

Discipline - Personal Life

by Hoseah Wu

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of personal discipline for spiritual growth and conformity to Christ's image through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 1:13:24

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:5-10, Psalm 50:17, Hebrews 12:11, Revelation 3:19

Topics: "Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of discipline in various aspects of life. He uses the example of musicians who must practice and give their all to perform well. The speaker also discusses the difficulty of submission and sacrifice in love. He then references several Bible verses, including Deuteronomy 8:5-10, which speaks about God disciplining his people and leading them into a good land. The speaker also mentions the importance of remembering and showing hospitality to strangers. Overall, the sermon highlights the need for discipline and obedience in order to experience the blessings of God.

Transcript

This morning our Bobby Ohanas was boasting a little bit. He said he came this time to this conference in fullness because his wife is with him. And I think I can boast too.

The Wu's, we are three generations here. My father, who is 84, is attending the Richmond Conference. My wife, my daughter, and also my younger brother from Minnesota, his family.

And later on in the week, my other daughter and her new husband will be here. And also I have another brother and his wife. They will join us this weekend.

So that's the real fullness. Well, thank the Lord, Christ is the fullness of God. And that's what we are seeking for, is to know Him and to enter into His fullness.

So we just look to the Lord for a moment, please. Our Father, we confess our great need of Thee. We acknowledge openly that without Thee we can do nothing.

Without Thee there is nothing. We do thank You that You have given us Your Son, the Lord Jesus. With Him we have all.

We just pray that this afternoon You will teach us, You will help us to enter into the Lord Jesus Himself. We just pray that You will prepare our hearts for us not to receive a teaching from man, but Lord, to receive instruction by Your Word through the Holy Spirit to give us help. We do thank You that we can count on Your help because You are the faithful one.

We give praise, give thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. Now I was given the assignment to speak on this matter about personal discipline.

And it is a very difficult subject. And I struggled before the Lord for some time. And as I was given this assignment I always had a very positive look.

It is always a learning situation for me. Maybe this is the area that I needed the most about my personal life. I need to be disciplined.

Well, by way of introduction, in life itself, life is adjustment and discipline. You cannot go through life without some form of discipline or some form of adjustment. That is life, even on a natural level.

If you want to get somewhere in this world, you have to discipline yourself to get somewhere. Now I am in the area of music. If you want to perform well, you have to discipline yourself.

You need to practice. You have to give yourself 100% to what you want to do. Now I have a friend who is a conductor.

And he said before the concert, he would have to tell his wife in case he said, I am going to shut in my study for the next three days. Now nobody is to call on me. If I am hungry, I will go to the kitchen and get some food.

But I am not to be bothered for the next three days. So in this world, if we are going to get somewhere, we have to somehow discipline ourselves to get somewhere. Of course, in the world system, we discipline ourselves for our own gain, for our own satisfaction, for our own gratification, for fame, for power, for success.

So even on a natural level, discipline is necessary if we are going to get anywhere in this world. Now you look at some of those people that have achieved success in this world. You look at their life.

In some area of life, there is self-discipline. Now, maybe immoral discipline, but it is discipline. At night, some of the people in business, they will stay awake, think of ways in the business world to get ahead, to gain, to profit themselves.

That is a form of discipline. Now spiritually, there is also a discipline. But it is a different kind of discipline.

It is spiritual discipline. In a way, we cannot discipline ourselves spiritually. We don't want to be disciplined.

We hate discipline. Now if you have any kids in your household, you know how they hate discipline. You tell them to do something, how they refuse it.

And how they get angry when you tell them to do something, or to obey something. In home, in school, in our society, I think we are living in a generation where discipline is prevalent everywhere. Particularly in school.

There is absolutely no discipline in school. I know because I taught school for 22 years. It is very difficult to get youngsters to listen and to follow instruction correctly.

They all want to do their own way. Now spiritually, when the Lord took us out from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, that is the most tremendous adjustment we had to face. From the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, what a transaction, what a changeover.

And just think of the adjustment and discipline we had to go through. From the old creation to the new creation. Something is all new to us, something is foreign to us.

Just think of the adjustment we had to make. The last four or five years, I usually go to the Philippines to visit my folks and visit the brothers and sisters there. The first week when I arrived there, it was most difficult for me because I had to make all the adjustments, because I had to change my whole lifestyle altogether.

I had to fit into their life pattern, their food, their routine and so forth, the way how they live and so forth. The first week is most difficult. Now I have no way for them to change their ways to suit me.

But since I entered into their situation, I must be the one, I should be the one who is to make the adjustment, to make the necessary changes. And that requires some form, some shape of self-discipline. Well, God's purpose is not just the discipline.

Discipline is under something. So God's purpose is to bring in His sons to glory. So that we'll be partakers of His nature.

