

Verses 5-12 start by quoting Proverbs 3:11,12 on the subject of God's fatherly discipline. The persecuted Jewish Christian had a particularly acute need to see the Father's hand in their trials. But we would also do well to understand:

- God never brings us a problem, sorrow, or tough stretch without a *specific* purpose rooted in His love for us.
- God's discipline is always perfect: the right amount at the right time of just what *I* need. Never just what seems best to a fallible human father. If it fails, the imperfection is in my response.
- It's asking a lot of human nature to see trials as God's *favor* but they can be a mark of His *esteem*. Which player on a team is given the longest and most challenging drills in practice, the one destined to spend the season on the bench, or the one the Coach has marked out as a starter and a star? Which field does the Farmer work the hardest, the sandy one with a history of weeds and droughts, or the one that has given rich harvests already?
- Every difficulty God gives is for our blessing. That blessing may not be what we would ask for or arrive when we want but it is a certain destination at the far side of our pain if we endure.

Questions:

1. In the Christian race we run, what are we to:

Set aside **behind** us?

Be aware of all **around** us?

See **before** us?

2. A witness can be one who *observes* an event or one who *testifies* to others. Which is meant in verse 1?

3. What is the weight in verse 1? Sin?

4. What does founder and perfecter mean? (Also see Phil. 1:6.)

5. What type of person would be the “illegitimate son” of v. 8, who does not receive discipline?
6. What is the peaceful fruit of righteousness in v. 11? (Also see 2 Cor. 9:10, James 3:18)
7. Verses 12 and 13 are plural; their commands are addressed to a group rather than an individual. What light does this shed on them? (Also see Rom. 14)
8. Why must we strive for both peace with others *and* holiness (v. 14)? Why would God not be seen without them? (Also see Eph. 4:15)
9. What is the root of bitterness in verse 15? How could it actually prevent someone from obtaining the grace of God? Why does it grow where peace or holiness are lacking?
10. As in Chapter 6, we have an example in Esau of one who was denied the chance to repent. Understanding that his birthright was something he was in line to receive but never actually claimed (having sold it to satisfy a passing hunger), how could this relate to the other miserable souls described in Chapters 6 and 10?