

HEBREW WISDOMS



Jesus preaching the "Sermon On The Mount"

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...Who Would Have Thought...

A STUDY IN PRACTICAL CHRISTOLOGY FOR THE
21ST CENTURY

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The Disciplined Achiever: Doing The Impossible Through God

They said it could not be done, but there they were, sitting in the middle of the accomplished fact: man had carved a canal all the way from the Caribbean Sea, clean across the Panama Isthmus to the Pacific Ocean. It was hard, but there they were there and it had worked! They had done it. They had dug a canal, fought off the hordes of disease carrying mosquitoes, endured the daily deaths of their friends and colleagues due to falling rock, snake bites, and the poisonous food rations. They did it.

They said it could not be done, but despite all of the 'wisdom' of their critiques, they had done it. It was really a marvel of the engineering world but it was the dogged persistence and constant discipline of the work crews, both native and imported that made the dream a reality. Oh how their critics were dumfounded at the Gatun lakes as they filled with water.

But then, if you stop and look at it, man has always confounded the wisdom of the critiques. Look at the great walls of China, great walls, not just one of them, but over 400 of them, -all designed to do one specific thing, slow down invading armies. They took years to build, countless workmen, unflinching faith, and engineering beyond belief. And they did slow down invading armies, time and time again.

Every example started with one man saying, "I think that we can do it. It is worth a try." It is a dream made real, a hope made possible, all by the power of a disciplined life. In point of fact, nothing has every come into being without someone saying, we can and we must.

No less remarkable than the feats of engineering that we have seen done by men in this world, are the great feats of faith that have been accomplished by the small men who followed God. Men like Gideon, a man who was so afraid of his world, that he was in a hidden place threshing the wheat so that he would not be caught by his Midianite overlords. Who would have thought that He would have become a great general?

Who would have selected David to be a great king. He did not look like a king, but he had the heart of a king, and God saw his heart. Who would have thought of Jeremiah, a man who was so sensitive that he wept like a broken child, but Jeremiah stood firm and wrote one of the most challenging of all of the prophecies. Who would have selected the feeble mouthed, clumsy, perpetrator of manslaughter, Moses, to lead the greatest exodus of all time? Who would have chosen, such losers. Who would have chosen this group to be a missionary team to this place? God did and God still does !! So we ask ourselves the question, "What do we need to do, to build the church that God has asked to do here in this place?"

Hebrews 12:1 - 2

We have our
answer here ...

12:1 **Therefore**, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,** 2 **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Before we go one any farther, we must
understand this point of summary...**

"... Fixing Your Eyes On Jesus ..."

1. Christianity is based around the centrality of Jesus to all thinking and all actions.
2. We are commanded to do more than just casually honour Him when we meet together and then to get on with the more important things of Christianity, like what we are to do. This is a common practice where the majority of our preaching is on the practical day to day living of our Christianity. It leaves behind the perceived message which says that he practical supersedes the Divine. All tired and exhausted forms of denominationalism reach this point at one time or another. We must avoid it !!!
3. The very first thing that we are to do is to fix our eyes on Jesus !!!
4. That means that He becomes central to everything. He is not a Catholic aside, or a Protestant after-thought. He is Christianity!!
5. The Christology of Hebrews is built on our doing this one thing before we do anything else.
6. We are not to make Jesus a casual picture!
7. We are not to make Jesus an impotent picture!
8. We are not to make Jesus a capricious and callous "mere god" !
9. And **we are not to sacrifice Jesus on the altar of legal bound living**.
10. **Running the race that is set before us, means to live wholeheartedly for Jesus and with Jesus, keeping Jesus in all our thoughts. There is no Christianity until we restore Jesus to centre.**

Hebrews 12:3-8

3 For **consider Him** who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,...

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
Nor faint when you are reproved by Him;
6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,
And He scourges every son whom He receives. "

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

"...So that you may not grow weary and loose heart..."

1. The discipline of the Lord, is first and foremost, here, concerned with our rigidly keeping our eye on Jesus. It is not a general discussion on the why's and wherefore's of discipline.
2. In point of fact, if all we every get people to do is to watch Jesus intently and to pattern their lives around Him, we will be achieving the greatest amount of discipline possible.
3. **We have not had to resist to the point where our lives are in danger, but He did, and He did it for us.**
4. Discipline here is not just the corrective moments, but it is also the training moments where we go through the tough regimes by which we gather strength and focus constantly, it is study and it is hard sermons that make you think and work to understand. Discipline is not just the pabulum that we feed to babies, but it is the essentials that make the faith real and not just a blind leap off into the ether.
5. The voice of this discipline comes first from the word of God. It can be brought to our attention by a person or by a sermon, but in the end, there is always a voice of authority by which we are commanded to learn, listen and live. There is no way that a disciplined Christianity can exist without the voice of this discipline guiding us every closer to the person that God wants us to be, and to the picture of Jesus that God wants us to venerate in every part of our lives and days. If we struggle with this, then it is something that we need to take up with God, for it is His will that we all be a disciplined people.