Or, in Hebrew, it says we'll be sharers of His holiness. Now to achieve that, in His love, God does discipline us. But on the other hand, we have to be willing to cooperate.

We have to be willing to place ourselves under the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Now, next, let's look at how do we define discipline. What is discipline? To most people, discipline is simply do's and don't do's.

Do's and don't do's, we think that is discipline. I think it's more than that. I can, through the scripture, we can see that discipline is really instruction.

To instruct, to teach something very positive. To correct, to train, to improve, to mold, to strengthen, and to perfect character. Has to do with our life.

Has to do with our whole being. Has to do with our spiritual character. Therefore, we need to be instructed.

We need to be corrected. We need to be trained. We need to be improved.

And we need to be strengthened, to mold, and to be perfected. And so that's how we define discipline in the scripture. Is to instruct, to correct, to train, to improve, to mold, to strengthen, and to perfect character.

Now, some aspects of discipline. I think this session will just dwell on two aspects. First is this matter of instruction, and then the second aspect is this matter of evaluation.

To instruct, we need an instructor. To be trained, you need a trainer. An athlete or a soldier.

A soldier needs a sergeant. An athlete, they need a trainer or a coach. And thank God, our instructor, our coach, our trainer is the Holy Spirit.

So do bear that in mind. We have no other teacher, we have no other trainer than the Holy Spirit that God has given to each one of us. Therefore, we know in the New Covenant, we do not need anyone to teach us from the outside.

But we have the anointing in us. He is doing a teaching from within. That is real teaching.

And that requires some discipline. To listen and to be conscious of that inward instruction, inward training, inward voice. Now, next is the instruction itself.

The course instruction. And the instruction is our transformation and confirmation to the Lord Jesus himself. So the one objective of the Holy Spirit's work, instruction, training, in our life, so that we can conform to the image of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let's not forget that. That is the goal of the Holy Spirit, to change us, to transform us, so that we'll be Christ-like. That is the objective, the goal, of the Holy Spirit.

Now, this mental evaluation is so necessary on our part. Because how can we tell that we have learned something? Or how can our instructor really know that we have received something from him, we have learned something from him? It's only by real testing. By what evaluation? So, brothers and sisters, our whole Christian living is a life of receiving instruction, as well as a life of evaluation, under the light of the Holy Spirit.

He will teach us, and he also tests us, to find out whether we have learned anything from him. Or if there is anything that we learned in the wrong way that needs some correction. So, evaluation has two sides.

One is to confirm that we have learned something. And the other one, the negative side, is to discover that we haven't really learned much yet. So, therefore, there is hope for us to be instructed again.

Thank God the Holy Spirit nearly gives us up. If we fail, he is very patient. He will keep teaching us until the lesson is learned.

So, brothers and sisters, here we see there is no shortcut here, to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no shortcut to the throne. There is no shortcut to the fullness of Christ.

So, as Brother Tom was sharing last night, and the thought just came through my mind, and this morning as well, as well as this afternoon, because one of the messages I have at home by Brother Kirsten Spock, entitled this way, Emptiness unto Fullness. So, there is no shortcut. To enter into the fullness of Christ, we have to cross Jordan.

We have to give ourselves up. Emptiness unto fullness. So, the Holy Spirit is very particular.

We have no way of bypassing him. No way. So, brothers and sisters, it's good for us to know that the Holy Spirit, in a way, he never gives us up.

But the question is, are we willing to endure his instruction and his evaluation until whatever lesson he is teaching us is learned. Now, what is the purpose of this discipline? Of course, we mentioned the goal of the Holy Spirit is our conformity, our transformation, confirmation to the image of the Lord Jesus. But as far as our practical way of life here on this earth, I believe there are two aspects, or two ways.

One is to prepare us individually so that we can fit into the corporate expression of the Lord Jesus for this present hour. So that the fullness of his life can be fully expressed in the people. Now, for instance, if you know your fellowship, as you already know, the problem of any fellowship is not the individual brothers and sisters.

The problem of any fellowship is how we are going to live together. It's a corporate problem, not an individual problem. So the dealings of the Lord, the discipline of the Holy Spirit is to prepare us so that we can be fitted together corporately into an expression of the Lord Jesus on this earth to express his fullness.

The second thing is the Holy Spirit is preparing us in this life so that we will fit into what is to come. In other words, to be a ready people for the life to come. As sons, or let's put it the other way, as wife of the Lamb.

To be properly fitted to the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, so that we can assist him administering his kingly affairs in the ages to come. Now brothers and sisters, if that is the case, that will require strict discipline. Now you are not even on a human level.

If you are a commoner, you will receive one kind of education. If you happen to be born in a royal family, in a kingly family, you will receive a totally different education altogether because you have the throne in view. Therefore, you have to go through much discipline, much instruction, much restriction, which average people will not have to go through.

So brothers and sisters, we are called to be kings and priests. So our spiritual education will be totally different. It has to be always looked at from the heavenly point of view, not from the earthly point of view, because God is calling us to be heavenly people.

So our education, our discipline is strictly heavenly, spiritual. Now the next thing, I think we can go to some of the more practical things that we can share this afternoon, is how to be disciplined. We all know discipline is necessary, but how? That is always the question.

So if the Lord willing, this afternoon, I will share three aspects. First is obedience in faith. That requires much, much discipline.

Obedience in faith, that is the first point. Second is submission in hope. To obey is very, very difficult, if not impossible.

To submit is also very, very difficult, if not impossible. And the third thing is sacrifice in love. Sacrifice in love.

So shall we turn to a few important scriptures, please? First, let's turn to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 8. And we'll read 5 verses 5 to verse 10. Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks, of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vine and fig trees, pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land where you shall eat the food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. So in

these few verses, we see discipline is related to Israelites entering and possessing the land.

So if you put in a New Testament term, discipline is vastly related to our entering into the fullness of Christ. It is a canon speaks of the fullness of Christ. So there is no shortcut to enter into canon.

Discipline is the key. Let's turn to another passage, and very familiar to most of us. Let's turn to Hebrews 12, and we'll read from 5 to 11.

Hebrews 12, 5 to 11. Now we know the book of Hebrews is a challenge to the Hebrew believers to enter in or to press on to something that is far better, something that is better, or sonship. Let's look at verse 5. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you, O son.

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor think when you are reproved by Him. For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure.

God deals with you as with sons. For what sons is there whom the Father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we have earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respect them.

Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of Spirit and live? For they discipline us for a short time, as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us who are good, that we may be sharers of His holiness. All discipline for the moment seemed not to be joyful and sorrowful, yet to those who have been trained by it afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. And let's turn to one more portion, Revelation 3. Revelation 3, verse 19.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Be zealous, therefore, and repent. And I think we'll just touch one more verse.

Let's turn to Psalm 50, verse 17. Psalm 50, verse 17. For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you.

For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. Well, brothers and sisters, in Hebrews, we read that those He loved He disciplined. And He disciplined every child of His.

So, brothers and sisters, that is a very encouraging statement. Because it did not say, I'll discipline most my children. It did not say, I'll discipline some of my children.

It says, I'll discipline every one of my child. And brothers and sisters, in that case, we are all included. So take heart.

No one is exempted from discipline. You can try to avoid it, as for the land's sake, eventually, it will catch up to you. So, why try, why ignore it? Why reject and why take lightly the discipline law? Let's evaluate.

So, I think that should be our attitude. So, let's settle this matter. As long as you are a child of God, you are not exempt from discipline.

And discipline is God's love in action. When we are being disciplined, we know we are loved. We see it clearly in Hebrews 12.

When we are disciplined, we know we are in the household. You can only discipline those who belong to your household. For example, I have two girls.

I can discipline my two girls. But I cannot discipline this brother's children. I have no right.

Because his children are his responsibility. My children are my responsibility. And we are God's children.

And it's His responsibility to discipline us. So, brothers and sisters, we are in the household. If we are disciplined by Him.

Or when we are disciplined, we know we belong to Him. We are loved by Him. We are in the house.

To me, that's very encouraging. And it's very comforting. That we are loved.

Disciplined because He loves us. Well, let's share those three points I just mentioned. First, faith and obedience.

Now, brothers and sisters, in Scripture, we know belief or faith and obedience always link together. Just merely belief and if there is no obedience, act following your faith. Your faith is not living faith.

It's not real faith. We know faith is a gift of God. We have no faith of our own.

So, Galatians 2.20, we are told the faith that we live, the faith that we have is the faith of the Son of God. Now, why did the Lord Jesus have this faith? The faith of the Son of God. To believe His Father.

Completely trust with Him. Because our Lord Jesus, when He came, He was prepared to do the will of the Father. Therefore, His faith is living faith.

His faith is real faith. His faith works. So, brothers and sisters, if we are not prepared to obey the Lord, then our faith is not a real faith.

It is not a living faith. It is not a true faith. It's when we are prepared to believe, to obey, then that faith is real.

That faith has power. That faith is active in our life. So, brothers and sisters, many Christians today, we live a defeated life, it's because we do want to believe, but we are not prepared to obey.

Therefore, our faith is not a living faith. Our faith doesn't seem to be able to transform our life. There's no transformation taking place.

There's no confirmation to the image of Christ taking place. Because we are not prepared to obey the Word of God. So, brothers and sisters, so, faith and obedience link together.

And faith and obedience is the only link that we can have with the Father. With the things of the spiritual, with the things of the heaven. Because Hebrews, you know, told us that without faith we cannot please God.

There's no way. Those who come to must believe that He lives. And He's a rewarder of those who seek Him.

