

## ***“The Proof of Sonship”***

### **Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest**

Hebrews 12:3-11

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**Transcriber’s Note:** The first sentence of Jeff’s opening prayer were not recorded.

**Jeff:** It challenges us. It convicts us. It causes us to overturn sinful patterns and habits in our lives. Father, we’re also thankful for the encouragement that He brings to us, each one. We’re thankful for the way in which He confirms Your love to us. We’re thankful, Father, for that love spread abroad in our hearts by Your Spirit and that Spirit who indwells us. We’re thankful for Him.

Lord, as we come we pray that You will open our eyes to Your word. Lord, help us to not just recognize the sentences, the nouns and the verbs, to be able to cognitively understand what’s being said. But help us to understand deep within our hearts, within our consciences, that these things are true and that these things apply to us, and that Your Spirit changes lives according to them. Father, change us today.

Lord, we pray for Jim. We ask that Your hand of blessing would be upon Him. We certainly pray as he battles this cancer that You will sustain and keep Him. Father, we pray for our brother Bruce, asking that Your hand of blessings would be upon Him as well. Lord, we pray that You’ll sustain Him. We pray that You’ll bless Him.

Father, as we gather we pray for our study of the Word. We ask that Your blessing would be upon us. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let’s turn to Hebrews chapter 12. And that is a misprint. It should be verse 3. Verse 3 is where we’re going to begin. So we’ll go from 3-11 today. Hebrews 12:3-11. Don, do you have that today?

**Don Maurer:** Yes, I do.

**Jeff:** Would you get that out and read it?

**Don:** Sure, no problem.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Don:** By the way, we have a magic piano, a magic keyboard. Did you know that?

**Jeff:** Oh, really? No.

**Don:** The sound changes whenever I play the prelude to the prayer. It doesn’t sound the same in the beginning. But every time I play the prelude the sound changes by itself.

**Brave Man:** Oh wow! Oh!

**Don:** I don’t know how it happens, but it does. *(Laughter)* All right. Anyway—  
*(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** I’m not musically tuned in enough to realize that, Don. I do appreciate that.  
*(Laughter)*

**Don:** Yes, but I’m speaking with someone who can’t distinguish “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from “Rock of Ages.” *(Laughter)*

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**Jeff:** Well, I want you to know that I was listening this morning to make sure that it wasn't "Over the Rainbow." *(Laughter)* And I was trying to identify the movie tune that it was. *(Laughter)* But I wasn't able to do that.

**Don:** Okay, all right.

**Ted:** This could be a pilgrimage site. We could charge people to come here.

**Brave Man:** That's right, yup.

**Don:** \$19.95. *(Laughter)* Being serious for five seconds. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Read it when you're ready, Don.

**Don:** *“Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD, or be weary when reproved by Him. For the LORD disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you have to endure; God is treating you as sons.*

*“For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who have disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them. But He disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness.*

*“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore, ‘lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet’, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let's think about an outline today. I want us to think about some brief introductory matters this morning. I want us to then think about the logic of the passage. And I want us to think about *what it means to belong to the family of God*, for certainly that is the lesson that has been taught us as we've walked through this letter. So I want to think again about that and how that sets us up for what's to come. Then I want us to think about *how God treats us as sons*. And then I want us to consider the fact that *if there is no discipline in the family, there is no sonship*. So those things will lead us into our thinking today about the passage.

Well, let's begin with the introduction. And I'm going to throw something up on the board. And it's a Greek word that's transliterated. It's *hagiosmos*. And it is the word from which we get our word *sanctification*. And it's also translated, in our text for instance, as *holiness*. And holiness is important.

One of the things that we need to take on board is the fact that our holiness, our being set apart, is important to God. It's important to one another, but it's important to God.

Now I realize that there is a debate about the use of language among us. *(Laughter)* And so, in order to circumvent any issues at the beginning, or at least try to, I want to

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simply say that in my mind, and according to the way I have thought about sanctification over the years, I have done it traditionally in line with the way that John Murray does it in his talk and in his articles on sanctification. He talks about there being a *definitive sanctification* and there being a *progressive sanctification*.

Now when you think of a definitive sanctification, what do you think of? Well, you’re supposed to think of a definitive taking us from one sphere and setting us down in another sphere. In other words, we are taken from the kingdom of darkness and set down in the kingdom of light. And that is a definitive breach with one kingdom, and—You’re not leaving already, are you, Bion? *(Laughter)* I just started. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** He’s a very normal boy.

