

Title: Son-colored glasses  
Text: Hebrews 12.3-6  
Theme: Discipline as a means of discipleship  
Series: Hebrews #48  
Prop Stmtnt Becoming like Christ means to endure by faith like Christ

Proverbs 13.4 says, “The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.”

This truism contrasts the character of the sluggard with the character of the diligent (fool vs. wise). Both of them have desires, but the sluggard does not do much, if anything about it, while the diligent stays the course. For example, let’s say that you have a child who says, “I wish that I could play the piano.” But, try getting them to practice! So, while they desire to be a good pianist, they desire comfort and convenience even more. Take the family that is always behind in their finances. They say, “I wish that we did not have to live under this constant pressure all of the time.” But, try getting them to stop eating out so much, or using those credit cards for impulsive purchases, or cut non-essentials like cell-phones, cable TV, etc. and what happens? You find out how serious a person is when the desire for relief is pitted against the desire for convenience. You see, behind the sluggard is the attitude of entitlement. I am entitled to the reward without the prerequisite of hard work. I am entitled to the benefits without the long diligence necessary to get there. If you want a good marriage, you have to do more than want it, you have to be diligent at pursuing it.

Life is daily. The journey of faith is a long obedience in the same direction. We forget that. We are impatient people. We love to be in command of our world and get everything that we want – right now! Direct TV says, “Don’t just watch TV, Direct TV.” With hundreds of choices, you can have what you want – now. With microwaves you can get dinner – now. With cell phones you can contact whoever you want – now. With the internet you can get information – now. We have trained ourselves to be impatient, and impetuous people believing that we are entitled to our desires now. If we don’t get what it, then we want a pill. Parenting is not in a pill.

My point is this. When you become a follower of Christ, you start on a long journey. Spiritual growth is a long, faith-driven obedience in the same direction. There are no short-cuts. The means that God has ordained for your growth is pressure. Sometimes that pressure comes in the form of trials, illness, persecution, or larger circumstances like earthquakes and tsunamis. There is no getting around the pressure. The question that remains to be answered is, will you benefit from it, or will you waste it. Benefiting from it or wasting it will be determined by which lens you chose through which to view it.

Now, I will demonstrate this later on from the text, but I will go ahead and simply tell you the big idea. God has provided you with a pair of Son-colored lenses for you to view life through. When you live as a son of the Father, then you learn that everything that happens is not to you, but for you. When you forget that, you think that things are happening to you and the result is self-pity. When you remember that your Father is

doing things for you, the result is joy, even in the midst of pressure.

Now, in a moment, we are going to stand and read this text. But, before we dig into it, I want you to hear the heart of this. These words are very pastoral. They are loving, kind, yet truthful. There is an arm around the shoulder and a kick in the pants all at the same time. In fact, we should note that this entire book has that tone.

Read Text:

Verse 3 continues the calling from verse 2 to look to Jesus by challenging us to “consider him.” This text grabs us by the lapels looks us in the eye and says...

1. **What are you thinking about?** (3)

*“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”*

A. **Are you thinking about Christ?** – consider him

How would this be helpful to the original readers? Like a person who was diagnosed with cancer for the second time after surviving a grueling ordeal a few years ago, these believers were facing a second round of persecution and were not sure that they were up for it. After all, they had already paid their dues. They had already been through this and had done their time, and learned their lessons. Couldn't someone else get the “joy” of persecution? Why us, again? And that is exactly the point. When we are under pressure our default setting is to naturally think about ourselves and how unfair this is to us, especially if we have been through this before. The opening word has the idea of “by all means consider him.” This is SO very, very important. We have to recognize that we tend to start by thinking about ourselves, instead of starting with Christ. If we start crooked we aren't going to end straight. So, are you thinking about Christ or are you stuck in self-pity thinking about how unfair this is to you? Thinking about Christ means to pick up the Son-colored lens of truth and look at your life, world and experiences through it. We not only have to consider Christ, that is think about Christ, but...

B. **Are you thinking rightly about Christ?** – *consider him who endured*

We get weary when we are day in and day out dealing with the same unresolved situation. It is so easy to make the resolving of the situation the goal instead of making pleasing God the goal. We want the problem to just go away, fix itself, and to leave us alone. But, what are we to think? We are to consider Christ who endured a long and persistent hostility against himself. We are to think about the implications of this. Before we learn our lesson from it, we have to think about what this means. *“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself.”* What does that mean?

