

Hebrews 12:4-24

Discipline

August 21, 2016

God asks us to be content in all circumstances we find ourselves in our life. God asks us to rejoice always. Then God tells us in our text that He disciplines us so that we will be better prepared to face the future and gain eternal life. He even tells us that the discipline will be painful at times. It is hard to be content and rejoice in the midst of discipline and pain. How can God ask us to do these things?

Someone gave me a book to read about the gangs in Los Angeles. There seems to be a common theme among the gang members. When we look beyond the rough exterior, we see that inside they do not feel good about themselves. The priest that wrote the book told story after story of gang members and gang leaders that broke down crying when they realized that someone accepted them and even loved them. The acceptance and love that they found filled a hole inside of them. When that the priest knew their name this would even lead some to the acceptance that they sought in life. Their positive relationship with the priest would even lead some of them out of the gangs when they realized that the gangs no longer met their need to be accepted. The priest loved them while the gangs only gave them an endless turf war that led to prison and even death.

The movie Pete's Dragon had the same theme. The end of the movie found both Pete and the Dragon surrounded by family. It seems this is a theme in our society. This theme can be found behind the Black Lives Matter movement. This theme can be found behind the Blue and All Lives Matter response. We can endure a lot when we know that we are loved. We can become violent when we don't feel loved. Likewise we can endure a lot of discipline when we know that our family loves us. We may not agree with the discipline, but when we know that we are loved, then many can endure. God's discipline like our family's discipline has a purpose. He is trying to correct our behavior so that our lives and the lives of those around us will be easier to live. In other words "All Lives Matter" to our God. We enter this world selfish and self-centered. When we have selfish people, then we have people that hurt others. The priest in the book had a wonderful ministry among the gangs because he reached out with an accepting attitude and touched their lives. Meanwhile he endured the conflict that surrounded him.

In Romans chapter 5 we are told that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God loves us and He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to live the perfect life for us and then Jesus died as payment for our sins. God's goal was that those who believe in Jesus Christ could one day have eternal life with God. Of course God warns us that narrow is the path that leads to heaven. The path is narrow because only through Jesus Christ can we enter into heaven. Yes, only in Christ are we accepted

and loved by our God for eternity. Of course God still loves us in this life as well, but eternal life is only for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ and the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So why do so many feel hollow inside if God love us. One reason that many feel hollow is that those in this world reject them and put them down. Many in this world feel hollow because they live by the first covenant with God which demands that we live good and even perfect lives. Of course in our sin we cannot meet the demands of God and the world to be perfect or even good at times. Therefore we feel hollow inside because we don't understand that God loves us and gave His Son as a sacrifice for our imperfections.

I don't know anything about the swimmer Ryan Lochte, but he will be remembered not for the gold medal in swimming but the false accusation that he was robbed at gun point in Rio during a drunken spree just before he went home. He might be a good person, but he has severely damaged his reputation. God still loves him and wants to share eternity with Him, if He commits to Jesus Christ through a repentant spirit. God loves us and wants to share eternity with us through our repentant spirit. Neither a gold medal nor a drunken spree define us when we are Christians. Rather they show us the need for the Savior more than our gold or our bad reputation. Amen.