**Jeff:** Yeah, I know. *(Laughter)* That’s exactly what I thought, Ted. *(Laughter)* All right. I told you I’d tell you, but I’m not going to tell you if you leave early. *(Laughter)*

So the definitive breach is God taking us from this kingdom of darkness and setting us down in the kingdom of light. And what he is saying is this. You no longer belong to that kingdom. You belong to this kingdom.

Now there’s a progressive aspect to this. And that is the growth or the maturing. And this is where some of the disagreement comes in. Is this properly called a progressive setting apart or progressive sanctification? Or, like our friend talks about, is this a maturing?

Well, I’m not happy with either one of those at this point. So if we call this progressive sanctification a maturing, I’m fine with that.

How do we understand this? Well, let me give you a picture that I think is somewhat helpful. I think of *The Prince and the Pauper*. And I think of how the two boys meet one another. They look almost identical to one another. And the pauper and the prince decide to swap places. Remember that? I think it’s Henry and Tom. And Tom becomes the prince and Henry becomes the pauper.

Henry is then beaten by the father of the pauper. And Tom becomes Henry; he becomes the prince. And everyone thinks that the prince has gone mad. Henry who is now living in poverty, and Tom who is now living in the castle, have swapped roles. And Tom who is in the castle has in one sense a definitive breach with the poverty of his old world.

And yet he has to come to grips and get used to, and be able to live within the patterns of the new kingdom of which he is now a part. And everyone thinks that the prince, who is really Tom, has lost his mind, because he doesn’t seem to know how to do the most basic things. And yet he grows. He matures in a sense. He grows in his new role, and so he gets better and better and more adept. And he’s able to be in that role seamlessly.

And I think that’s the idea that captures definitive sanctification and progressive sanctification. We were a part of the kingdom of darkness. Now we are in the kingdom of the sun of God’s love. And we are progressively getting used to coming to grips with and maturing in that new role. And I think that encapsulates what we’re saying when we say that holiness is important—not simply the definitive aspect, but the maturing process that we go through to become what we already are, at least in terms of our outward conduct.

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So holiness is really important when we think about the Scriptures, and we can't avoid that. And I think that what we're going to look at next sets us up for that, because in Hebrews 12—and I'm going to go ahead to verse 14,—we find a statement that ought to rattle us to the roots. It says this. *“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”*

Now I've talked to you about justification and sanctification. And I would expect that every one of you here—and if you don't, I want you to not feel badly about raising your hand. We'll just call you a new guy at this point even if you're an old guy. But, you know, it's an important question, and I want you to raise it if you need to raise it. But my hope is that you understand that when the text of Scripture says this, that you see this not as works righteousness, not as well, if I don't pursue works, and so maturity, I must not have salvation, as if to say that works brings one eternal life. That would be an error. That would be an error of the greatest magnitude.

But if we understand this to say that in Christ we have our justification, and that because we are in Christ we are becoming what we are, then we understand that well, if I'm in Christ I need to pursue holiness, because I need to become what I am in Him. Then you have it together. You have the right idea. Does that make sense to everyone? I'm heckling you a bit about not asking that. But I really do want to stop there if you need to stop there, because I think it's so important that you understand that, okay? All right, so that's how we understand it.

Now here's my question for today. My question for today is not to rehash this. My question for today is this. If that statement is true and we understand it in the proper context, then how do we pursue it? How do we pursue that *“holiness, without which no one will see the Lord?”* How do we pursue it?

My question is this. What counsel would you give someone? Someone says this to you. Well look, I read this passage the other day. I understand it in its proper theological context. But my question is how do I pursue this holiness so as to mature? How do I do that? That's my question?

So what would you tell people? What would you say? What are some of the common things that you might say to people?

**Bishop Rodgers:** Use the means of grace.

**Jeff:** Okay, use the means of grace, the church and sacraments. The means of grace. What else?

**Brave Man:** The Scripture.

**Don Nemit:** Look for God's hand in suffering.

**Jeff:** Look for God's hand in suffering. You guys are giving these out of order.

*(Laughter)* Bible reading is at the end. *(Laughter)* Come on, now. All of these things. Would you add to that list?

**Bishop Rodgers:** Discipline.

**Jeff:** What else? We've already heard one to add to that list. What would be another one?

**Brave Man:** Tithing.

**Jeff:** Tithing. What would be another one?

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**Sig:** Service to others.

**Jeff:** Service to others.

**Bishop Rodgers:** Fellowship.

**Jeff:** Fellowship. Okay, so all of these things would be the things that we want to tell people when we encourage them to mature in the faith. Now here’s one that was alluded to already or mentioned by the bishop. It’s this. We need to think parentally. Discipline. And I’m not talking necessarily about the church’s discipline.