So, brothers and sisters, faith is the link. And through faith we honour Him. Now, I'm not saying empty faith, just simply believing.

I mean faith through obedience. Faith through obedience, we honour Him. Faith through obedience, we please Him.

So, brothers and sisters, I hope this will be helpful to all of us. I think for many of us, we live a life of Christian, simply just believing, believing. But never into the obedience of that faith.

And therefore, we live a very undisciplined Christian life. And there simply doesn't seem to be any power in our Christian living. We live a defeated life and somehow we say, I believe, I believe.

Because we lack the element of obedience. Faith, obedience also need to be maintained and it's also progressive. Now, I think we know that in Romans 1, there is this term that the righteous shall live by faith.

But also in that same verse it says the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. So, we have the gift of faith initially, but that faith needs to be activated continuously. So, we move from faith to faith.

It's a progressive thing. In other words, we obey. As soon as the Lord has given us something new, we also are ready to obey.

So, it's faith, obedience, faith, obedience and faith and obedience. Now, let's turn to the 11th chapter of Hebrews and look at some of the examples there. Now, we know very well, brothers and sisters, that in the book of 1 Corinthians 13, at the end of that chapter, Paul mentions three things.

Faith, hope and love. And then if you take a look at the last three chapters of Hebrews, 11 is the chapter of faith, 12 is the chapter of hope and 13 is the chapter of love. Now, recently I was with Brother Kong in Australia and our Brother Kong shared about the three pillars for the building of the church.

Without those three pillars, there would be no building of the church. And those three pillars are illustrated by three persons through their three epistles. James, Cephas, you want to look at it, it's in Galatians 2, James, Cephas and John.

And if you notice, the arrangement of the epistles, James comes before Peter and Peter comes before John. James speaks of faith in work, Peter represents hope and John represents love. And as our Brother Kong shared in Sydney, without those three pillars, church cannot be built.

Corporate. Same thing applies to us individually. If we do not have faith, if we do not have hope, if we do not have love, we cannot build up a spiritual life in the Lord.

There's no way. So, through these three chapters, we can look at some of the examples. Faith, obedience and action, hope and action, and love and action.

And all of these three aspects require self-discipline. Now, I hate to use this word self-discipline or personal discipline. Because we don't want to discipline ourselves.

Let's be very honest. We hate discipline. That's why we read from 50, 17, the Lord said, you hate discipline because you cast my word behind you.

We don't want any discipline. We want to do it our own way. That is our fallen nature.

Therefore, if we are going to have any discipline, we need to rely on the life of Lord Jesus. It's only through His life, we can live a disciplined life. Now, I know you, all of us in this room have tried many, many times and how we failed miserably.

We all have tried at least once in our lifetime. But you determine that you're going to read through this Bible from Genesis to Revelation within the first year. I don't know how many times I tried.

Now, is that true? Every time you determine to try, what is the consequence? You fail miserably. You just cannot do it. And if you fail to do it, your conscience bothers you.

You know you have to do it, but you cannot do it. And when you don't do it, something inside tells you something is wrong. Same thing with this matter of witnessing.

You know as the Lord's people, you ought to witness, share the Gospel with the insane. And yet, how often we neglected the opportunity the Lord has given to us. Right there.

We know we have to do it, but somehow we cannot do it. And when we fail to do it, we feel miserable inside. Brothers and sisters, I believe that is a teaching and discipline of the Holy Spirit to tell us apart from Him, we cannot do anything.

So brothers and sisters, one of the lessons the Holy Spirit is teaching us is that we have to cast upon Him. He is the wisdom. He is the energy.

He is the power. He is everything. Without Him, there is nothing we can do.

So this matter of discipline is not that I can discipline myself. It is simply I just give myself over to Him. So in a way, faith and obedience, strictly speaking, is surrendering.

Andrew Murray says that surrender and obedience is not something God wants you to do. He expects it. The reason He expects it is because He has given the life of the Lord in you.

That life in you, that new life in you is a surrender life. That life in you now is an obedience life. Therefore, God expects surrendering and obedience from you.

So thank God, what He demands, He supplies. And the problem with us, we know God demands something, but we try to use our own self, our own energy, our own know-how, our own ability to meet God's requirements and therefore we feel miserable. Now this matter of faith and believing that God has given life to us, it is not a small matter.

So sometimes I feel that sometimes we overlook the place of Christ in our life. Isn't that true? How we overlook? If Christ is the beloved Son of God, He is what He claims He is. And He came in, into your very heart and took up His residence there.

For instance, it is not a small matter. The very Creator Himself, the Redeemer Himself, came into you, into my heart and took up His residence. It is not a small matter.

But do we express the greatness of Christ in our lives? We fail. Because basically, we fail to believe that the life in us has the power, the energy, the ability to express all that is in that life. It's because of our unbelief and also because of our disobedience.

