

The Discipline Of Our Heavenly Father

Hebrews 12:5-6 [NIV] *“And you have forgotten that **word of encouragement** that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because **the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.**”*

The writer of Hebrews was inspired to call God’s discipline an encouragement.

James 1:2 [NIV] *“**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials** of many kinds,”*

James calls the trials that we face as Christians *“pure joy.”*

Proverbs 27:6 [King James] *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”*

The friend mentioned in this proverb is **not** the preacher but God.

Why do I say this?

Job 5:17-18 [NIV] *“**Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.**”*

God uses discipline, or wounding, in order for us to change and mature.

In a small book written by a lady who lived in Norwich, England named Lady Julian, she recorded a prayer that she made to God.

“O God, please give me three wounds; the wound of contrition, the wound of compassion and the wound of longing after You.”

Then as a little postscript Lady Julian added:

“This I ask without condition, Father, do what I ask and then send me the bill. Anything that it costs will be all right with me.”

When I read this it brought tears to my eyes, for here was a lady who truly loved and trusted her Saviour and Creator God.

I would have liked to meet her but she died several hundred years ago.

All great Christians have been humans whom God has wounded.

It is amazing what a physical wound can do to the strength and self-assurance of a human being.

Soldiers wounded on the battlefield finding their whole world suddenly collapsing around them.

Instead of being the strong, broad-chested fellow that he thought he was, he becomes a whimpering child again. Some have been heard to cry out for their mothers as they lie bleeding and dying.

There is nothing like a wound to take the self-assurance out of us, and reduce us to teachable children again.

Making us small and helpless in our own sight.

In a small way God has wounded me by allowing arthritis to limit my physical life in many ways. Every movement I now make is accompanied with pain. This has helped me realise more clearly my

total dependence on Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in and through me, if I am to accomplish anything of lasting worth in my life from now on.

Any human who has had an encounter with the Creator God has been defeated and broken down before Him.

Isaiah 6:1-5 [NIV] *“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”*

Few will have such a dramatic encounter with God, but the reaction everyone has will be the same as Isaiah, a broken spirit that causes all self-confidence to vaporise.

Having humbled Isaiah, God then gave him a commission.

A similar thing can happen to all who are humbled by God.

Isaiah 6:6-7 [NIV] *“Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”*

First we are cleansed by God so that the Holy Spirit can dwell in us and work through us.

Isaiah 6:8 [NIV] *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*

Isaiah responded to this cleansing by offering his life to God for Him to use to fulfil His will.

Isaiah 6:9-10 [NIV] *“He said, “Go and tell this people: “**“Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”** Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”*

God commissioned Isaiah to be a preacher, and as every preacher knows by experience this can be a very discouraging task to be given.

Every Christian receives this task of witnessing for Jesus Christ, mostly by our lifestyle example, and only in a very limited way through our speech.

Let us now look at the three wounds that Lady Julian prayed for in her life.

1. The wound of contrition

We have preached that repentance is a change of mind, which is true, as far as it goes. But if repentance is limited to a mental act, it is unlikely to do us much good as far as maturing spiritually.

No human has truly repented until their sin has wounded them near to death.

Until this wound has broken their spirit and has taken all the self-assurance out of them.

Until we come to see that **we** are the one who nailed our Saviour to the cross.

I don't know about you, but the only way I can maintain a right relationship with my Creator God is to keep a sense of contrition in my mind and spirit.

Until I have bewailed my sins before God and sought the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse me and some of His rightness to be credited to me to make me acceptable to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, I feel an alien before God.

We are part of a sinful race, the Adamic race, of human beings.

Isaiah 66:1-2 [NIV] *“This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “**This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.**”*

Until the knowledge of sin has wounded us, repentance can never produce any good in us, for God will **not** accept us as His child.

Isaiah 57:15 [NIV] *“For this is what the high and lofty One says, he who lives for ever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

It is **only** those who have this contrite heart and spirit that God will work with to bring to maturity.