Now I think that the church’s discipline will emerge in this discussion at some point. But what we’re talking about primarily in this text is God’s discipline of the believer, God’s direct discipline. And I want—Did you do that, Don?

**Don Maurer:** What?

**Jeff:** Did you hear that piano? Just one note. Did you hear it?

**Ted:** Boy, you’re starting to spook me out. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** God’s discipline over His people. And we’re going to see how that directly comes out of the text as we move along. But I think we need to think about growing in grace this morning, in light of God’s disciplining us as sons. I think that’s crucial, very important. So that’s what I want us to do.

But before I do that, I want us to simply affirm what we’ve been saying all along. And that is that *we belong to the family of God*. We need to get our minds situated around what it is that the author has already told us.

Now in order to do that I want you to just think back to chapter 2 and verse 11. And if you want to go there you can go there. And yet I will throw it up on the screen for you. It says, “*For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all from one Father.*”

Now I want you to think about that. What he’s talking about is that he’s talking about those who have gone before and those who are in Christ presently and becoming what they are. They are all from one Father. So what he’s simply saying is that if you belong to Christ, then you are in the family of God. And I think that is something that we cannot escape. It’s something that we should not want to escape. In fact, that same text goes on to tell us that we are adopted into this family and that Christ “*is not ashamed to call us His brethren.*” I think that chapter 2 is a wonderful passage where, remember, Christ takes upon Himself the burden of the seed of Abraham, that He might redeem the seed of Abraham. And I think that this whole thing is driving us to think about our place in the family of God.

Now I want you to understand something. I think that we oftentimes think about the family of God. And a lot of people disparage it today. I’m going to talk about this in just a little bit. A lot of people disparage it today. They say, “Well, I can’t really think about family life because I had a poor family life.”

And I want you to understand something. We do not allow our experience to interpret Scripture.

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**Jeff:** So we don’t allow our experience to negate the teaching of Scripture. If you had a bad family experience, that doesn’t mean that the Scripture is wrong to teach about

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family life, and proper and good family life, from the aspect of being in the family of God. In other words, if you’ve had a bad family life, if you’ve had a bad father, what you should be doing is that you should be saying this. “My father was sinful in the earthly world. But my heavenly Father is a perfect Father. And I belong to a family that’s a perfect family. And my experience needs to conform to God’s word.” It’s as simple as that.

When we allow our experience to dictate how we view the Scriptures, rather than allowing the Scriptures to dictate our experience, we’re in big trouble. That’s where we are as a nation now. And so I just want to simply put that out. The family of God is the model that we ought to be aspiring to.

Now the problem was that some were desiring to depart from this particular family. Some were desiring to leave. The hardships had become too much. And so they were desiring to leave.

Now there were two problems with those who wanted to leave. First *they forgot what it took to overcome sin*. Now for instance, I think—Can you hear me if I wander away a little bit from the microphone? If I talk loud, can you still hear me? Is everybody good? All right, good.

So I think that one of the things that you have to understand is that he is challenging them. So when you look at Hebrews chapter 11, one of the things you’ve got to realize is that he is calling these people to look at people who have come before. And he’s calling them to have faith like them.

Now there’s a certain sense in which we need to qualify that. When we say that he’s calling them to have a faith like them, he’s not calling them to emulate their faith. He’s calling them to emulate the object of their faith. In other words, he’s calling them not to imitate their exact belief, but to follow their belief to the Savior. And I think that we need to think about that very carefully.

In other words, when I say to somebody, “You know what? Follow me”, I’m not saying to follow my pattern of belief. What I’m saying is, follow the Lord in whom I believe. That’s who you need to put your eyes on—not me, not my habits, not my characteristics, but on Christ.

And there were a couple of things that were happening here. And in the midst of those things we find that the Preacher is saying, “You need to be challenged in your belief, and look at these people as they look to Christ.”

But that’s not all he’s saying. I want you to see something else. He is really saying this, and this is what he asks them. Have you resisted sin and temptation to the point of shedding blood? In other words, have you spilled your own blood as you’ve resisted the departure that you’re now going with?

Now I want you to think about that just for a minute, because what he has been saying is this. He’s been saying for the last three chapters that Somebody has spilled His blood for you, that you might be where you are. And this is what he says. *“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

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Think about that. For three chapters he’s been telling them about the blood of Jesus. And then he gets to this chapter and he says to them, “Now let me ask you a question.” Have you spilled blood in wrestling with temptation? Have you forgotten what it took to make atonement for your sins? It took the spilling of blood, not the spilling of your blood, but the spilling of the Savior’s blood.