Think of this. If you stand up for what is right, some people may support you, but some will oppose you and they will be vicious and hostile about it. If they are reacting in hatred

to the truth it is because of their latent hostility toward God. You just happen to be the messenger or the mailman. There have been things that I have said through the years that have been the occasion for some people to become very upset and leave the church. How am I supposed to look at that? Did, what I said accurately reflect the text? If what I said is faithful to God's Word, then I know that these people are not ultimately upset with me, but with God. I find a measure of comfort in that. Christ, however was the object of their fury. He was and is the Word! He endured from sinners, hostility against himself. This refers to how his entire life was lived in the face of misunderstanding, rejection and threats that, in the end, were more than words, but were actions. Remember that in his birth he was hunted in order to be killed. The rejection of Christ was the "in your face" experience on the part of the Creator of the wholesale rebellion of his creation. He came to his own and they not only did not receive him, they hated him. The endurance of Christ was an endurance through hostility.

### C. **Are you believing what you ought to be thinking?**

*"so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted"*

This is a warning. If you do not think consistently and correctly about Christ you will grow weary or fainthearted. Both of these words (weary and fainthearted) were used to describe runners who collapsed from exhaustion after they crossed the finished line. You see the point? In order to keep from collapsing, we must keep on considering Christ. Now, I recognize that we do not do that all of the time. That is why we need others to speak into our lives and us to them in order to keep us considering and focused. How can you do that? Seriously, practice reading His Word with someone. Text it, email it, or speak it. In the next verse, the author of Hebrews challenges them a bit more.

#### 2. **What are you whining about?** (4)

*"In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."*

You've heard the expression, "Cheer up, things could be worse", so I cheered up and sure enough – things got worse. This is sort of like that. (not really)

The shedding of blood is a phrase that refers to dying. In this setting it would be a reference to martyrdom. Back in 10.32-34, we learn that these people had been through round 1 of persecution and had responded rather well. They do not seem to be holding up as well to the persecution that they are now facing. Not that the AH had an inside track on the future, but it sounds as if he is preparing them for a ramping up of the intensity of persecution against them. "You have NOT YET resisted to the point of shedding your blood." Is martyrdom coming? I think for some of them it probably did.

Listen, you may have it tough. But, if all that you are doing is looking at your circumstances through the lens of entitlement or self-pity, then you will never get it. When you look at the lives of some of the people mentioned at the end of the previous

chapter and see how they were treated then in comparison, your situation is not as bad. Some of them died. Consider Bonhoeffer, Brainerd, Savonarola, Wycliffe and Huss. Read about Bunyan (John), Polycarp Latimer and Ridley. This is a great question to ask ourselves: “What are you whining about?”

### 3. What have you forgotten? (5-6)

Verse 5 begins as a question that is really a statement that is presented in love. This helps answer the second question “What are you whining about?” because it is basically asking, “what did you expect?” What did God say about your life now? Here he lays out 4 things that we tend to forget when the pressure comes to bear. Notice how these four sub-points flow together.

#### A. **You forgot the Word of God.**

“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?” What exhortation? The author of Hebrews expects his readers to know their Bibles doesn’t he? Listen, God does not pull fast ones on you. He always tells us up front what to expect. The problem is that we are not always listening. Therefore when you are not being reminded of what God has said about you, you are going to forget your true identity.

#### B. **You forgot who you were.**

What is the author of Hebrews pointing out? He is saying that you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as **sons**. Now, I am making a big deal about this, because this is critical to your understanding of the providences of God in your life. The text here places a great deal of stress upon the word, “sons”. Whether you are male or female, if you are a genuine follower of Christ, you enjoy the status, the privilege, the promise of a future inheritance and the pressure that comes with being a son.

Now, in the past couple of sermons, I have taken you back to Hebrews 2 because I am convinced that the application in this passage is based in part on the theology of that chapter. The first part of this book focuses upon the superiority of Christ. In chapter 2 we see that superiority played out in how he was an incredible Son. He was the Son who showed us what sons (and daughters) are to be like. As the Son, he became one of us, so that he might be able to live in our place and then die in our place by bearing upon himself our sins.

The life of Christ can be looked at through two different but related lenses: 1) Christ, our substitute. Christ did for us what we could not do for ourselves. 2) Christ, our example, or pattern. We see in him not only an ethical example of how we are to live, but we see in his life a pattern for us as well.

