

Hebrews 12:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Analysis

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. This verse contrasts human and divine discipline in duration, motivation, and goal. Human fathers disciplined 'for a few days' (limited to childhood) 'after their own pleasure' (kata to dokoun autois, κατὰ τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς, 'according to what seemed good to them')—their best judgment, which was imperfect and sometimes mistaken. God disciplines 'for our profit' (epi to sympheron, ἐπὶ τὸ συμφέρον), meaning our ultimate advantage and benefit.

The purpose clause, 'that we might be partakers of his holiness' (eis to metalabein tēs hagiotētos autou), reveals God's goal in discipline: conforming us to His character. The Greek metalabein (μεταλαβεῖν, 'to partake' or 'share in') indicates participating in God's holy nature. This is the ultimate purpose of divine discipline—not punishment but transformation, producing in us the holiness without which 'no man shall see the Lord' (verse 14).

This is fundamental to Reformed theology: God's discipline serves sanctification, not retribution. Christ bore our punishment; discipline is parental correction for growth, not penal satisfaction for sin. God's perfect wisdom ensures His corrective methods always serve our profit, conforming us to Christ's image (Romans 8:29). What seems painful or arbitrary serves the glorious purpose of making us holy as He is holy—the highest privilege and most valuable attainment possible.

Historical Context

Ancient understanding of discipline focused on character formation rather than merely punishing wrong behavior. Greek *paideia* encompassed comprehensive education, moral training, and character development through instruction and correction. The goal was producing virtuous adults capable of self-governance and contributing to society. Hebrews applies this educational framework to divine discipline, showing God trains believers toward holiness—conformity to His character. First-century readers, experiencing trials, needed assurance these hardships served purposeful good, not random suffering. God's discipline, unlike imperfect human attempts, always achieves its intended purpose of producing holiness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that God's discipline aims at your profit and holiness transform your response to hardship?
2. In what specific ways has divine discipline made you a partaker of His holiness?
3. What does this verse teach about the relationship between suffering and sanctification in Christian life?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	μὲν	γὰρ	πρὸς	όλιγας	ήμέρας	κατὰ	τὸ	δοκοῦν
G3588	they verily	For	for	a few	days	us after	G3588	pleasure
	G3303	G1063	G4314	G3641	G2250	G2596		G1380
αὐτοῦ	ἐπαίδευνον	ό	δὲ	ἐπὶ	τὸ	συμφέρον	εἰς	τὸ
of his	chastened	G3588	but	he for	G3588	our profit	that	G3588
G846	G3811		G1161	G1909		G4851		G1519
μεταλαβεῖν	τῆς	ἀγιότητος	αὐτοῦ					
we might be partakers	G3588	holiness	of his					
G3335		G41	G846					

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 1:4 (Parallel theme): Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Titus 2:14 (Parallel theme): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Ephesians 4:24 (Holy): And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Leviticus 19:2 (Holy): Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

Psalms 17:15 (Parallel theme): As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Colossians 1:22 (Holy): In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unrepentable in his sight:

1 Peter 2:9 (Holy): But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

1 Peter 2:5 (Holy): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

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