Now you know, I think we can sometimes think to ourselves that that’s abstract and ethereal. But I want to tell you something. If you meditate upon the Scriptures and what they say about the Lord Jesus Christ for any length of time, it’s not abstract and ethereal at all. It’s concrete and real. Jesus Christ took upon Himself human flesh, that He might be a substitute for your sins. There’s nothing abstract about that. It’s all concrete.

So here is what good counsel is. Every time, right before you sin and think nothing of it, just meditate upon the cross just a little bit. And when you meditate upon the cross, you’ll see what sin deserves and hopefully you’ll see the One who was punished for that sin in which you’re about to engage.

So that’s the first problem: they forgot. And the second problem was this. *They had forgotten about sonship.* They had forgotten sonship. Now I want you to think about that. He says, “*And you have forgotten.*”

Now let’s just pause right there in that statement for a minute. That’s in the perfect tense, which means that you might translate it like this. “Have you completely forgotten?”

You know, that’s what you said when you’re a dad, don’t you? Or that’s what your dad said to you, you know, when he’s talking to you about the rules of the house. “Have you completely forgotten what I told you?”

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff points to someone.

**Jeff:** You never heard that. *(Laughter)* I know you know; I know it. You know, have you completely forgotten yourself?

Now I want to tell you something. It’s at this very point, as I’ve said to you in the past, that when we think about how it is that this text is God’s discipline on us, that we could move to talk about church discipline, and that would be a legitimate move for us. But I don’t think that’s where the text is taking us. What this text is saying is that God is the One who is at work in the disciplinary process. And you know, we’ve been saying as we’ve been looking at the book of Hebrews, we’ve been talking about how it is to call one another alongside of us. Well, in this particular text in the way it’s worded it is God who is calling us to Himself. He is the One in this text calling us alongside of Himself. He’s the Father who is saying, “Get over here!” You know, that sort of thing, right? And so He’s calling us. This is God’s call to us.

Now I realize that in some ways this is a lot of rehearsal of what we’ve been through. But I think it’s important, especially as we move into the disciplinary topic. Do you have any questions or thoughts you want to work through before we move on from this? I think that in some sense we’re just reinforcing some of the things we’ve already looked at.

All right. So let’s look at this. How does God treat us as sons? Well, with discipline, doesn’t He? Now you can translate this word in any number of ways. You can translate it

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as *instruction*. You could translate it as *teaching*. You could translate it as *discipline*. You can translate it in any number of ways. In fact, there are some translations that even have this translated in a little bit harsher of a way. And one might get the idea then that this is purely punitive. But it is not punitive. What we find is that built into the idea of this discipline is correction.

Now any father knows that. You know, you come home and you find your son doing something that he ought not to do. And you don't go out and browbeat him just to punish him, just to be punitive. No, you don't go out and just beat him up. What you do is, you might discipline him. I want you guys at this table to know that I was never disciplined. I was pretty good. *(Laughter)* I'll tell you what, I was disciplined all the time. *(Laughter)*

But do you know what? I grew up in the days when—and you know, it's hard to say this to people because they, and maybe you, will have this reaction,—but I got my butt wupped.

**Brave Man:** With the switch.

**Jeff:** Yes. But I always knew that my dad was not simply exercising punishment for the sake of punishment. I knew that he was exercising this particular discipline in order to instruct me not to do it again. And if I did it again, then this would be the outcome. So he was trying to correct behavior and move me in the right direction.

I did have friend whose dad was punitive, and everybody knew it. Everyone knew it. Everyone knew that the correction of this father was no correction at all. I mean, it went beyond the pale. And everyone knew it.

So there's a sense in which one knows. And here's how one knows. One knows because one knows if the father loves him. You know, my father may have had the switch or the belt in his hand when I got my butt wupped. But I'll tell you what I knew. I knew that it was wielded by a father who loved me and wanted the best for me. So built into this idea of discipline is correction. And we need to take that on board when we look at this text.

Now the process of this is not explained to us. Look, I said to you that we can move into the idea of church discipline, informal or formal. And I think that would be a legitimate move. We would say that this is a natural outworking of God's discipline over His people. It's exercised through His elders, right? We could say that, we could talk like that.

But it's interesting to me that the process is not described for us. But I'll tell you what the emphasis is in this text that I think we have to catch. The emphasis in this text is that we as the recipients of this discipline are responsible to receive it. And that's where the focus rests in this text.

So this text is really not about explaining that this is how God providentially disciplines His people as a father. It's not that. It's let me tell you how you ought to receive it when you get it. Okay, so that's it.