God oversaw the maturing process of his son and brought that process to completion. Chapter 5.8 says, “*Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*” The process of maturity was marked by the discipline of suffering. The result

of that was a perfect Savior. So, here is the pattern. Son + Suffering = Endurance. Now, the author of Hebrews is appealing to Christ as the example for us. If you are a son, then God is going to bring discipline (suffering, pressure) into your life in order to produce endurance, that is perseverance.

The rest of verse 5 and verse 6 is a quotation from Proverbs 3.11-12. Here I think that it is not only the truths themselves, but the context of these truths that is so fitting and important for us. Think with me. Who is the main writer of Proverbs? Most of the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon to his son who was going to be king. The book is a collection of the words of a sage, a wise and seasoned man who is attempting to pass this on to this young boy. Now, this boy is a child of the king. He has privilege and power. He can use that privilege and power for self-interest and bring shame and reproach upon the kingdom or he can use that privilege and power for the good of the people and bring joy to the kingdom. The difference between the two different types of kings is not only enormous, but the difference hinges upon whether or not the boy is humble enough to listen to the wisdom of this sage. The sage is attempting to beat the foolish arrogance out of this boy so he doesn't destroy the kingdom. When your daddy is king, that is pretty heady stuff and it is easy to think that because your daddy is king that you can do whatever you want. Fact is, there are more eyes on you, more responsibility on you, more pressure on you, and more expectations on you.

When you have power and position and God puts pressure on you, it is really easy to become embittered by your self-pity. So, the old sage writes, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." A wise son will humbly accept the pressure and bow to the purposes of God in it. This is the wisdom that God gave to help kings represent him in their rule. This is the wisdom that His Son, the King followed in his days on this earth as he experienced obedience in all sorts of difficult and humbling situations. Since the Son of God (who was already ethically perfect) was matured through suffering, how much more do we need to be pruned and matured and disciplined? If Christ learned obedience, learned perseverance and endured from sinners against himself, how much more will we?

Now, beloved, that is not an easy thing to think. There are times when the Bible uses the love that a father has for his child to point out the love that God has for us. But, in the ultimate analysis, we do not define God's love for us based on the way that we love our children, but we measure and define God's love for us based on how He loves His Son. If (or since) a loving God used suffering as the means of teaching His Son endurance, then we can see that behind the clouds of providence is the warmth of God's love that is teaching us endurance as well. He is teaching us even through suffering the greatest thing that we can ever know and that He is far and above beyond all other loves and worthy of being trusted – no matter what.

Deut. 8.5

1 Corinthians 11.32

So, here is what this text is calling us to do. Pick up the lens of Son and look at your life through it. The suffering that you experience is BECAUSE you are a son. God disciplines his sons. God puts us under pressure in order to smack the offensive arrogance out of our lives that makes us think that we are better than others. That is revealed even in how we react to suffering. We tend to think that what God is doing to us, is no way to treat a child. Consider him! Consider Christ, what did God do? God crushed him. Who do you think you are?!

### **C. You forgot to take seriously the discipline of the Lord.**

Here is the warning. Do not take this lightly. God is doing specific surgery in your soul. The discipline is for maturity and the reproof is for correction. The Father taught, disciplined, matured His Son. Not because Christ was in anyway sinful. He was perfectly righteous. We, on the other hand, not only need discipline to mature us and to help us experience faith-driven obedience, but we are sinners and we need to be reproved.

Being reproved is not fun, but only a fool does not want to be corrected. Only a fool does not want to know of his failures. If you are a true son, then your life will be characterized (as Proverbs puts it) by the way of wisdom, and not the way of the fool.

If you want to a good soldier, you have to go through boot camp. You have to know what it is like to make decisions under fire, to obey orders instantly in the chaos of war, to look out for fellow soldiers. There are a lot of things that take place in training that are designed to prepare you for that. God uses the boot camp of life to train you to be a soldier in the army of Christ. He who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ. In the long runs and the demands of faith, it is so easy to question him. But when you remember that you are a son, and that God is your Father, and you realize that because of the cross He is good, then you can take this discipline seriously. It is not a mistake.

### **D. You forgot God's motive. (6)**

*“The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

God wants more out of your life than you do. He wants to make you like Christ. Life is more serious.