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By quoting from the Book of Proverbs, the author of Hebrews establishes that God’s loving discipline is a parental act. Here is my paraphrase of the second reading: *“So don’t feel sorry for yourselves. Or have you forgotten how good parents treat children, and that God regards you as His children? My dear child, don’t shrug off God’s discipline, but don’t be crushed by it either. It’s the child He loves that He disciplines. The child He embraces, He also corrects. God is educating you. This trouble you’re in isn’t punishment; it’s training.*

Deprived of structure and guidance, one would suffer the lack of boundaries on the way to maturity. The purpose of all discipline is the same: to establish the voice of conscience to guide our direction and choices. Lacking to internalize these outward disciplines, one will be ego-driven instead.

Foundational for the Church, hardships and suffering require perseverance, discipline, and holiness. When endured with Christ--the ultimate model of faith--it teaches us that suffering, as a manifestation of God’s love, is meant as a form of spiritual pruning that purifies and strengthens us. God does not simply punish. God corrects us out of a loving desire for us and for the way we live.

This passage is understood through the lens of sanctifying grace. The grace, received in Baptism and the Sacraments, gives us the strength to accept God’s discipline, transforming despair into an opportunity for holiness. God brings good out of suffering, just as our parents’ correction brings about our maturity. Despite the obstacles we face, God’s discipline calls us to press on in faith, shaping us into the image of Jesus, that we may live in peace and unity with one another.

Obedience and discipline help us respond effectively and return to the Lord. The path to this return will not be an easy one. The good news is that God, as Father, will look with mercy upon us and will restore us. God is the potter and we are the clay. He crushes us, treats us hard, and finally molds us into a beautiful shape. We must learn to endure as Jesus did, through His suffering and death. Glory with God comes through patient endurance through discipline and obedience.

The crosses which we make for ourselves and not heaven-sent crosses. The crosses laid upon us bring their own grace, and consequent comfort with them. We see the hand of God at work on us. Grace to replace a faithless spirit when everything seems unendurable. Not trusting God, we cry: “What are we that you should do this?” it is the Lord. And that is enough. It is the Lord. Let God do as it seems right. Let Him lift up or cast down. Let Him wound or heal. Let Him smite or soothe. Let Him give life or death. He is always the Lord. We are but His work.

Let us throw self aside. God’s grace will enfold us as to all He does around us. Our contradictions, our inconstancy, our very injustice will dissolve as a result of God’s wisdom, God’s justice, God’s unfailing goodness. We shall experience God as Good, All God, the Highest Good.

God uses our pride, our pretensions, and vanity to set forward His purposes for His elect. He turns sin and failings to our sanctification. His discipline is designed to purify and make us worthy of Him. So let us welcome Him who tries us with various testing. Let us rejoice, for by such travail the new creation is born in us*. “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Rising from prayer in a spirit of humility, and with a contrite heart, St Francis prepared himself by taking the Gospel. Opening the book with reverence, the first passage that met his eye was the passion of the Lord that tells of the suffering the Lord was to endure. Francis, with the spirit of God, understood that he would have to enter into the kingdom of God through many trials, difficulties and struggles. The spirituality Francis contains a three-part charism: to acknowledge God by persevering in truth faith; to adore God with one’s whole life by living prayerfully with purity of heart; and to serve God in one’s neighbor by service in charity and action on behalf of justice in the promotion of peace.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. God works within us, His grace to help us endure suffering in our faith journey, giving us the fortitude to persevere by embracing divine discipline as God’s loving correction, emphasizing the transformative power of focusing on Jesus, the exemplar and perfecter of our faith, achieving the ultimate promise of eternal fellowship with God.