

Strength in Discipline

All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God and observe the commands and decrees he gave you. They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. (Deut. 28:45-46).

God Disciplines Those He Loves

Like every good father, God disciplines His children. But discipline can be hard, frustrating, and painful. Hebrews 12:4-14 says we should neither (1) _____ God's discipline nor (2) _____ because of it. Rather, we should receive God's discipline as a source of righteousness, peace, and holiness. God's discipline should encourage us: it is evidence that we are His children.

Curses for Disobedience (28:15-68)

- **Deut. 28:15. Curses.** A curse is a pronouncement of divine judgment. There are two ways to see a curse: (1) God directly punishes people for their behavior or (2) people's actions bear naturally painful consequences. Both happen; some curses are directly from God (the shutting of the



Swarm of locusts in Israel (<https://forward.com/news/breaking-news/172349/israel-battles-2000-acre-swarm-of-locusts/>)

heavens); some are the consequences of sinful behavior (you will find no repose among your captors).

- **28:16-20. Evil.** Failure to obey God results in evil because God's way is always right. **Destroyed.** Notice that the term does not mean "cease to exist," but, rather, "cease to be a coherent people" (cf., 30:1-4).
 - **28:21-24. Bronze, iron:** The hardest metals in Moses' day: the sky and ground will be as unyielding as metal. For a nation that depends on crops, such a curse results in starvation.
 - **28:25-35. Defeated.** Israel was carried into captivity by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians.
- Through the centuries, Jewish people were scattered around the world. **No one to rescue.** God sometimes provides only one way out of our distress: turning to Him alone.
- **28:35-44. Other gods.** Ironically, Israel will be forced to worship the very idols with whom they sinned. **Locusts.** A major problem in the Middle East, locusts can clean a field of its crops in minutes.
 - **28:45-50. Sign.** The destruction of Israel is a warning to all other people: obey God or suffer the consequences. Paul says that God's discipline of Israel was written down for us (1 Cor. 10:11). **Joyfully.** Joylessness results in ingratitude, and ingratitude is a source of apostasy (see Rom. 1:21ff.).
 - **28:51-57. No compassion.** As people are stripped of their livelihoods, they will lose natural affections for each other. The descriptions here are vivid, graphic, and painful.
 - **28:58-68. Written in this book.** Moses was aware that his sermons were to become a book. **Scattered.** The fact that the Jewish people are today scattered around the world is a testimony to the truthfulness of God's warnings, but it is also a testimony that He did not obliterate them. **Egypt.** Many Jews ended up back in Egypt—where they once served as slaves—a sort of "reverse Exodus."



Wall panel from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh depicting Jewish captives from Lachish kneeling before the Assyrian king (c. 700 B.C., British Museum, Wikipedia Commons)

Strength in Discipline (Hebrews 12:4-12)

The word “discipline” in Hebrews 12 is translated from the Greek term *paideia*, meaning “child-raising” (from which we get “pediatrics” and “pedagogy”). *Paideia* refers to the comprehensive training that good parents provide their children in order to raise them into virtuous and honorable adults.

- God disciplines me through _____ (12:3), through _____ (12:4), and through _____ (12:7).
 - ✓ *As a child of God, God uses everything to train me.*
- God disciplines me because He loves me.
 - ✓ *God does not discipline me because I annoy Him or because He is mad at me. (cf. 1 Thess. 5:9)*
 - ✓ *God is too good a Father to leave me undisciplined.*
- God’s discipline is exactly what I need.
 - ✓ *It is _____: his discipline fits my circumstances perfectly.*
 - ✓ *It is _____: his discipline is neither too light nor too heavy for me.*
 - ✓ *It is _____: his discipline comes at exactly the right time.*
- God practices _____ discipline: my discipline is part of a bigger plan.
- God disciplines me for only one reason: to _____.
 - ✓ *Without holiness, I cannot see God, so He is chipping away at all my unholiness.*
- When I am disciplined, I should look for what God is teaching me:
 - ✓ *To depend on Him, to give up my secret sin, to walk in the Holy Spirit, to stop being selfish, to love God first, to treat others right, to be generous, to stop loving the world, to pray and fast regularly, to stop living for pleasure, etc. All discipline is intended to make us more like God.*



Elephantine Island, Egypt, to which many Jews fled during the Babylonian Captivity: an “exodus in reverse.” (<https://www.journeytoegypt.com/en/discover-egypt/elephantine-island-aswan-egypt>)

God Never Gives Up Me

Though Deut. 28 sounds as if God would give up on Israel because of its disobedience, only two chapters later, God promises a restoration of Israel. God never gives up on me.

“When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back.” (Deut. 30:1-4)

Answers: make light of, lose heart, conflict, temptation, hardship, appropriate, proportional, timely, corporate, make me holy