2. The wound of compassion

Compassion is an emotional identification, and Jesus Christ has that in full perfection.

Matthew 9:36-38 [NIV] *“When he [Jesus Christ] saw the crowds, **he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.** Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

When we look at all the humans who do **not** know the Good News of what Jesus Christ has done as the Saviour of all humanity; do we experience a spirit of compassion that seeks to reach people with the gospel message of hope in a hopeless world?

Mark 1:40-41 [NIV] *“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Filled with compassion, **Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.** “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”*

The compassion that filled the life of Jesus Christ, cause Him to reach out and touch the untouchable to heal them.

Does our commission reach out to those whose lifestyle we find repugnant?

Jesus Christ can never suffer to save us anymore, this He did once for all, when He suffered on the cross.

But Jesus Christ still suffers the wounds of compassion to draw people to Him, to be saved.

Jesus calls His people to be to Him a kind of physical earthly body through whom He can express compassion for all humanity.

Colossians 1:24 [NIV] *“Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”*

Paul, out of compassion for people, was glad that he could suffer for the Colossians, to be an example for the church to follow and suffer compassion for Jesus Christ.

A person who is wounded by compassion is never a seeker after happiness for themselves.

Most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, would rather be happy than feel other people's sorrows.

Scripture tells me that it is God's Will that we should seek to be Holy rather than happy.

If we seek Holiness through the indwelling and yielding to the Holy Spirit, then we will receive joy in our lives as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit [**Galatians 5:22**].

This joy is a side benefit of our compassion motivating us to serve others in need.

Joy is an eternal experience that is **not** dependent on physical circumstances, so **cannot** be taken from us.

Happiness is an experience that is dependent on physical circumstances and if those circumstances change for the worse then the happiness dissipates.

Isaiah 53:3 [NIV] *“He [Jesus Christ] was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”*

When our Lord Jesus Christ was sweating it out in the garden or hanging in pain on the cross, He could **not** be happy.

Hebrews 12:2-3 [NIV] *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

It was the eternal joy of the compassionate vision of what His sacrifice was accomplishing that empowered our Saviour to endure the pain and shame.

John 16:21 [NIV] *“A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.”*

A woman who is giving birth is **not** happy because of the pain, but as soon as the child is born she experiences joy that can last a lifetime.

We as Christians should consider ourselves as mothers who are enduring the pain of bringing others to a spiritual birth.

This pain of persecution and rejection will **not** bring us happiness but if we are filled with compassion for the world who has lost its way in life, even as Jesus Christ is, then the end product will be eternal joy, for those we reach and ourselves.

3. The wound of longing after God

Lady Julian prayed in effect *“O God, make me to desire to know you better so much that it will become a painful wound in my heart that I can never get over.”*

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

If we have ever wondered what eternal life will be like, then meditate on this very short verse.

The Greek word translated “know” is “ginōskō” and is referring to a very intimate relationship.

The same word is used for the intimate marriage relationship [see **Luke 1:34**].

1 John 5:11 [NIV] “*And this is the testimony: **God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.***”

We can experience this eternal life **now** through the union of our human spirit with the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus Christ has sent into the world at His Father’s request, [**Proverbs 20:27**].

Matthew 5:6 [NIV] “*Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.***”

We must have a restless thirst, a burning desire to know and reflect the righteousness, that is holiness, of God.

Too often many Christians:-

Want Jesus to do all the dying, so we can live a peaceful, guilt-free life.

Want Jesus to do all the sorrowing so we can be happy.

John 12:24-26 [NIV] “*I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. **The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.*”

We all need to meditate on these words of our Saviour and Lord.

We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to bring to us a longing that will become a lovesick wound to our spirit, prompting us to:-

Always be moving towards God.

Always seeking to know Him more intimately.

Always desiring to be in His presence.

So that this world becomes less and less valuable to us and God becomes more central to our lives.

To dare to pray such a prayer will mean a turning point in our lives we will never regret making.