

In Jesus' name. Amen.

...as follows in Jesus' name:

*"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by Him.
For the Lord disciplines the one He loves,
and chastises every son whom He receives."*

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

People loved by God, Especially you, Jeff and Bud,

It is a testament about a man when so many make it a regular practice, even a weekly practice, to come and be with him... to listen to him and talk with him.

It shows a certain appreciation of the man, and how much they value and respect him.

Of course, this was the kind of guy Don himself was.

After his brother Les had his stroke, Don made a habit of visiting with him regularly on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

And eventually, Don moved to the same home with Les and was also well cared for by Ghenet.

It was a special grace that these brothers, who had gone through so much together in the earlier part of their lives, would be able to spend the later years of their lives so close together.

It's another special grace, too, that Don and Les turned out the way they did.

In our text from the book of Hebrews, we hear about the discipline of a father, how they discipline as seems best to them for a short time — namely during a child's youth — and there is much value for that child as he is growing up.

Except, that for Don and Les there wasn't much of a great father figure for them.

They grew up, in large part, caring for themselves and each other through the 1930s and 40s.

Taking baths in a box, in a house without running water... eating from trees.

Hunting and fishing helped fill hungry bellies.

That is a hard beginning to life, but I suppose that might also be where a strong work ethic comes from.

Stupid mistakes can be costly. You might do it once, but you learn quickly so it doesn't happen again. — Of course, running your own business will teach you that, too, so you don't cut into profits too much.

And I suppose you learn how important relationships are as well.

Going through hard times together tends to bond you closer as you help each other survive.

And that can also come with a pretty healthy portion of learning to sacrifice yourself for others,

just as others have sacrificed themselves for you.
You learn that you don't need much in life to survive, which helps with contentment.
And you care that others have what they need, so that you can both make it through.

But these virtues aren't the outcome in every case.
Two people can go through the same situation and come out with very different characteristics.
So I think that this is where we should recognize the grace of God in Don's life,
that he didn't go down a very different path.

Now, I am not going to romanticize this hard life for you.
Don didn't make it through unscathed.
He picked up a pretty nasty habit of drinking. It didn't help his marriage.
And it didn't help deaden the pain when his daughter Angela died, either.
In fact, it strained relationships with those he loved most.
It got so bad that Les even gave him an ultimatum that if Don didn't quit drinking,
Les wasn't going to be around anymore.
This sobered Don up pretty quickly. As he reported to me, he stopped drinking "cold turkey."

But in all this, as you stand back and reflect on Don's life and character,
I hope you will also see a loving Father's discipline... and I am not yet talking about Don's parenting.
We heard just a few moments ago:
*"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by Him.
For the Lord disciplines the one He loves,
and chastises every son whom He receives."*

Don and Les didn't grow up in a religious home, much less a Christian home.
It wasn't until Don's wife made him go through classes at her church that he got baptized.
And even then, it wasn't necessarily something that he wanted to do or was convinced of himself.
And yet, in patience, the Lord moved ever so steadily with His now-baptized son.
At some point, he started to attend church here at Parkland with Les pretty regularly.
He even helped with various maintenance projects around the church for a time.
But Don didn't join Parkland yet at that time.

Remember how our passage for Hebrews spoke about discipline, it said,
**For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant,
but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.**
The Lord has a way of using very serious and difficult situations in our lives
to get us to think about what comes after death.
And the conscience is a powerful tool as one considers his life over the last 80 years.
Don had wanted to be a "good man," but he realized that
even if he attained that status in his own mind, it wouldn't give him certainty of eternal life.

...

But remember why Hebrews says the Lord disciplines His children.
It is not because the Lord is so insecure that He needs people to praise Him to lift up His self-worth;
nor is it because He needs little do-gooders on earth because He is powerless to do His own works.

Instead, **He disciplines those He loves...** and
He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.

It wasn't until Don moved to Ghenet's with Les, while taking cancer treatment in 2017 and 2018.
that Don went through instruction and became a communicant member of Parkland.
Since Don wasn't really mobile anymore, this meant that our pastors got to visit him each month.
Each month then, we would come and hear his confession and then absolve him,
that is, declare him forgiven of all his sins, and thus holy before God.
This was a monthly reminder to Don of his baptism so many decades ago,
that though Don had not necessarily regarded it as of much value back then,
the Lord had taken His promise to Don – now His adopted son through baptism – very seriously.
The struggles that the Lord had used in Don's life, that is, the Lord's disciplining him
was treating Don as His legitimate son & heir to His eternal kingdom.

Each month, we pastors would read the Scriptures to him and explain it for our devotion together.
You can picture it like a family sitting around a dinner table,
or even under a pear tree on lawn chairs, or sitting by a wood stove for an hour.
It was an opportunity for him to listen to His heavenly Father and to pray to Him.
And each month, we would partake of the Lord's Supper together, where he would receive
Jesus' holy body and blood *to confirm onto him the forgiveness of all his sins*.
He would once again be reminded of his status as 'holy' before His Father.

He was always grateful for these visits.
He would say a heartfelt "Thank you, Pastor," – not for the personal visit (he had lots of regular visitors)
but for the absolution, the Christ-centered devotion and prayers, and Holy Communion.
After all, a man who lives into his 90s is going to have some guilt and regret.
And yet this man, having lived to his 90s had 90 years of sins completely forgiven,
and could lie down in peace with a good conscience.

Jeff and Bud, know that your father was very proud of you.
"They're good boys," he would often say to me. But really, he meant, "they're good men."
He was proud of your work ethic, that you are honest,
that you are self-supporting and not leaching off others. And many other qualities.
But those great qualities don't often come naturally, do they? They usually come... from discipline.
A father disciplines the sons he loves, and he did as **seemed best to him** at the moment,
though I would imagine that some of the regret or guilt he carried revolved around his parenting.
I have heard that he could be pretty demanding... expecting near perfection.

But as exacting as Don might have been, it isn't the perfection that our heavenly Father requires of us.
Jesus says, "**You... must be perfect (or holy), as your heavenly Father is perfect/holy.**"^{Matt. 5:48; Lev. 19:2}
That is a standard that none of us are able to live up to ... and Don realized that.
He wasn't the perfect man. He wasn't the perfect dad.
He wasn't the perfect son of his heavenly Father.
But Don himself took the Lord's discipline to heart.
He freely confessed his sins and trusted that his heavenly Father's Word, was true:
that Jesus Christ had already been punished on the cross for Don's sins... and for yours.

It seems that in his later years, Don eased up a little bit more... became more patient... perhaps more forgiving... able to go with the flow... perhaps that is evidence of the Father's discipline **later... yield[ing] the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.**

But one thing that we can say for certain, that Don, along with his brother Les, received the Lord's discipline for his good and that he now shares in Christ's holiness forever.

Thanks be to God for His discipline and grace upon His son Don here in this life, so that he now rests from his labors in heavenly splendor and awaits the resurrection to life everlasting.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria