providing for you, caring for you and yes, correcting and disciplining you when it is needed.

A fundamental truth that the Bible teaches is that unbelievers relate to God as judge, but believers relate to God as Father. Believers are not punished for their sins. Jesus has been punished for us. We are not to view ourselves as criminals before the judge, but rather as children with our Father.

Now, we can try to make up for ourselves what we think it means for God to be our Father and us His sons and daughters. The Bible does not allow us to do that. It defines for us how we are to think about it *regardless of our earthly experience of it*.

I want to start with a text that gives us our title, to wound and to heal.

It is a Blessed Pain

Here is my theme for this talk on our heavenly Father's discipline: Job 5:17-18

¹⁷ "Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves;
therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty.

¹⁸ For he wounds, but he binds up;
he shatters, but his hands heal.

God reproves and disciplines us. Therefore:

We are blessed to receive it.

(v. 17)

This is not how we tend to think of it. We usually think of being not blessed when we are chastened by God. Somehow we think of him as being upset with us or mad at us. All through the Bible, we learn that God is different. Earthly fathers may discipline and it is not blessed to receive it. But this is not so with God. His discipline is a blessing.

We must not despise it.

Since it is a blessing, we must not despise it. We must not look down on it or feel contempt for it. In the context here, Job, a man with great affliction and hardship is being counseled by one of his three friends. While much of their counsel is true, it is often misapplied. But not so here. Eliphaz is saying what is true and is even true of Job *because of the way the rest of the Bible uses this sentence*. It is quoted and expanded on. So we need to be careful.

How then do we "despise" the Lord's chastening?

In our actions – we respond to it with words or deeds that deny its value or even its reality.

In our emotions – we respond to it a whole range of emotions like anger, frustration, bitterness, contempt.

In our thoughts – our minds are filled with words that are displeasing to God when we are chastened.

We will be wounded and healed.

Why is chastening so hard for us? Because it will be painful. God wounds and God shatters. Strong words. Hard realities. God may hurt us. But He will never harm us. The rod of his discipline may fall sharply across our lives. We must learn to kiss the hand that wields the rod.

Ok, so Christians believe that God is abusive? No, abuse is when the discipline is done out of anger, hatred, frustration or results on permanent harm. What God does is out of love and care. It is done for our good and His glory. He knows exactly what He is doing.

But then there is the opposite side of those two phrases: He will bind up and He will heal. So the hand that wields the rod also brings the balm. In both there is His love and His grace.

O the world cannot understand this. This goes so against our self-focused, self-centered, sinful ways of thinking. But this is truth. This is the way it is. We have a loving Father, the rod of chastening and tender healing hands as we submit and thrive.

It is by the Word of God

Deuteronomy 4:36-40

³⁶ Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you. And on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire. ³⁷ And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, ³⁸ driving out before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day, ³⁹ know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. ⁴⁰ Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for all time.”

Here is an interesting text with this startling sentence in it. But if we think about it, it makes good sense and is very encouraging.

God speaks for our discipline.

All of us recognize that we do this with our children. We speak to them to change them. We want to them to change their thinking or their behavior and so we speak to them. Our words to them can do what discipline is supposed to do. It can get their attention. It can instruct them. It can correct them. It can connect choices to consequences.

God is chastening us through His speaking from heaven. In the Old Testament, He spoke in many ways, in many forms through many people. But now, He has spoken to us through His Son. Jesus has come from heaven and lived among us. His full of grace and truth glory was seen. The apostles have written down what they saw and interpreted it for us. So the Scriptures are now a means for God's sovereign, good and wise chastening.

We can hear in the midst of our discipline.

Chastening will profit us when we hear the Lord's Word. Discipline in silence will destroy a child. Speaking to a child; explaining the offense, being sure they understand, clarifying what is expected will make the discipline useful. So, God speaks to us and we must hear. If we despise and reject God's chastening, we will not hear and we will not be changed.

We must learn what God is like.

What is the primary lesson? We will learn what God is like. This is what God is after. He is not merely working to change our behavior. He is not just seeking to impart character and skill, to bring maturity. God wanted Israel to know that He alone was God. He wanted them to understand in their hearts that He was a great God. Once we have the greatness of our God deeply impressed upon our hearts, then we will be able to walk with Him and obey Him.

It is for us to Believe in our Hearts**Deuteronomy 8:1-7**

¹ “The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. ² And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. ⁶ So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills,

This text is so important for us to understand. I bring us back to it once again because of verse 5. This is what you must know, you must believe in your heart. Chastening will not accomplish what it is intended unless you know these important truths. In our chastening, we must believe:

That God is exposing our hearts

God is at work in everything in His children’s lives to see if they will obey Him from the heart. He will bring hardship. He will allow trials and testing. He will allow us to suffer want and to be full. In both the good and the bad, how will we respond? This is what His chastening is doing. It is exposing your heart idols, your heart masters, your heart adulteries, your doubts, your lack of faith. It is also exposing our wants and desires. It is showing you your cravings, where you want something so bad you will sin to get it and sin when don’t get it. It is showing you your lack of submission both in your wills and in your wants.

