

## Sermon or Lesson: Hebrews 12:12-13 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: It's Time To Toughen Up !

INTRO: Do you ever have times when you feel you can't go on, you're not making any progress, just spinning your wheels and getting nowhere? Perhaps this perplexity of not making progress seems significantly worse when God is disciplining you or when He seems distant when you are going through hardship.

TRANSITION: We all have times when we experience this. So let's look at what God says we should do when we are going through this.

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READ: summarize the previous verses 1-11 in the context of discipline, and then read Hebrews 12:12-13

[Note: Interpret this passage metaphorically - i.e. spiritually speaking rather than physically.]

[Lesson Question: What is this passage telling us to do when God is disciplining you or when He seems distant when you are going through hardship? And what are the implications and applications?]

SECTION POINT: When God is disciplining you or when He seems distant when you are going through hardship, you should spiritually and morally strengthen yourself, comprehensively establishing your life in holiness.

v.12 "**strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees**":

"strengthen" = Strong's #0461 "straighten up"; (*Zodhiates*) "to make straight or upright again; establish".

"feeble arms" - "weakened and drooping hands" (*AMP*), "hanging down" (*KJV*).

- - i.e. "Feeble arms" represents the means or measurement standard by which you do things - your spiritual and moral value systems.

"weak knees" - "weak" = Strong's #3886 "to loosen beside, i.e. relax (paralyzed or enfeebled)" - i.e. wobbly, unsteady, inflexible, trembling, quavering, twitching, faltering.

- - Knees are crucial to standing upright, maintaining your balance, being mobile, and maneuvering.

- - The phrase "strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees" means to spiritually strengthen and fortify how you think and what you do.

- - Therefore, restructure your spiritual and moral value systems to align with God's values, and then excellently stand upright in God's values in every situation you encounter.

- - Do not cave-in, give up, go limp, crumble, sag, wilt, collapse, sink, or lose your fortitude and motivation under the unpleasantness or painfulness of discipline. (v.11)

- - Return to giving your full effort, spiritually re-establish yourself in holiness and right standing before God.
- - By implication, God will not necessarily make your discipline easy or light but it will be enduring, and it will be easier to get through if you toughen up.

v.12 **“therefore”**:

- - Because God uses hardships to discipline you as sons for your good (vv.7,10), this spiritually strengthening and re-establishing yourself in holiness and right standing before God should be your motivated response to His disciplining you.

v.13 **“make level paths for your feet”**:

- “paths” = Strong’s #5163 “(figuratively) a course of conduct”.
- “level” = Strong’s #3717 “straight, level, or direct”.

READ: cf. Proverb 4:23-27

- - The emphasis in both of these passages is to be careful to go in the right direction spiritually and morally - solidly pursuing holiness and righteousness.
- - Note that both marginally participating in evil or marginally pursuing holiness would be taking an un-level and crooked path.
- - Proceed persistently in righteousness through the rough and trying times of discipline.
- - Example: Driving a truck through washboard sand - very bumpy, must go straight, must maintain sufficient forward speed and momentum, and must stay in the tracks or you will get stuck.

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 READ : v.13

[Lesson Question: What will result if you respond appropriately to God's disciplining of you?]

SECTION POINT: Strengthening yourself to appropriately respond to God's disciplining of you will result in successfully being delivered out of wayward enslaving debilitating sinful living, and into healthy righteous living.

v.13 **“so that the lame may not be...”**:

- - Come out of, move out of, or step out of your spiritual or moral lameness.
- - God wants you to spiritually “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10) and not spiritually lame any longer.

v.13 **“not be disabled, but rather healed”**:

- “disabled” = Strong’s #1624 “be turned aside; to deflect, i.e. turn away (literally or figuratively)”; i.e. weakness, incapacitated, crippled, handicapped.

- - “Healed” suggests completion or cured, reconstructed to full healthy functionality, making you into a new creation. (cf. Ephesians 4:21-24)

- - Those who are spiritually or morally weak are not to become or stay spiritually or morally incapacitated or crippled, unable to function properly and unrestricted; i.e. remaining a fully-engulfed slave to sin.
- - We are to accept and implement God's discipline upon you, resulting in becoming spiritually strong and healed.

SYNOPSIS: Strengthen yourself spiritually and morally, proceed through life in a morally upright way, and do not turn aside into evil, so that you will not be spiritually or morally crippled by your enslavement to sin but rather restored to full healthy spiritual functioning.

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BIG IDEA: God wants you to toughen up and be strengthened to successfully endure His discipline through to its completion, being reconstructed out of enslavement to sin and into holiness.

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#### IMPLICATIONS:

- - If you do not toughen up, you likely will not successfully, adequately, or properly complete God's discipline of you. Consequently, you will remain entrapped in your enslavement to your sin(s). (2 Timothy 2:25-26)
  - - The verbs in these two verses, "strengthen" (v.12) and "make" (v.13), are imperatives, not being stated as options.
  - - And another verb that is precursory and unstated here is to 'choose' - 'choose and strengthen', 'choose and make'; i.e. each person must both choose and then act as directed in order to be strengthened through God's discipline.
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#### APPLICATIONS:

Typically, how do you handle when God's discipline is on you?

- - Do you crumble and fall apart?
- - Do you harden and rebel?
- - Do you succumb and fail?
- - Do you wallow in your misery or self-pity?
- - Do you complain and gripe?
- - Do you deny or rationalize away?
- - Do you slide into depression or anger?
- - Do you self-medicate in an attempt to escape?

Wouldn't it be better for you long-term if instead you choose to toughen up?

- - Choose to restructure and strengthen your weak spiritual and moral value systems.
- - Choose to consistently proceed down the path of righteousness without veering off into sin.

- - Choose God's deliverance and freedom from your enslavement to sin.
  - - Maybe it's time to toughen up!
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