Well, let's look at the 11th chapter of Hebrew. First is this matter of walking in obedience. Walking in obedience.

The illustration here we find is in verse 5, chapter 11 of Hebrew, Enoch. And the Old Testament, Genesis, we're told that he walked 300 years with the Lord. And he was not.

And the Lord took him. Walk of obedience. Brothers and sisters, in the New Testament way, we can put it this way, is to be yoked to Christ.

To be yoked to Christ is not an easy matter. Because we have no choice. Wherever He goes, we go.

And our natural tendency is we want to do it our own way. We have our own desire. The flesh is fueling us.

We want to think things our own way. We think we have a solution to our problems. And so therefore we struggle, we struggle, until the moment here comes that we know we can no longer struggle.

Then we submit, we obey. So brothers and sisters, this matter of walking in obedience with the Lord will require a tremendous discipline. I'm sure you heard some of our brothers in this platform in years past share how difficult it is to walk with the Lord Jesus.

Some people think to walk with the Lord Jesus is such a beautiful, such a happy walk. Because He's so perfect. We are so imperfect.

He's so holy. We are so unholy. He's heavenly.

We are earthly. There's such a contrast between His life and our life. So for those two lives to walk together is impossibility.

But thank God He causes to come and follow Him. Therefore all the adjustment, all the discipline has to be from our side. Because He's unchanging.

So any change that needs to take place has to be from our part. And thank God for giving us the Holy Spirit to change this. And all we need to do, brothers and sisters, is just to simply give our will to Him.

Will our will to Him. So that He can do His work in us. So this matter of walking with the Lord, brothers and sisters, if we walk close to Him and walk close with Him, we will find how difficult, how impossible it is.

It's only by grace. It's only by grace that we are able to walk. So to walk with the Lord will require a tremendous discipline on our part.

Many Christians like to do works for the Lord. Therefore in Christianity we are full of Christian activities. Radio, television, not just this country, in fact it's worldwide now.

So everybody is engaging in some form of Christian work. Brothers and sisters, but to do the work of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit is a different matter altogether. Because everything that we do has to be initiated by Him.

If it is going to be of any value. So this matter of ministry, this matter of walking for the Lord and with the Lord will require a tremendous adjustment on our part. I know some brothers express often times about certain brothers.

They say, oh, this brother possesses tremendous gift, such vision, such seeing, and yet he is not doing the work that's comparable to his vision. Brothers and sisters, if we have a vision of the Lord, that vision in a way limits us. We cannot do what most people do.

Let's face it. Vision increase our spiritual horizon. But vision often restrict the activity of the flesh.

And that's very, very hard. Because we have a love for the Lord, we think we should do things for Him. But brothers and sisters, if our work, our ministry is to the only value, has to be initiated by the Lord Himself.

And if that is the case, brothers and sisters, we need to disperse. We dare not to move until He tells us to move. Therefore, this matter of waiting is vital in working with the Lord.

I know it's a hard lesson to learn, but it's a necessary lesson. And this last few years, especially with some of the Chinese in this country, there are many groups, they love the Lord. They study the Word together.

They fellowship freely in the Spirit. They grow in the Lord. There's a real manifestation of the presence of the Lord.

So is God's sake. But many of them, as soon as they form themselves into a church, then they get into a tremendous problem. Troubles begin.

You know why? Because they did not seek the might of the Lord. They move into something they think is simply expedient for themselves. Therefore, they're into a great deal of agony, spiritual agony.

So brothers and sisters, if our service, our work for the Lord is to be of any lasting value, we have to learn to wait for the direction from the Lord. Working with the Lord will require discipline. Working with the Lord would also require discipline.

And then one of the examples in this chapter of Hebrews 11 is the love of Abraham. He lived a life of obedience. We know a few times he tried his own way.

Remember one time he went to Egypt because there was a famine in the land and how he got himself into trouble. His unbelief is disobedience. So discipline sometimes we have to learn through hunger.

Because once we know what's hunger then we appreciate the food. I think one of the problems in this country we have plenty of food and we don't know what's hunger. So we don't really appreciate what we have.

And I think Abraham in his case, God is teaching him a lesson. So that he will hunger and thirst after God himself. Because the perversion is in the land.

He was in the land but he left the land and went into Egypt. And he thought in Egypt he could find real food. But he found trouble.

And later on in his life in the case of Ishmael again it's something that he tried to do for God. So brothers and sisters so we need to walk in obedience. We need to walk in obedience.

And we also need to walk in obedience. And all these three aspects of Christian life require a tremendous discipline on our part. Because discipline, strictly speaking is learn how to say no to the flesh and say yes to the Holy Spirit.

That's all. Even the cap, what is discipline, spiritual discipline, is simply learn how to say no to the flesh and say yes to the Holy Spirit. And brothers that lesson is the hardest lesson to learn in this life.