Now a couple of things here. First of all, *we're not to take it lightly*. I want you to think about this. I want you to think about this in relation to something we've already heard. In the first two verses he's said to us, “Cast off every weight that hinders.” Now



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he’s not talking about sin at that point. He does say, “Cast off every sin.” But he talks about casting off every weight.

And when we went through this text the last time, I said that this isn’t necessarily a sinful weight. These are those encumbrances that actually get in the way of godliness, though they may not be sins.

For instance, let’s say this. Let me give you this example. Let’s say that you have a propensity to stay up past what would be a good bed time. And it cuts into your getting to work on time. Staying up late is not sinful in and of itself. But if it leads you to rob your employer, then it’s a weight or an encumbrance that does lead you to sin. So cast off what is not sin in order that you may not be led into sin. I think that’s the idea.

Now here’s the thing. I think it’s ironic that he says at this point, “*Do not take the discipline of the Lord lightly.*” In other words, cast off the thing that needs to be cast off, but consider as weighty the thing that is weighty.

Now I want you to think with me about this. This is fertile ground for thinking about your youth. And I’ll tell you what, I can think to myself. As soon as you study this passage, I can think back to the days when my dad said something. I remember, and I’m ashamed to even remember. But I can remember when my dad would tell me something and I’d say,

**Transcriber’s Note:** A grunt.

**Jeff:** And I’d walk out the door and I’d say to myself, “I’m gonna do what I want to do.” I took it lightly. I went against what the Scripture text says. I went against what I should have taken as weighty. And I took what I should have cast off in those days as more important.

And you see, we can do that very thing. We can do that thing today with God as our Father.

How do we do that? Well, there are things that we know that we should cast off that aren’t necessarily sinful, but lead us into sinfulness. And how do we do that? Well, we know how we do that. We do that by putting them off.

But I’ll tell you what we have a tendency to do when we want to do it, because we want the thing that we want. What we do is we read the Scriptures. And we say, “Instead of taking this and giving it its due weight, I’m going to take this lightly, and I’m going to continue to keep the weight that I should be casting off.

Now I don’t need to put in specifics. I mean, I could. But I don’t need to put in specifics for you to know exactly what I’m talking about, because I have those things I know. I know the things that I don’t take weightily enough that God has said to me. And I know the things that I ought to be casting off that I’m not casting off. Do you see what I mean? I know them and you know them, the very things that are in your life that are the same way.

The second thing I want you to notice is this. *We’re not to faint.* We’re not to faint under the discipline. You know, I think we could render this as *we’re not to give up.*

Now I think at this point that what he does is interesting. I think that when we think about the Lord Jesus, we think, and rightfully so, about the atonement He made. But in

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this particular passage, when he talks about the Son, he talks about Him in the very similar way that he’s speaking to us.

Let me give you a for instance. We’re not to faint. We’re not to give up. What does he say about the Lord? And this is in chapter 5. We are treated like sons because He is a Son, and so treated. Hebrews chapter 5 says, *“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.”* And if He did it, and He’s your Brother, then you are not to faint when you’re disciplined by the Lord.

Now I want you to understand this. Why is that? Well, it’s because you’re sons too. But there’s a big difference between the Lord Jesus and us. He is the eternal source of our salvation. We’re not the source of our own salvation or anyone else’s.

But I’ll tell you where he connects it. This is where he connects it: Hebrews 5:9. *“He became the source to all of those who obey.”* That’s where he connects it. In other words, those who obey are truly His, not because they obey and earn some sort of merit before God. No, they obey because they are demonstrating that they are already saved, justified in Him, and living out of a life that is definitively sanctified and so becoming more mature.

Now I want you to know something. This ought to be a challenge to every one of us. Not a one of us is in a situation where we can say, “It’s not a problem for me.” Every one of us, every single one of us, ought to be challenged by this text.

And you see, here’s the question that we ought to be asking ourselves. It’s the same question that the deserters should have been asking themselves. Am I a son?

I mean, look. I never want to encourage you to do any sort of self-examination unless you do it in Christ. But self-examination is necessary.

You know, there was an old Puritan. I think it was Thomas Watson; I’m not sure. But he used to say that for every one time that you think about your own sins, you ought to think ten more times about Christ and what He did for you and your sins, how He was an atonement. And I think that’s a great ratio.

But the question is still legitimate. *Am I a son?* What kind of behaviors am I continuing to embrace? And in what ways am I taking the Lord’s counsel to me lightly? Let me just stop there and ask you. Are there any thoughts or questions that you have before I move on to my last point? Yes, go ahead.

**Brian:** I’d be curious as to some of the examples of what God’s discipline might look like.

**Jeff:** Okay. So this is a great question. And here is where we have to be absolutely careful, because this basically moves us into a situation where we need to think about the will of God, okay?

What does Deuteronomy 29:29 say? Does anybody have that memorized?

**Sig:** Leave the mysterious things to God and deal with the ones you know.

**Jeff:** Yes. *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God. But the things revealed belong to us and to our children.”* It’s as clear as that.

Now what that means is this. We have God’s revealed will in Scripture. But we do not possess what’s called His secret will.

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Now what that means is this. And here’s where the disciplinary part comes in. Let’s say, for instance, that I give you an example right out of my own life. Several years ago I got a sinus infection that put me on my back for months. And I thought I was going to need surgery for it. I ended up not needing surgery. But I was on my back for months.

And one of my thoughts at that time was *Lord, why have You put me on my back?* And creeping alongside of that was *What is the sin that’s in my life that is undiscovered or unconfessed that has put me here?*

Now let me tell you something that you need to understand, whether it’s you or me. You can’t answer that question. You cannot answer the question of why am I in this position. Why do I have this four-month sinus infection that’s wrecking my work life, my family life, my personal life? Why? You can’t answer that question.

Now the reason I say this is because there are people who will tell you exactly why you are in the position you’re in. (*Laughter*) And here’s what I want to do. Listen, this is what I want to do. When somebody says that to you, you don’t look at them and say, “That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard!” (*Laughter*) You avoid that because you want to. You want to say, “So do you have the mind of the infallible God that can interpret this providential act to me in such a way that it is without error?” Because that is a wonderful trick. (*Laughter*) You don’t say that.

You look at them and you say this.

**Transcriber’s Note:** A gesture.

**Jeff:** Now what *do* you do? Because we know that God is a providential God. We know that He’s sovereign. I did this this morning because that was sovereignly decreed that I would do that. “*The lot is cast into the lap, but it’s every decision is from the hand of the LORD.*” Proverbs 16:33. “*The heart of the king is in the hand of the LORD; He directs it like a watercourse.*” Proverbs 21:1. All of these things. We should not doubt that our God is an absolutely sovereign God.

So how do we view providential happenings in life like that one that I mentioned, the sickness? Well, we make use of those providential happenings. In other words, here’s what I say to myself. I don’t know why God has put me in the position that I’m in. I can’t answer that question with infallibility, I can’t. But I can make use of it.

In other words I can say that maybe I need to confess sin. Maybe I need to search myself and ask myself what is going on in my life that I have not stopped to think about and so confess?

You know, maybe it’s not that at all. You know, maybe it’s some other reason. But what it does do is give me the opportunity to stop and slow down and reflect before God and ask myself some hard questions. And so I think that we use providential happenings in our lives. We don’t interpret them. So I came out of that still not being able to interpret why it was that God did that. But I made use of it. And I think that’s the key to the thing. Dick, go ahead.

**Dick:** Thanks, buddy. I almost forgot the thought.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Dick:** This almost sounds like Job’s friends.

**Jeff:** Yes.

## *“The Proof of Sonship”*

**Dick:** They all had the right answers. But right in the Bible, it supports you and you support it.

**Jeff:** Well, I’m always happy to be right with the Scriptures. *(Laughter)* All right.

**Sig:** Jim’s next.

**Jim:** This is my question. How would this be perceived either in terms of discipline or consequences or punishment?

**Jeff:** Yes. I think that you can talk about consequences when you’ve committed a sin in your life. So what if, in the providential happenings of life, you commit sin? Let’s talk David, right? So David commits sin. And his baby dies. The sword doesn’t depart from his house. Now we can talk about consequences.

Now I say that it’s in that situation where the clear revealed word of God was transgressed that we can then talk about consequences in life. For instance, there may be things that happen in my life as a result of that sickness. But I can’t really talk about that, for instance, as consequences unless I talk about biological ones.

Let’s say, for instance, that the sinus infection damaged something inside of me, and because of that I talk about the consequence of that. I live with that daily, that sort of thing. But in terms of talking about moral consequences, I’m not able to do that with the sinus infection because I’m not able to identify with the transgression that brought that upon me, if indeed there was a transgression that brought that upon me. Does that make sense?

**Jim:** Yes. When somebody does something where he’s brought up and arrested and is in jail.

**Jeff:** Yes, sure. That’s a transgression of God’s revealed will. And the consequence is —

**Jim:** And for a believer would there be punishment in that, or is that just discipline?

**Jeff:** Well, I think that for instance what you find in the life of David is that God interprets the providential things that are going to happen to David in light of the sin. So He says that the consequence is that “the sword is never going to depart from your house.” So when we read about the providential happenings that happen to him with his son and with his daughter being raped, and so on and so forth, we say, “This is the sword never departing from his house.”

