

**THE  
BON AIR  
PULPIT**

Sermon: *Beyond the Horizon*

Scripture: Matthew 28: 19-20

June 4, 2000

One of the problems of being a pastor as long as I have is that there are not enough Sundays to say what I want to say. So, you will notice in your bulletin one passage of Scripture, I would like for you instead to turn to Hebrews, Chapter 12, please. I wanted to read to you a passage that talks to us about how God so deeply loves us and how he shows his love for us in ways sometimes that we do not appreciate or understand. And this is Hebrews Chapter 12 beginning in Verse 5. You have forgotten the word of encouragement that addresses you as sons. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline and do not lose heart when he rebukes you. Because the Lord disciplines those he loves and punishes everyone he accepts as his children. Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you like his children. What son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined, then you will understand that everybody has discipline then you are illegitimate children and not one of his true children. Moreover, we all have human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit ourselves to the Father of our spirits and live our Fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best. God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace to those who have been trained by it. In a healthy parent-child relationship parents give their life to help their children to become all they can be. You set before them educational opportunities and cultural privileges. You invest your time and energy that they can develop all the potential and all of the talents that they have within their life. You give positive affirmations. You also tell them that if they do not live by the values and principles of your home that there are consequences that will be served. Now all of us understand that while that is the normal healthy relationship, that very often we are confronted with that which is a bad or an unhealthy relationship. That is, where Mother and Father do not really love their children, do not invest the time, do not set guidelines, do not say, here are the parameters of action. The Bible tells us as parents that if we do not set the perimeters for our own children that we really do not love them. That a part of love is saying, here is how we are to live and here are the consequences if you do not. Another unhealthy part of that relationship could be a child who loses all respect for their parents. They simply don't care what their Mother and Father say, they don't abide by what they say, they don't have any worry if they disobey them that any consequences are going to come and so simply what you have are people who may be living in the same house but they really do not have any sense of respect for their parents. Now the reason I went through that little litany with you is that the Bible says that when we come to God in Jesus Christ that we enter into a parent child relationship. That we are taught to pray Our Father who art in heaven. We are called the children of God. And so in a healthy walk with God it simply means that we know that he loves us, he's investing himself in us. He wants the best for us, he teaches us his values, he sets the parameters for our action. And the healthy child is the one who then says, I respect what he says and I want to do as he has commanded. An unhealthy walk with God is the Christian who says I have no respect for him. I don't care what he says and I certainly am not worried if I don't do what he wants me to do that anything is going to happen to me at all. Now what I have just read for you is the statement that says that because God loves us and because he is willing to invest himself in us and because he wants us to become like him that God wants to instill his values in us and he sets the parameters for our actions. And what he simply says is that if you do not obey me, if you walk in known disobedience to me then there are consequences that you are going to have to bear. Now, what I would like to do this morning is to show you some of the ways in which those consequences come. And I am aware that one of the reasons that God changed my sermon today is that there are people who are going to be in this room who are simply saying that I know that I am running away from God and I am being disobedient to him and really there is not any concern in your life about anything that is going to happen. You just think that you can do whatever you will as a Christian and everything is going to be all right. If you've got heaven what in the world could happen to you here on earth? Well, let me show you how God, the Bible says as he disciplines us in love, let me show you how he does it. Number