That God is not punishing our disobediences

We must also be clear that God is not punishing you. He is disciplining you as sons. I am repeating this. It is important. If you are being punished by God then you are not a child of God. If you are a child of God then all your punishment has been borne by Jesus. As a child, you are being reproved, corrected, changed through the words and deeds of our loving Father. But He is not judging you. You do not pay for your post conversion sins. Jesus paid it all. God is not punishing your disobedience.

That God is dealing with us as sons

So why do we go through discipline, through hard things? Because God is dealing with us as sons. He is training you up in the His own nurture and admonition.

A whole generation of people has grown up with the idea that to correct, to discipline, to spank a child is unnecessary, wrong, abusive or evil. How will that generation have any hope of understanding texts like this? Yes, people have always been indulgent, self-centered and lazy and so didn’t deal with their children. But we live in a day where it is possible to go to prison for doing what the Bible tells you to do.

Remember, the Bible is using analogies in our world to help us understand God. God is the ultimate of these realities. What we are in our world is a reflection, a copy of what God is in

His. We are fathers because He is a Father. We are sons because there is the Son in the Trinity. God was not trying to communicate using frail human realities. He created and brought those realities into existence as a reflection of who He is and to communicate to us who He is.

It is from a Loving Father

Proverbs 3:11-12

¹¹ My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
¹² for the Lord reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.

We tend to respond badly

(v. 11)

We do not want it and thus begin to reject it. Here is that word, "despise" again. Since the Bible repeats this warning several times, we had best pay attention to it. We are very vulnerable to despising the very thing through which God confirms His relationship with us. Think of something you despise, you really dislike: a food, a team, a kind of clothes, a situation. What popped into your head when I asked that question? Now, be careful that you do not feel like that about God's discipline, about your Father's chastening.

We grow tired of it and thus begin to falter under it. This is the second vulnerability. We simply grow tired of being chastened. We get weary. We tire of it. It seems never to end. One kind of chastening is followed by another kind. Our Father works on one area of our life and then works on another. This is not so much being tired of what chastening brings us: the pain, hardship, suffering, difficulties. It is losing patience with God and the regularity of being chastened.

So this brings me to one more thought - chastening is not an occasional event that rarely happens. It is a regular feature of our relationship with God. So we will learn to endure because of something greater and more wonderful ahead of us.

It is because He loves us

(v. 12a)

He reproves us as the Lord who loves us. He is not some distant king and we are serfs or slaves. No, He is our loving Lord. We know this in all kinds of ways. One of the important ways is that He loves us enough to correct us and cause us to be pleasing to Him.

Two other Proverbs help us connect love and discipline.

Proverbs 21:1, which says, "¹ Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid." Since this is required of us it must also be true of God. He loves discipline because He loves knowledge. And we are ignorant in a sinful way ("Stupid") if we do not love discipline and the practical knowledge, the experience it brings.

Proverbs 13:24, which says, "²⁴ Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." Do you believe that? About God? About yourself?

The Bible teaches and Christians believe that we are disciplined in love by our heavenly Father.

Like a Father who enjoys His children**(v. 12b)**

We are meant to see an analogy, a picture. Look, see that Father over there who really delights in his child? See his joy? See his careful eye on him? See him move to guard him from danger? See him now lean down and correct him and even spank him?

That is like your heavenly Father. It is a dim reflection. For the Father leaning over to delight in toddling children is GOD, the God of the universe, the creator and sustainer of all, the beginning and the end, the One from whom all things are and to whom all things are – that God. He is a Father delighting in His children

How do we know that? Because He chastens, He disciplines us.

Reflect and Respond

I know that we have looked exclusively at Old Testament texts this morning. Three of these texts are quoted in the New Testament and used as we have used them. In other words, these were written to people in a different age. But they are still applicable to us. In the New Testament, sonship comes to its fulfillment in Christ and its fullness in the church, in believers. I invite you to come next week, and the Lord willing, we will think about these things from Hebrews 12.

But what about you?

Do you believe that God is a loving and righteous Father?

Do you believe that you are a son, sometimes wayward and often foolish?

Will you accept that your Father will both wound and heal?

Are you despising the chastening your loving Father has brought to you?

Are you weary of the discipline your loving Father is using in your life?

Will you kiss the hand that wields the rod?

For those who may not believe and are listening today, I invite into the family of God. Jesus the Son of God bore the punishment for sin. He is the Way, the only Way to become a child of God. Today, believe and bow to the Lord. Give your life to Him. And He will save you. You will become a part of His family. Today.