

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
June 17, 2018

Father's Discipline
Hebrews 12:4-9

12:4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

12:5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

12:6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

12:7 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?

12:8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

12:9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

1. God Is the Father

The "Founding Fathers" of the United States" were who signed on the Declaration of independence and the Constitution. They were many. If we have to choose one, I'll choose George Washington. Johann Sebastian Bach was the "Father of music," and Galileo Galilei was the "Father of Modern Science." These people built the foundation for the future government, music, and science. They acted as "fathers" in each field.

The Bible teaches, "God is the Father." Since He created

everything, He is the “Father of fathers” and the “Father of All.” However, the Bible calls Him “the Father” not because He is “father-like” Person, but He is literally the “Father” Who has the Son, Jesus Christ. God is the Father of Jesus Christ. Therefore we can call Him the “Father” when we believed in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Strictly Speaking, God is the “Father” only of Jesus Christ, since God has only one Son. But, God gave the power to become children of God to those who believed His Son. It is as we read in John 1:12; “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Through His Son the “Father of Jesus Christ” became the “Father” of the believers in Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus said, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” in John 20:17. Jesus clearly told that God became the “Father” of believers by calling God “YOUR God.”

The name, the “Father of Jesus Christ” is glorious title for Him. God receives great glory by Jesus Christ. We are able to understand God adore Him and trust in Him knowing He is the “Father” of Jesus Christ Who is righteous, holy, and full of love and power. But, I often asked myself, “Is it suitable for God to be called the “Father” of us? Does the glory God hurt by us when we call Him ‘our Father?’” Because we are sinners and the Holy God should not be called as the Father of sinners.

For example, the parents of the criminals are ashamed by their sons and daughters. If a person commits a crime, the crime will not end up for the punishment for the person. It will put the parent’s name shame, cause pains, and bring a big loss to the parents. Like that our sins put the holy name of God shame and cause His heart distress. God should

keep His glory as the Father of the Holy Son, He does not need to become the Father of us, sinners.

But, God purposely made sinners His children and became their Father. More over He allowed us to call Him “Our Father.” All of us know the famous story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. The son wasted his father’s money and dishonored his father. He came back to the father with no possessions but just worn-out clothes. However, the father hugged him and received him into the house. The father recovered all the privilege of his son. Like the father of prodigal son, God forgave those who came back to Him through Jesus Christ and accepted them as sons and daughters and become their Father willingly.

1 John 3:1 says, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.” It’s not ordinary that we are able to call God “Father.” It’s a special privilege, and God gave us the privilege by handed His beloved Son to the death on the cross. Every time we pray “Our Father” and sing “God the Father,” please don’t say it only lips, but do them remembering the great love of God the Father.

Jewish people apply “Adonai” (in English, “my Lord”) to “YHWH,” the most holy name of God. “I’ve heard the Jewish people have a short silent time after they pronounced the name. It’s to meditate God Who called Himself by the name, and to think of His love to His people. I’d like to see the same practice among us. Let us remember what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God” every time we call Him “Our Father,”

2. Father's Discipline

“The Father of Jesus Christ became the Father of those who believed in Jesus Christ. The believers are loved as His children by God the Father.” This is what we firmly believe. But don’t misunderstand that God always do as our wish because He loves us. God promises the believers His blessings, but it doesn’t mean that we never lose our jobs, become ill, or suffer from the relationship with others. Even the believers, may come up unexpected difficulties from unexpected incidents. They may get hurt or suffer a loss. And, they may suffer from consequence of sin that is not yet cleaned.

During the early church at the time of persecution, the believers’ properties were taken away, expelled from town, imprisoned, or deprived of life. So, the believers of the early church had prepared to do against trial. However, when a trial came, even a believer could be confused, feared, discouraged, and complained. Then the numerous verses of the Bible encourages believers who are in trials.

Jesus encouraged His disciples, saying, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28) He also encouraged Paul when Paul started to preach in Corinth. Jesus said to Paul, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” (Acts 18:9-10)

Paul wrote to the faithful people in Corinth, saying, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be

able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) Yes, there is “the way of escape” or “exit” in any trials. Any trials are not like a cave which has no exit. Trial is like a tunnel, and there is always an exit. God never lock us in the trials. God says, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” (Psalm 50:15) Even you are in trials you can call God’s help. You should call His help because of the trials. God has already prepared glorious place behind the trials.

When I had a trip to Nagasaki in 2009, I visited Dr. Takashi Nagai’s memorial hall. There were his artworks. One of them says, “Tail is also a part of role” This expresses that even a smallest one has the important role. The other says, “Ground on the bottom” This means that there is something always supports ourselves no matter how we are depressed. A person said, “I was thrown into suffering. It seemed like a bottomless swamp. But when I went to the very bottom of it, there seemed huge and hard hits bottom. It was God. God has been supporting me on the bottom.” Let us keep the words, “There is God’s supporting us on the bottom.” in our minds. The Bible says, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair.” (2 Corinthians 4:8) Even if every direction were closed, always open in heaven. And Jesus is always waiting and helping for us whenever we call out to Him.

3. Father’s Love

In today’s verse, there are powerful encouraging words for the people in trials. They were verse 5 and 6, “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.” These are quotations from Proverbs 3:11-12. These words in the Proverbs were written as a father’s words of discipline to his son; however, the author of the Hebrews used them as the words from God to His children.

We sometimes think, “I have to endure this discipline because God doesn’t love me” But, is it true that those who are loved by God never meet any trials and those who meet trials are not loved by God? No, it doesn’t. God pours His love on those who are straggling with trials. If we are committing sins and do not repent them, and keep doing wrong things, and still things go according our wrong intentions, we may be ignored by God. We see the repeated words that say, “God gave us up” in n Romans 1:24. 26, 28: “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity....” “God gave them up to dishonorable passions.....” “God gave them up to a debased mind.....” This is the most awful punishment from God. Receiving God’s discipline is far better than being under the punishment that God gives us up in our sinful hearts and wrong doings.

“The Lord disciplines the one he loves.” This is true word. Both of father’s love and mother’s love are equally big and deep. However, if I point out the different, it would be like this. Mother’s love is easing the current pain and suffering of her child. On the other hand, father’s love is making his child go through the pain and suffering for his/her future. It is easy to feel mother’s love immediately; but, it takes time to understand father’s love. However, in any circumstances, God loves us and show us His love by saying “My son.” We shall look at the love of God. Even in the trials, and along with the trials, let us trust in the God of love and walk by faith.

(Prayer)

God of the Father of Lord Jesus Christ, You made those who believed in Him Your children, and You became “Our Father.” We sincerely appreciate Your great love. Help us remember Your love by saying “My Son” on the day of celebration or the night of trials. You are our Father and we are Your children. This is not just legal parent-child relation. We want to seek the loving relationship which Lord Jesus had with You. Lead us such deep relationship. In the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.