

PROVIDENCE AND DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:4-6

INTRODUCTION

- A. Hebrew letter addressed to Jewish Christians.
 - 1. Considering turning away from Christ and returning to worship of God under the Mosaic covenant.
 - 2. The writer contrasts every aspect of the New Covenant of Christ with the aspect of the Covenant of Moses.
- B. The book of Acts shows that Jewish Christians suffered persecution by Jews who rejected Jesus. (I.e., Acts 3ff, Stephen, Saul persecuting church, etc.)
 - 1. This may have led to consideration of returning to the laws of Moses.
 - 2. Hebrews 10:32-34
 - 3. Some were even in prison. Heb. 12:4-6
- C. Questions to consider:
 - 1. If unbelieving Jews were persecuting Christians for being Christians, how was this persecution discipline from the Lord?
 - 2. For what was God chastising them?
 - a. Denotes “to train children” or “educate”.
 - b. Correcting with words, reproving and admonishing.
 - c. By the infliction of evils and calamities.
 - 3. Is every instance of opposition in a Christian’s life discipline from the Lord?
 - 4. Is every calamity in a Christian’s experience a chastisement from God?

I. PERSECUTION BRINGS BLESSINGS.

- A. Protecting From Every Difficulty.
 - 1. Even though we may desire to make life simple for our children, doing so creates a weakness that may very well cost them late in life.
 - a. From crawling to walking to running.
 - b. To “protect” them from bumps and bruises will hinder them from growing physically as they should.
 - 2. Bodily exercise is necessary for physical strength.
 - 3. The same should be said for our spiritual strength.
 - a. James 1:2-3, endurance or perseverance
 - b. Romans 5:3-5
 - c. Psalm 119:67, 71
 - d. Matthew 5:10-12
- B. Promised Persecution for the Faithful.
 - 1. 2 Timothy 3:12
 - 2. John 15:20
 - 3. In times of persecution (in history) Christianity thrives.
 - a. The kingdom grows more when it must struggle against opposition.
- C. Persecution is not Pleasant.
 - 1. Hebrews 12:11
 - 2. Hebrews 12:2 – spoken of Jesus.
 - 3. Romans 8:18, sufferings not worthy to compare

II. CALAMITIES – NOT PROOF OF SINFUL LIFESTYLES.

- A. Moses.
 - 1. Assured Israel that obedience would bring long life and prosperity.
 - a. Deuteronomy 28:1-14 – blessings if you obey.
 - b. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 – If you will not obey...curses.
 - 2. Laziness and sin would bring about poverty and early death.
 - 3. A general truth, but not a universal rule.
- B. Job.
 - 1. Three friends – calamity of Job brought about by specific sin.
 - 2. But, by God’s estimation, Job was blameless, Job 1:8.
 - 3. God would accept Job’s prayers for the three friends. Job 42:7-9
- C. Blind Man from Birth.
 - 1. Apostles’ question, “Who sinned?” John 9:2
 - 2. John 9:3, neither, but rather for the works of God.
 - a. Not likely the *reason* for his blindness.
 - b. Rather the intended *result* of the blindness.
 - 3. Jesus denied any link to the blindness with sinfulness.
- D. Some Sins Do Bring Their Own Punishment.
 - 1. Constant drinking – cirrhosis of the liver.
 - 2. Sexual promiscuity – sexually transmitted disease, Rom. 1:27.
 - 3. Drunk driving – kill or maim self and sometimes others.
 - 4. Hebrews 12:4-5 – persecution referred to as “discipline”, is not meant to be understood as punishment for sin.
 - 5. Discipline from the Lord, because we are legitimate children, helping us to grow in faith, James 1:2.

III. DISCIPLINE SIGNIFIES GOD’S APPROVAL.

- A. Example of Christ.
 - 1. Hebrews 12:3
 - 2. 1 Peter 2:20-21
 - 3. Jesus’ suffering, a sign of approval from God.
 - a. Hebrews 5:8-9
 - b. Hebrews 12:4 – persecution to death.
- B. Acceptance by God.
 - 1. Proverbs 3:11-12 – acceptance, legitimate son-ship.
 - 2. Hebrews 12:7
 - 3. Accepting tribulation, affliction, persecution as discipline from a loving Father.

CLOSING

- A. Providence often brings to mind blessings and provisions.
- B. In Hebrews, provisions were defined as persecution, imprisonment, threat of death, plundering of goods.
 - 1. These were all for discipline, which spurs our spiritual growth.
 - 2. By it we are blessed and by it we are claimed as God’s children.
- C. God provides many blessings.
 - 1. But also provides discipline.
 - 2. James 1:2, “*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*”