It will take our whole life to learn how to say no to the flesh and how to say yes to the Holy Spirit. And that was the lesson the Holy Spirit was teaching Abraham. To say no to his own need but to say yes to what God needs.

Then I'll give one more example in this chapter of 11 of Hebrew. It's in the case of Moses. It's not easy because the world is its attraction.

It's very, very tempting. Not to speak of this world system. Even the religious world.

There is full of attraction. And Moses was marked out for God to be a leader for the nation Israel. And because he was a marked person therefore he went through strict discipline which the rest of the Israelites did not go through.

Our brothers and sisters all of us in this room we are all marked people. And God will discipline you and he will discipline me until he get us what he wants us to be. And Moses had the courage to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh.

Refuse. Brothers and sisters, that would take some discipline. You know, in the empire Egypt to be called a king son is something.

In this world to be recognized as somebody is something. There is an attraction there. In the Christian world, to be recognized as a person who has tremendous prophetic ministry is something.

There is attraction there. But because Moses was a marked man and because he knew he was under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, he refused. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh.

And brothers and sisters, there are situations we have to refuse. We have to refuse. We have to be separated.

We are a separated people. Therefore we need to refuse some of the attraction surrounding us. That will require a tremendous discipline.

And not only Moses refused, then he left Egypt. And what is the median? Median. Brothers and sisters, to refuse is one thing but to let Egypt is quite another thing.

And let's speak of this, brothers and sisters, we are marked out for the Lord. We are people separated under the Lord himself. We are not our own.

We have been purchased by that blood of the Lord Jesus. We can never claim our own. We are marked out.

And we have no part of this world. And yet the flesh is often drawn to what's in this world. The soul is often drawn to what the religious world can offer to us.

And therefore we need to be disciplined people, have the courage to say no to these things. Refuse. And if left those things, if necessary.

So Moses not only refused, but he also left. And that is a great price that Moses paid. So brothers and sisters, in this life God needs men and women like Moses that will be able to help these people and to deliver them from this present world system.

Out of it and into Christ. And therefore brothers and sisters, we need to be prepared to take the steps that Moses took. Not just to refuse but to let this system.

So brothers and sisters, to be that kind of person, it requires a tremendous discipline. The easiest thing for us to do is to compromise. Moses could easily compromise.

But once he compromised, God cannot use him. God cannot use him. So brothers and sisters, we need to walk with the Lord in obedience.

And that will require discipline. Because he's perfect, he's holy, we have to change, we have to do the adjustment. If we desire to walk the walk of the Lord, we need to learn to wait upon him.

Because only that which comes from him and uses from him is eternal value. And we need to learn to live a life of obedience or a life of discipline. And then we have to learn to say no to something.

We have to be willing to leave something behind if we are to enter into what the Lord desires us to enter. So brothers and sisters, so the first thing is this matter of obedience in faith. Now let's turn to the 12th chapter of Hebrew and this matter of hope.

Now faith often refers to the past or present but hope includes the future. So hope is always what lies ahead. So we need to have faith but we also need to have hope.

Because faith refers to the past and the present but hope includes the future. Now this hope in Timothy 1, it tells us this hope is none other than the Lord Jesus himself. If you turn to 1 Timothy 1 and Paul says this way Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the commandment of God our Saviour and Christ Jesus who is our hope.

So this hope we talk about is the Lord himself. And this hope, if we turn to 1 Peter 1 3 Peter tells us that it's through new birth that we are brought into this living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. I'll quote that verse for you now.

1 Peter 1 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So this hope is Christ. The faith is Christ.

The hope is also Christ. So we can build on nothing else but Christ himself. Because all the other things are sand.

They all want to go. Only Christ is the solid rock. Now the most encouraging thing is that in this chapter of 12 of Hebrew, it began with so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us.

Now that's very encouraging. It says then you are not alone. There are witnesses there.

They have they have this hope in them and their hopes were all fulfilled. They stood there as testimony that our hope in the Lord Jesus is not in vain. And that is most encouraging.

So the first the writer of Hebrews show us this beautiful picture. All of these witnesses their hopes in the Lord Jesus were fulfilled. And then they encourage us to run the race.

Now you can run because this hope is certain. This hope is sure. This hope is true and this hope is real.

So thanks to the Holy Spirit. So at the outset of this chapter, he shows us those who have achieved this hope. And that gives us tremendous encouragement to run the race.

So that's most encouraging. Because there are those who are already there. Their hopes were fulfilled.

Their hopes were realized. And now the writer says now run. And then verse 2 says fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

They were able to fulfill their hopes because they had fixed their eyes on the Lord Jesus. For instance, our hopes would not be fulfilled if our eyes were not fixed on the Lord Jesus. Because he is the author and the perfecter of that faith.

Once we turn our eyes away from him, our hopes will not be realized. As long as our eyes are fixed on him, that hope will be realized. And then of course when that hope is certain and that hope is that of the Lord Jesus himself, then we're given strength to run.