one he does it by what you do not get. There is a strange story over in Luke Chapter 9. Jesus and his disciples are walking through the Samaritan Province. There is a part of Middle Eastern culture that any time that people are out on the road and it was dark that you would bring them into your house. Hospitality was one of the features of Middle East culture. So Jesus and his disciples asked some of the people can we stay around your house tonight. And the Bible says, the Samaritan said, no, you go on to the next village. Well, it was just breaking every rule of courtesy and every part of culture you could think of. Well, I am sure the next morning around the market place you would hear this kind of talk. You know, there was a man who came to town yesterday said he was the Messiah, said he was the promised one of God, he was the one that God sent and you know what we did. We sent him on his way. And you know what? Nothing happened to us. I mean, there was no fire from heaven, no earthquakes, no voice from God. We sent him away and nothing happened. But then the next day at the village the conversation is different. It goes like this. You know, Jesus went to the next village. Did you hear what happened down there? Well, what happened was that there was a mother who had a little child and nobody had been able to find out what was wrong and Jesus put his miracle touching hand on him and the little child was well. And in that village there was a funeral procession and a wife was taking her husband out to bury him and Jesus stood in front of the funeral pyre and said, In the name of God rise up and a dead man got up and walked! And there was another man who lived in the village and he was always acting in a bizarre sort of way and Jesus looked at him and said, In the name of God may the devils leave you and the man now has a sane mind and is acting like everyone else. And then everybody sat down and began to think. And they said, you know, we told Jesus to go away and we thought nothing happened. But maybe what happened was what we did not get. You see, none of our children were healed. None of our husbands were raised from the dead. None of our men who were beset by demons was restored to sanity. Maybe the judgment is what we do not get. And once you understand that story you then begin to realize what you begin to miss in your Christian life when you are running away from him. And that is God cannot bless you like he would like to bless you. So there are people in this room today who have been running from him and you recognize you do not know the joy of answered prayer. You have not walked so faithfully for him so you have not know what it is to feel that you have been walking on his promises and you have felt his steady hands. Or maybe you haven't felt his daily presence in your life and maybe it is beginning to dawn on you that one of the great problems in your life is what you have not received. You see, I can look in a room like this and everybody looks about the same to me. But you see, God looks in our heart and there may be somebody here about that thick and some people over here this thick. This person has been running and that is all the blessings of God they may ever receive. This person has been walking with God and my goodness if you could look and measure what is in his heart. When you read in the Bible, you recall that sometimes that is the way God punished some of his choicest servants. There was a man by the name of David who lived away from God for a while and when he did he wanted more than anything in the world to build the temple of God and God came to him and said, David you can't do that. That was the judgment. And Moses who led all of the children of Israel out of Egypt more than anything wanted to lead them into the Promised Land and God said, I'm sorry, Moses, you can not go in. That was his judgment. And when we live in disobedience to Him the difficulty that we have is what we don't get. Dearest God in heaven with all of his resources and all of his riches, he wants to pour out his blessings upon us. But we run away from him. And we can't receive them. There is a wonderful old story out of the Middle East. It was told by the Middle East Philosopher called Tagor. Tagor said, the King decided to walk through the villages. As he did so, he said, I would like for everybody to bring food and we'll have a big banquet tonight. And all of the peasants began to say, now isn't this wonderful. King's got all this money and all this riches, he comes down here and wants to take some of our food so we can eat at his banquet. Man went home and he said, I resent having to do this but the King has commanded so I will give him something. And so he pulled open his cupboard and in it were three kernels of corn. He said, I will give him one and I will begrudge him for every bit that I've given him. So that night after they ate he went back home to eat with his wife. He went to the cupboard. He was going to get the two other kernels of corn and he picked up one and he picked up two and there was a third one that was there. And Tagor said, the man realized that the third one that had been replaced was solid gold. And Tagor said, and the man bemoaned that he did not give the King all three. Sometimes we leave the impression God's trying to always get me to do something. Oh no, my friend, God wants to bless you. But if I turn away from him and I don't do what he wants me to do then one of the judgments he brings to my life is what I cannot receive. There is a second one. The way he often works in our life and that is what we lose. Over in the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis there is a story about a man by the name of Lot.

Lot was a kinsman of Abraham. They both became very wealthy. They had a lot of flocks and a lot of herds and their herds didn't have enough grass to eat and so God came and said, Abraham, why don't you and Lot divide and Abraham said to Lot, you go wherever you want to and I will go in the other direction. When he did, Lot looked around for a while and then he said, I'll tell you what I'll do, I'm going to move my family to Sodom. Now you have to almost catch your breath.

(alarm sounds...) I'll catch mine, as a matter of fact. Feel your pew. If it's getting hot you can leave. We've got trained men who respond quickly when that happens. And I am waiting for them to respond. (alarm stops...). I told you they were trained. If an untrained person went it's going to come back on in 30 seconds. (alarm sounds again...) (Laughter) They'll love me for that one.

I was telling you about Lot. (end of tape - turned tape over)

... move his family to Sodom. I said, what makes you always want to catch your breath is the Bible says, Sodom was the most evil city on the face of the earth. I don't want to chase that rabbit but the word Sodomy has actually been brought over into the English language and if a person has a sexual difficulty, perversion, we call them a Sodomite. And God said, this to me is the most evil spot. One day God came to Lot and he moved on in, raised his family there. The Bible says that Lot's righteous soul was vexed in Sodom. This simply means that he participated but didn't enjoy it. And one day God came to him and he said I've stood this as long as I can and Lot, tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to destroy this city off the face of the earth and I want you to get your family and I want y'all to get out. Now an interesting fact is that we don't know where Sodom is. We know in the Bible about where it is and about where it is is where the Dead Sea is now. An archaeologist has dug around the Dead Sea and they found something that has been found only one other place on the face of the earth and they found sand that had been under such intense heat that it actually became glass, 4 inches thick. The only other place that we've ever seen that is out in New Mexico in Los Alamos when we dropped the first atomic bomb. The heat was so that all the sand in the New Mexico desert actually became glass. The only other place is around the Dead Sea. God just wiped it off the face of the earth. So, he said, get your family out. Now I want to tell you how it happened. Lot then goes to his two son-in-laws and his two daughters and he says, God has said to me that we are to leave. Now let me tell you what the Scriptures say. The Scriptures said the son-in-laws mocked Lot. Let me tell you what that means in my vocabulary. The old man's got religion. He's at night hearing God talking to him. The sun's got the best of him. They started laughing at him. And then Lot began to understand what it means to live in disobedience to him and what you lose is that you lose your testimony. The greatest thing you have as a believer is your spiritual integrity. So that when you say something a person will look at you and say, I believe that because I trust you. What would happen to you in your life if by your actions or your attitudes you were such a person that whenever you said something, nobody paid any attention to you. And one of my daily prayers is, Dear God, let me not today do anything in my life that would help others to laugh when I try to speak for God. And he began to lose his Christian testimony. What he found was, nobody would pay any attention to him. So I want to ask you a question today. You came to church today and let's say that God really did a work in your life. And you go to work tomorrow and you say, you know, yesterday I went to church and God spoke to me. You do the Lot thing. How will people at your work respond to you. Will they laugh? Ha! God talkin' to him! Suppose you young people go to school tomorrow and say, you know, I was at church yesterday and God helped to change my life. What kind of response would you get from your fellow teenagers? Then you can begin to understand that maybe what you have lost because you so compromised your life is that you've lost your testimony. The second thing he lost was his family. His daughters wouldn't leave with him. And then he understood that regardless of what he said that his own children wouldn't pay any attention to him. One of the great figures in Christian history in America was a man by the name of D. L. Moody. Mr. Moody made a vow with God that he would never let a day go by when he wouldn't talk to somebody about Jesus. At the end of the day he realized he hadn't fulfilled that vow he made to God and so he left his house late at night and she calls on him again to walk the streets and he said God, the first person I talked to about you, intercept me with I'll talk to. He found he was a very needy person and that night the man accepted Christ as Savior and D. L. Moody was telling the story and he said he was walking away and he was just so ecstatic and wonderful. Mr. Moody got up the next morning and walked down the same street and saw that same man. As high as he was the night before he was that low the next day. He would almost have to get on a step ladder to get to the belly of a snake. He turned to him and he said, what happened? And he said, last night you were so ecstatic and here I see you this afternoon and you are all down, what happened? He said, Mr. Moody, he said, I went back home last night and I said the first thing this morning what I need to do is go to see my

son. My son and I have been out of sorts and my son and I don't have a good relationship and I went back to my son and I said, Son, I want to tell you what happened to me last night and he said, Mr. Moody, my son turned to me and he said, old man, you and I don't trust each other, don't believe each other, don't have any relationship with each other and let me tell you this, you talk about God a lot but I am not going to listen to you anymore. Get out of my house. He said, Mr. Moody, do you know what it means to go to heaven and your own children don't want to follow you? How tragic. How tragic to lose your own family. The Bible says that one of the ways in which God can work within our life is that we need to be reminded that when we are disobedient to Him sometimes his judgment is what we lose. And let me mention the last one. The third one. Sometimes God deals with us by what we get. Now I think you all are aware that as God made our world he made it with certain laws and consequences. If I go home today and eat too much roast beef I can get sick. That is the law of capacity. If I get up on the building and jump I am going to end up on the ground, hurt! That is the law of gravity. As God has put moral laws around us, physical laws, he has put moral laws. For example, you can take any sin in the Bible and you can put it by three categories. How would it affect me physically, how would it affect me emotionally, and how it would affect me spiritually. Let me give you an illustration. Let's say, your anger is not under control. You go to work every morning and you get so angry at everybody who doesn't move fast as you think they ought to move or swerve in front of you and by the time you get to work you are just all bent out of shape and your blood pressure has gone up 500 points. What's happened to you? Because you have been away from God then what's happened to you is that you are beginning to find yourself resulting physically. Now suppose it's the sin of gossip. So you gossip. You become less, maybe you hurt somebody else. Maybe a relationship is broken with somebody else. Maybe it gets so bad that somebody comes over and threatens you and says, if you ever say that again I'm going to knock your head off and maybe it gets so bad somebody will sue you for slander. You see you open yourself up for all the natural laws in which God has made when you disobey him. Now I know that there are a lot of Christians who somehow think that because I am a Christian I can escape all of these natural laws. Not so. If you are a teenager and you drive 70 miles per hour your car is going to wreck like a person who has never been in church. And sometimes what happens then is that when we run away from God and we get out of the realm of grace and forgiveness and get over here and consequences and law then we suffer like everybody else. Man asked to come by and see me. He said I am going from house to house in your community. I am selling Bibles and Christian literature. I'd like to show you the Christian literature. If some of your members call and say do you know anything about this man, at least I'd like to introduce myself to you. He showed me all of his literature. I noticed that as he was showing it to me that he was doing it with one hand and this arm was by his side and he showed me all the literature I was telling him I appreciated it. He said, now, before I go I would like to share with you a part of my Christian testimony. He said, I came to Christ, sought to live with him and then he said what began to happen is I began just to drift and drift away. And he said, what I found in my life is that when you are drifting from God you are always are drifting faster and farther than you ever imagined. And he said, one day I woke up and I realized I was a long way away from him. But he said, when I was drifting what I would do is I would get off work and I would go by the local bar and get more than I needed to drink and then I would go on home. One day I was standing at the bar, a man walked in with this beautiful woman, the woman stood next to me and he stood there and we were standing there drinking together, he said I got more than I needed to drink and I began to make passes at the woman. After a while she turned to me and asked me to back off. He said, that was like waving a flag to a bull and I just kept talking. After a while the man came over and moved the woman over to this side and he said then it was me and him just like this and he said enough is enough. You've insulted the woman that I have brought here. This is enough. No more. He said, that was like saying I'm not a macho male and said I swung. Said he didn't swing. He just took his beer bottle, hit it on the side of the bar and stuck me in the throat. He said the rest of my life I will walk with this arm that won't work anymore. Now what happened? Was the man a believer? Of course he was a believer. But he's going to walk around with an arm that won't work the rest of his life. Why? Because he got away from God and got over here in natural law again. And when you go in natural law you are going to suffer like everybody else. And God sometimes wants us to be reminded of how he has made this world, that we will turn back to him and said, oh, God, I no longer want to live in that kind of world. I want to live in a world of grace and forgiveness and love. I want to do what you want me to do. Let me quote to you again. Who the Lord loves he chastens. If you do disobedience to God and never have the consequences, the Bible says that means you need to check your birth certificate. Because you are not one of his. I remember one of my older sons, some boys creating difficulty and I walked out of

the house and I said, Paul, come here! And so we had a kind of a harsh talk. My son turned to me and he said, all of them did it too, why don't you say something to them? And I said, 'cause they are not my sons. Their Daddy has got to deal with them. But it's me and you, boy. The person who is one of God's children and says I can do whatever I want to and I'm not going to worry about it and nothing is going to happen to me is living under false illusions. Here's the great news I want to tell you. Regardless of how much you've been running. There is a God who stands with open arms saying I love you and I want you back. A God who is ready to forgive. A God who is ready to give you a second chance, third chance, fourth chance. A God who is willing to say, if you will come to me we can start walking together again and I can give you all the blessings I want to give you. God sent all kinds of strange instruments to some of his rebellious children. When the prophet ran away from God, God sent a talking donkey. When Jonah ran away God sent a whale. When Peter ran away God sent a chicken. I don't know what God is going to send in your life, but God will send something to help you to know that he wants you back and he loves you. Now let me ask you. Isn't it time you turn back around and said, Dear God, I want to start back with you and I love you and I want to live for you. Some people here today need to make some life changing directions to come back to him. As you know, we always sing a hymn of invitation. The reason we do that is to allow you to respond to what God is doing in your life. Some of you, God has been working in your life to bring you to himself. You need to come to say I want to give my life to Jesus. Some of you are Christians, and you have been visiting this church and you say, we want to be a part of this fellowship and you want to come today to let us know that. Some of you are here today who are members of our church. His children who have drifted away. Very much need to say, I want to come today and start over with the Lord. I don't know what God is doing in your life, I just pray that today you will respond to his voice and do what he wants you to do, will you?