But the problem is when I say, “Ah, the sword has never departed from my house,” right? Because the Lord has not said this to me, right? And so I have to be careful with that sort of one-to-one.

**Ted:** You guys can correct me. But Bruce would say that the will of God is not always especially known until after the event. And I think about the consequences of sin and weight. This morning I went on my iPhone and I looked at news. That took away from the time that I had for a quiet time this morning. There was a consequence to that. And it’s not bad to look at news. But it was a weight that I needed to put away because it cut down my time with God. As a result my quiet time was cut short this morning.

**Jeff:** Yes. John?

**John:** Regarding the discipline you were talking about here, I kind of make a connection here to Jesus making the claim that He is the true vine. And in John 15, and I

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think it's verse 5; it's hard to read, He says that there will be some pruning, and it will lead to even more pruning that comes about, so that we will be even more fruitful.

**Jeff:** Yes, that's right.

**John:** So rather than looking at this discipline as a result of some horrible sin that I've done, He's looking at it to make us more fruitful. And this connects to sanctification.

**Jeff:** Yes. I'm just going to affirm it. Do we have somebody else? Mike, did you have something?

**Brian:** I had a follow-up on this.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Brian:** I don't disagree with Deuteronomy 29:29. However, as fathers we discipline our children. We tell our children, "You're being disciplined. Here's why." My sense is that God would allow us to know what's discipline or how discipline is. So when David was disciplined he knew it was discipline. I know that sometimes we can't, because look how long it was for Job before he realized that was discipline. You know, when the earth opens up and God smites people, that's fairly transparent. So I guess that's what I'm trying to figure out. I'm not trying to get into God's non-revealed will. But how do you know? Yes, this is a discipline and I need to change my ways. I guess that's the practical sense I'm trying to figure out.

**Jeff:** Yes. But Brian, I want you to think about this. If your kid breaks something in your house because he threw a ball in your house, and the rule was no balls in the house, you sit him down and you say, "Here is what's happening. Here's the rule, here's the transgression and here's the punishment, so that you can be corrected," right?

But let's say that you and your wife are talking. And you say to yourself, and you guys talk and you say, "With the one child there's a responsibility issue there that we can't quite put our fingers on," right? So you go and buy a Baron Stain Bear book on responsibility. And you say, "Come on, let me read this story to you," right? He doesn't know what's happening, right? That's the secret will of a parent at work, *(laughter)*, where you are trying to shape or form without him realizing that you're trying to shape or form him. And I think that in some ways that's the way we need to think about the discipline that happens to us that's not necessarily a direct result of a transgression that we can trace back to where I transgressed the will of God here. Here's the consequence. This is God disciplining me. Do you know what I mean? There are things that happen in daily life where we just have to say that God is active and involved. But I don't know why He's active and involved in my life at this point, right? And that's the mystery there that I just think that we can't broach. Yes, Mike?

**Mike:** Just a thought for a little bit of balance in all of this is that it's not always about us. When we look at 1 Peter, for instance, he's talking there about people who are going through suffering and difficulty. And he's saying, "live your lives right so that everybody around you will look and say, 'What's the reason for the hope that you have?'"

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Mike:** And so we know it's not about us; it's about the glory of Christ.

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**Jeff:** And that’s a great one, Mike. Actually, that’s a terrific reminder, because you look in John 9. The disciples say this about the blind man. “Who sinned, his parents or him?”

And Jesus says, “No, neither one of them. This is for the glory of God,” right? And so we could look at a situation in life and say this.

I’ve probably told you guys this before. But my son is in a wheelchair. You knew this. But we were in McDonald’s one day when he was really young. And this guy stopped us and said, “Hey, can I pray for you guys?”

“Sure, sure! Pray for us.” And the next thing, lo and behold, he’s praying for my sin. You know what I’m saying? And my faith, so that either my son can walk because of my sin being relieved, or that I would have more faith. And from that point on, when somebody asked me, “Can I pray for your son?”, I would say, “You can pray for us in your private time any time you want. We covet your prayers.” Then we would walk on by. *(Laughter)* You know what I’m saying?

But you’re absolutely right. The things that we bear are for the glory of God. We can rest assured in that. That’s a great reminder, Mike.

**Matt:** And then the 1 Peter passage, that our faith must be tested in order to be proved genuine. How we respond to a sinus infection is an indication of this. It proves that you are a son and not a rebel.