For instance, it's not that we have the strength to run to the goal. But it's the goal, the prize, gives us the strength to run. I think the way we run in the sports world and the way we run spiritually may not be quite the same.

To be qualified for a race you have to be physically fit to run that race. You have to be qualified. Now in one sense spiritually we have to be by new birth we are qualified to run the race.

But the strength to run that race is the goal. It is Christ who is the attraction, who is the power that draws us and who keeps us in the race. So brothers and sisters, thank the Lord.

He is not only the goal, but he is also the strength in us to achieve that goal. Therefore, that hope is certain. That hope can be a reality.

Now to run in this verse here to say endure. Endure. Now to endure requires some discipline.

I think our problem is not the initial search of power. Our problem is how we maintain in that race. Somehow if you look back into our Christian experience we all began that race sometime somewhere.

But the question is before we knew it we were on the side. We disqualified ourselves because we did not maintain or endure in the race. We let something else come in to hinder us from staying in the right course and run the race.

Or it could be our eyes were just a little bit out of focus from the real goal. Because the way we draw our strength to run the race is the Lord Jesus. That goal will keep us in the race.

He will keep us in the race. He will give us strength in the race. Once we move away from him, we are out.

So brothers and sisters, to stay in the course, to endure would require real discipline. So the problem of many of us is not the initial thing. It's how we maintain it to the end.

So it's not how we begin, it's how we end. And that will require endurance. And that will require real discipline.

And in this condition I'll just add one thing. You know, to run this race is just to gain Christ. We know that.

And that is a price worth the endurance. If you think the gain is Christ himself, then it's easier for us to endure. Because we know it's worth it.

And also the other thing is that you know, in Paul, in 1 Corinthians, love is not jealous. So in this race, it's not a competitive race like the race we see in this world. If we run this race, we see somebody run ahead of us.

It should not be a distraction. But it should be an encouragement to us. Now that will take some discipline.

Now in the natural, if I'm running and somebody pass me on and then just keep going, oh, I'll be just so discouraged, I'll just give it up. I say, now what's the use? Because the prize will be his. According to this, do you know in a sense, we are running corporately for Christ.

What your gain is my gain. What his gain is our gain. And so there's no jealousy.

And that will require some discipline. Because it's no longer an individual thing anymore. It's a corporate thing.

So when somebody run ahead of me, I'll be greatly rejoiced. I say, hallelujah, somebody is up in front of me and has the faith and obedience and submission to go ahead and run that race. And what he gain is for all of us.

And that will be a tremendous encouragement to all. For instance, to me that is the key to the whole thing about this race. It's not in a competitive spirit.

It's not so-and-so has witnessed five times this week, I have witnessed nothing. It's not at all. If that sister has witnessed five, thank God for what she has doing.

What she does is for the residents. And I think that should be our spirit. And that is the right spirit.

So brothers and sisters, let's run this race together. If somebody can get ahead of you, that will cause us to rejoice in the Lord. So-and-so is moving on to the Lord.

That should give us tremendous encouragement. So brothers and sisters, shall we try to encourage one another by moving forward onward to the Lord? And that will require a tremendous discipline because our natural self is, you see, oh, it's more spiritual. And he's more spiritual, oh, let him run, I'll quit running.

No. He runs for you but you need to run for the others. And that's hard.

Because when the race, we always think, I'm running for myself. The prize is just for me. No.

It's together that we may gain him. And together that he may gain all of us. And I think that's one of the reasons why Paul used this illustration as running race.

All of us, for one thing, to gain Christ. Now, our time is just about there now. And I think maybe tomorrow I'll just touch on this mantra of love.

And maybe we can quickly just touch a little bit on this mantra of love. Let's turn to the 13th chapter of Hebrews. Maybe for the next five minutes we'll just touch a little bit.

I'll just pick a few words here to share. Verse 1. Hebrews 13. Did love of the brethren continue? Now just take note this will continue.

Our problem is not love. Our problem is continuing love. Let's face it.

We all love once. There's no question about that. But are we continuing in that love for the brethren? That is a real challenge.

That will take some discipline to maintain and continue in that love for the brethren. That is some discipline. Out of ourselves, we can love once, but we cannot continue.

The problem is the way to continue this love is not to rely on our natural love. It's only the love of Christ can maintain that love. It's only the love of Christ can love the brethren.

So we cannot continue in that love. We know that love is ourselves. But when that love continues, keep loving the brethren.

You know that is not your love. It is the love of Christ. So brothers and sisters, we need to appropriate the love of God to maintain that love and to continue that love for the brethren.

Now verse 2. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by this soundly entertained angel without knowing. Neglect. Now that's another word.

It's so easy to neglect. It's just natural to neglect. It takes some discipline not to neglect.

