

Fresh Brewed Faith

Week 9 – Start to Finish

Hebrews 12

Therefore then, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who have borne testimony to the Truth], let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us, looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]. He, for the joy [of obtaining the prize] that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising and ignoring the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2 AMP

The writer of Hebrews thus far has demonstrated the requirement of faith, first to receive Jesus and then to walk in victory with Him. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

The key word in this chapter is “endure” (Hebrews 12:2, 3, 7, and 20). The word in the original language means “to bear up under trial, to continue when the going is tough.” Persecution was escalating and many new Jewish converts to Christ were tempted to compromise their convictions to avoid suffering. The writer of Hebrews was admonishing them to remain faithful and true to Jesus Christ.

1. Run Well, Finish Strong-Hebrews 12:1-3

Having recorded the testimony of God’s faithful servants, “men of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38), the writer now admonishes them (and us) to live for the Lord and fulfill God’s calling in our lives.

The writer uses the imagery of an arena. He references a great “cloud of witnesses” which is most likely a reference to those listed in God’s Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11). Framed in this context, believers are compared to runners in a race. Just to clarify, we DO NOT run in order to get to be saved or gain access to heaven. Salvation is **not the prize** at the end of the race; it is **the gift of grace** that puts us in the race. And each of us receive a different race to run. We are not running against each other. We are running against the downward pull of sin, Satan, and self and the propensity to indulge in such. In order to run our race well, we are admonished to lay aside anything that hinders our forward progress. Hebrews 12:1 says, “Lay aside every encumbrance.” This refers to the things that are seemingly harmless, yet they work against our faith because of the investment of time and energy they syphon off our lives. We must jettison “the sin which so easily entangles us.” Sin, especially of the variety of sinful habit patterns we readily fall into, can be described as anything that contradicts the Word of God.

Consider Jesus!! He “endured the cross and the hostility by sinners against Himself, so that [we] will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:3). The cross of Jesus Christ represents the greatest suffering in history. Not only did Jesus endure horrendous physical pain and the horrors of crucifixion, He also experienced God’s just wrath as Christ became sin for us. God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The joy set before Him refers to our redemption and all who will come to faith in the future!

Hebrews 12:3 says, “**Consider Him**, who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lost heart” (emphasis mine). Jesus suffered in His humanity. Therefore we know He can relate to us and the struggles we encounter. “We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). We can rest in Him. No matter what the circumstances, we **consider Jesus!** Lay aside distractions. Lay aside sin. Consider Jesus. Fix your eyes on Him who is “the author and perfecter of faith.” And run. Run well! Finish strong!

2. The Father’s Discipline-Hebrews 12: 4-17

Hebrews 12:5-6 says, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (NKJV). God chastens His children. Chastening (the word “discipline” is used in NAS but has the same meaning in the original language) is a term used for child-training. It is the work of a father and mother who are training up a child in the way he should go. “He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness” (Hebrews 6:10). God’s discipline is proof we belong to Him. Therefore, if you are a child of God He will discipline you when you step into sin, especially if you stubbornly refuse the warnings of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11). God’s correction is always redemptive in nature, with the intention of producing the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Chastening is ultimately for our good that we might be progressively conformed to His image and become sharers of His holiness.

This very basic premise can certainly be applied to parenting. Moms, obviously training a child is a long slow process but the goal of your instruction, training, admonition, exhortation and correction should be redemptive in nature for the purpose of producing a child that will walk with God in truth and righteousness. If what you are utilizing in correcting your child is not resulting in these desired results, you need to get into the Word and ask God to show you how to better discipline and “train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6).

In light of escalating persecution and suffering, the writer of Hebrews encourages the more mature believers to “strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble”

(Hebrews 12:12). This speaks to the value of community and accountability in the body of Christ.

The aggressive pursuit of personal holiness and practical righteousness (called sanctification) is expected of all Christians according to the writer of Hebrews. This passage is obviously not teaching salvation by works, but is referring to the progressive transformation that gives evidence of a genuine conversion.

3. The Unshakeable Kingdom-Hebrews 12:18-29

Here the writer of Hebrews contrasts the Old Covenant and the New Covenant inaugurated by “Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant” (Hebrews 12:24).

“The contrast is made between Moses and Christ, Sinai and Mt. Zion, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. When the Law was given at Sinai, fear and terror ruled, and the mountain was covered with smoke and fire. When God spoke, the people trembled. But today, we have a spiritual experience greater than that of Israel’s at Sinai, for we have a heavenly priest, a heavenly home, a heavenly fellowship, and a voice speaking from on high that gives a message of grace and love.” (Warren Wiersbe, *Exploratory Outlines of the New Testament*).

Jesus is calling those outside a personal relationship with Him to receive salvation by grace through faith. “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking” (Hebrews 12:25). The Day of Judgement is coming upon those who reject Jesus. “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:9-10). Hebrews 2:3 poises this question, “How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” Dear one, if you do not know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, we urge you to **consider Jesus**. Consider the claims of Christ and receive Him through repentance and faith.

In light of the escalating persecution and suffering, comfort one another with the promise of an unshakeable kingdom prepared in glory for those who know the Lord!! This is not our home; heaven is where we will spend eternity. In the meantime the writer of Hebrews exhorts us, “Let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28). In Romans 12:1-2 Paul wrote, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” A holy, grateful, life dedicated to Jesus Christ is the only reasonable response to the gift of our salvation.

May the aroma of “Fresh Brewed Faith” perfume our lives with Christ as we serve the Kingdom and God and prepare for an eternity with Him!