**Jeff:** Excellent, excellent. Yes?

**Bill:** You want to hear from me, right? *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** You know, I thought I had massaged you and massaged you right from the beginning. But I knew it, I knew it. *(Laughter)*

**Bill:** I want to give you a birthday present. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Go ahead.

**Bill:** There’s a difference between punishment and discipline. Punishment looks back at the act.

**Jeff:** Sure.

**Bill:** And applies punishment. Discipline looks at the future and what God wants us to be.

**Jeff:** And which are you giving me? *(Laughter)*

**Bill:** Well, your turn will come. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Well, let me. Oh, go ahead. I thought you were done.

**Bill:** It’s hard to tell the difference in our earthly fathers, because we knew we could push their buttons and stand on our last nerve. And what they gave us was hard to tell if it was punishment or discipline. With God it’s not that way.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Bill:** God always punishes nonbelievers. He only disciplines believers. There’s a reason. And discipline is not self-discipline. People come up with this passage and think it’s self-discipline. It’s not.

**Jeff:** No, right. Mm-hmm.

**Bill:** And if a father doesn’t discipline his son, he’s an illegitimate son. If God doesn’t discipline us, we’re illegitimate.

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**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Bill:** We’re not His sons.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Bill:** I’ve been a Christian since ’66. I don’t know; that might have been before you were born. But I’ve found that He disciplines me with either a light in the eye or a bit in the mouth. But He’s constantly disciplining me, mostly with a bit in the mouth. But He’s faithful to do that to a believer.

**Jeff:** That’s right. Dick, would you put a bit in his mouth for a minute? (*Laughter*) No, that’s all good stuff. Yes?

**Jim:** You know, it’s just thinking back to you reap what you sow. It means to me, even for believers, if I would be looking back, what did I sow?

**Jeff:** Yes. Well, let me give you this last point fairly quickly. And somebody has already said it. *If there’s no discipline, there’s no parental love*, even though it’s sometimes difficult, like Bill mentioned, to sort of parse it out when you think about it in terms of our earthly fathers. But if there is no discipline, there’s illegitimacy. And though our earthly fathers were imperfect, how much more is our heavenly Father perfect.

Now there are three things that I want to walk through with you just really quickly. First of all, *discipline is for our good*. And this is attitudinal. I mean, I think it goes back to what Bill was talking about. We have to have an attitude here that this is for our good. We need it.

And secondly, *discipline is for our training*. We know that’s for our good. Think about it like soreness when you work out. We’ll watch those guys work out tomorrow at 7:00 in the morning as we eat doughnuts—Jeff, Mike, those kids. That soreness is good for us, right? There’s a bad soreness, a soreness that we experience if we’ve not worked out for a long time, and a good soreness, a soreness that we realize is happening because we’ve been working out.

And you know, when I think about it I think about Romans 5:3. I’m just going to put these up here. “*Tribulation leads to perseverance, perseverance to proven character, and proven character hope.*” That’s a great paradigm for thinking about some of what we’re talking about here.

And then *discipline is for fructifying*. It’s for fruit-bearing, right? It’s for the fruit of righteousness that will be born in our lives, which is what he says in verse 11. And that takes us back to thinking about it. I mean, when you think about it, it’s what he said in chapter 10, and it’s what he was driving at in chapter 11. And it’s what he returns to in chapter 12. It’s not shrinking back so that we can live by faith and receive this righteousness. And here are these people that lived by faith and had this righteousness. And here is the discipline of God that we might have righteousness. So it ties back to the righteousness. And that fructifying is that righteousness of Christ teased out of us, sort of like what Matt was saying. How you respond reflects your sonship. How you respond reflects that righteousness that’s being teased out of you. So that’s where I’ll end right now. And why don’t we pray together? Don, go ahead.

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**Don Maurer:** I really love how the author of Hebrews says that, because he doesn't say, “Now come on, just suck it up. Bear it.” He says, “I know that for the moment all discipline seems painful.”

**Jeff:** Yes, that's right.

**Don:** “*But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*” That's such a comfort and an encouragement, as he does throughout this whole epistle.

**Jeff:** Yes. Reality, right? He really speaks to us. You know, to the people who are about ready to desert, he's saying to them, “You know, I'm not denying that what you're experiencing right now is hard. It is hard.” Yes.

Well, why don't we pray? Father, thank You for this day, for the time. And Lord, thank You for Your word. Most of all, thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ whose Word it is. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit who brings it to bear upon us. Lord, continue to do that throughout the rest of the day. And Lord, we pray that as You do, that You would change, shape us and conform us to His image, for we pray in Christ's name. amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)