You have to be on the watch. You have to be on alert. And that takes some discipline.

Now it says hospitality to strangers. Not hospitality to those who are in fellowship with you or those who you know in the Lord. Now I'm sure if some of the brethren and sisters you meet here in Richmond this week and you happen to like them and know them and you get their address and you say the next time you come by please do drop in and visit us and see us.

That seems to be a very natural thing to do. You love to receive the saints. We often do that.

If you come by Glasgow drop in and see us. We like to receive you in the Lord. Now that's very natural.

That's very natural. And thank God for that. In this verse it says do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.

If some somebody you never know, you never met before and come and knock at your door, what would you do? To take that person in and treat him the way he should be treated. As the Lord would have treated him. According to this, it would take some discipline.

It would take some discipline. And then verse 3. Remember the prisoner as though imprisoned with him. And those who are ill-treated, saints, you, yourselves, are also in the body.

How we remember the things we like to remember. We are all like that. And the Bible says remember the prisoners as though you were imprisoned with them.

That is a hard thing to do. Now, brothers and sisters, thank God for some of the stories we heard from China. And about those who were tortured in prison and suffered for the Lord.

And don't you sense that when we heard those stories we sort of entered into what they have gone through, what they have gone through a little bit. As we heard the story, there's something inside respond. As though what they have went through is part of us.

Don't you feel that way? That should be the way. It would take some discipline to be able to enter into the suffering of God's people. But also those who are outside of Christ.

Strangers. It's hard for us to treat those we like, nice. And those we don't know, we will treat them differently.

Now, I'm saying that I know how to treat those strangers. I don't. But I think we are all in the school of Christ.

We are being under-disciplined. We are all learning. We are being instructed.

And we are being transformed and conformed to Christ. But I think that is one of the vital lessons we have to learn. And I don't think there is a better way to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus by practical deeds.

Sometimes a deed is better than preaching. By the way we treat them, we show them Christ. I think showing them Christ is far more effective than preaching Christ to them.

So I think that could be one of the most neglected ministry of God's people. It is to show our love and hospitality to those who are outside of Christ. I can give you one illustration here, and then we will continue the rest maybe tomorrow afternoon.

Recently in our South Jersey Bible study group, several of our friends came to know the Lord. And there was no effort on our part to really preach the gospel to them. But down deep in our heart we have a concern for their soul.

But when we invite them to come to our fellowship sometimes, we never aim our gospel at them. Or we never try to testify to them that we are Christian, that they are not. But they need to be saved.

But down deep in our heart we have a longing that they will come to see Christ in the lives of these people. That's all we have a longing for. So therefore we invite them to our fellowship.

But the inner bottom is the wonderful thing is that before you knew it, one by one came to know the Lord. Just by including them into our fellowship, bringing them in, treating them as though they were one of us. Not preach to them.

Not to testify to them as though they are out there and we are in here. But simply with love, by faith, we include them into the family. And hope they'll be conscious that they are not in the family.

And they desire to be in the family. And so the Holy Spirit can begin to work. And so I can testify to you this way it's been happening quite often in our area.

Some of the new believers in our fellowship they came to know the Lord within the last two or three years. It's all through this means. As we have our money fellowship we try to invite as many as we can.

As we fellowship they came to awareness that the God that we love and the Lord Jesus that we appreciate and remember is alive and many of them came to know the Lord that way. So that is love and demonstration. That is love and demonstration.

So maybe that's what we should do in many localities to include those and it will take some discipline. Because we don't know how they're going to react to us when we invited them in. And sometimes you encounter that those who do come they let you know they really don't appreciate your invitation.

So what do you do? You still love them. You still show that you want them to be there with you. And so in that case they are hard to touch.

So I think maybe that will be all for this afternoon and then tomorrow maybe we can just go on a little bit about some of the marks of a disciplined life. Some of the signs spiritual marks of a disciplined life. And maybe we'll just touch a little bit on this matter of love.

So brothers and sisters, this disciplined life is so essential. And it's through obedience and through love. And I just looked at my notes and I didn't touch this matter of submission in faith.

Maybe tomorrow we'll touch a little bit. So shall we bow our heads. Our Father, we do thank you for getting us together.

We have to confess that we are so inadequate in sharing, expressing what's in your heart. We just pray that the Holy Spirit will speak and do what is humanly impossible. Lord, we just pray that you will, in a way, draw us to yourself, make us willing vessels, make us willing to make ourselves available to you.

Lord, that you can do your work in us. That you can love us, you can change us into the likeness of Christ. And Lord, we know the way of the cross is the only way.

The way of death is the way to resurrection. And the way of the cross is the way to glory. We just pray that you will challenge our hearts to be made willing, Lord, to follow you all the way.

Lord, that we may experience into your fullness. So we just commit each other into your loving hands. And do be with us.

Bless your people, Lord. We give praise to thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

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