Hebrews 12:9 - 13

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.** 11 **All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.** 12 **Therefore, you are to strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,** 13 **and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.**

1. The simple truth is that we already understand the need and the value of discipline. It is part of the way mankind grows up. The demise of discipline is a cruel fact of our modern age, however.
2. Three quotes of significance:
 - ➔ **"What lies in our power to do, lies in our power not do." Aristotle**
 - ➔ **"The first and the best victory is to conquer self." Plato**
 - Point:** The world has long recognized these truths to be so. A more modern voice has said, and rightly so...
 - ➔ **"Unless you change how you are, you will always have what you've got and be what you are now." Jim Rohn**

...this is nothing more than simple self-discipline, restrictive and educational, but discipline and surrender to Jesus, never-the-less. Otherwise, if one can not control self, then it is self who is at fault and it is self who is held responsible, for self has then superseded Jesus and all subsequent actions are self authorized and internally rebellious towards Jesus from a fundamental level.
3. The reason behind discipline is, on the norm, one to assist and not one to merely abuse. It helps us be Jesus focused as we should.
4. Discipline is not fun, but it has a very good side.
5. We are to be a people that 'discipline' one another. To assist the weak, to marshal the strong and to find the path for everyone that is righteous oriented.
6. It is for a good purpose.
7. Remember, the book of Proverbs says that iron is to sharpen iron. This is just a rephrasing of that truth.

All are 'self-discipline' based

Hebrews 12:14 - 28

14 **Pursue** peace with all men, **and pursue** the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

15 **See to it** that no one comes short of the grace of God; **see to it that** no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

16 **See to it** that there be **no immoral or godless person like Esau**, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

18 For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them. 20 For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." 21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 **and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.**

25 **See to it** that you **do not refuse Him who is speaking.** For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." 27 And this expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 **Therefore**, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, **let us show gratitude**, by which we may **offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe**; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

Remember: "Our God is an awesome God, He reigns with wisdom and power, our God is an Awesome God..."

"Discipline" In The Old Testament: A

"Discipline" In The Old Testament: B

The "Discipline Problem" In The Old Testament

1. Growing up in my faith, one of the difficulties that I faced was why God chose to set down a set of rules governing what to do to a person if they violated His way, and then to watch that 'law' slowly change and get 'disarmed' over time. Why would God be so strict in the beginning, and so lenient latter in the history?
2. An example of what I mean is this change that I saw. In Deuteronomy 21:18-21, parents are required to bring their non-compliant, rebellious children to the elders and then the elders of the community were to see that those children were stoned to death. Now that is very extreme, to say the least.
3. Latter in history, we do not see this law being applied, even though we do not have a repeal of the law that is found in the text itself. Why is this so? What happened to change things so much, from stoning disobedient children to letting them get away with their disobedience?
4. One of the first problems that we face is the moral reprehensibility of the law itself. We pass judgement on God and God's law very easily, doing so from our perspective of 'child'. How could God be so callous and so cruel? Was He callous and cruel, actually? Could / Did He foresee the setting aside of this law in the passing of time?
5. Another problem that we face is that of purpose. What purpose did it achieve in the family unit, in the community at large, and in the nation as a whole to see a child who was 'disobedient' be stoned for his / her acts of parental disregard?
6. In the 10 Commandments, it says to 'honour your father and your mother'. To disregard this command is to disregard the supremacy of God as God and as ultimate law giver. It demeans the very thought of God in the community if one is allowed to 'get away with it'. For God to be God and to set up such a law, it must be understood that He is God and works in a whole different sphere of reference in His spiritual world than we do in our mortal world.
7. The disparity between God and Man is beyond the imagination of all men, really. God is supernal and eternal. We are mortal and rather temporary, -prone to monumental mess ups from time to time. God, on the other hand does not make mistakes. If something is not understood, then do not give a moral judgement where one can not be given due to this disparity of position, knowledge, righteousness and power.
8. It is all a fundamental problem with who is God and who is man, as well as who is Lord, and who is creature?

Question for Sunday Morning Discussion

"No horse gets anywhere until he is harnessed. No stream or gas drives anything until it is confined. No Niagara is ever turned into light and power until it is tunnelled and channelled. No life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated, disciplined."

Harry Emerson Fosdick

1. How does the subject of 'discipline' in Hebrews 12 reflect back on the message of the centrality of Jesus in Christianity? Why would the author of Hebrews put this material into the letter that he wrote? (*aka. -What is the primary purpose of this discipline section?*)
2. How can a local congregation go about helping develop a truly disciplined mindset without becoming dogmatic and legalistic? Can it even be done in the first place, or is this just a 'pipe-dream' of a highly idealistic person?
3. Why is discipline seen primarily as a punitive act? Why is the idea of 'discipline' not seen as a training and development act without any reference to punitive measures today?
4. What is the role of the eldership in the whole matter of discipline today?
5. Where does Matthew 18: 12-20 fit into this whole picture actually? How does Acts 5: 1-11 fit into this whole picture? How does Acts 10: 9ff fit into this whole picture? What is different between the pictures found in Matthew 18, in Acts 5, and in Acts 10?
6. Why did no one go to Annais and Sapphira and talk to them one on one before they went to the whole assembled "church"? What act of 'discipline' here was that which was most instilled in the minds of the congregation?
7. What is your definition of discipline now?

NOTE: A life, or a ministry, where Jesus is minimized in favour of mere obedience and preached as if this obedience is the primary concern of our Christianity, is not focused on the Lord, but on me and what I am doing to save myself: it is not dedicated to the primary things, and it is not disciplined by the reality of the centrality of Jesus Christ. It just is not Christian, it is a legalistic quasi-Christianity.