

Encouragement to Persevere in the Face of Hardship
Hebrews 12:4-13

Introduction

1. Our study in the book of Hebrews is as follows:

I. Prologue: The Superiority of God's New Revelation (1:1-4)

II. The Superiority of Christ to Leading Figures under the Old Covenant (1:5-7:28)

A. Christ Is Superior to the Angels (1:5-2:18)

B. Christ Is Superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)

C. Christ Is Superior to the Aaronic Priests (4:14-7:28)

III. The Superior Sacrificial Work of Our High Priest (8:1-10:18)

A. A New Sanctuary and a New Covenant (chapter 8)

B. The Old Sanctuary (9:1-10)

C. The Better Sacrifice (9:11-10:18)

IV. A Call to Follow Jesus Faithfully and with Perseverance (10:19-12:29)

A. Having Confidence to Enter the Sanctuary (10:19-25)

B. A Warning against Persistence in Sin (10:26-31)

C. Persevering in Faith under Pressure (10:32-12:3)

1. As in the past, so in the future (10:32-39)

2. Faith and its many outstanding examples (ch. 11)

3. Jesus, the supreme example (12:1-3)

Note: Tonight, we are going to look at the writer's "Encouragement to Persevere in the Face of Hardship" from Hebrews 12:4-13

2. Let me remind you of the writer's comments concerning Jesus our supreme example in Hebrews 12:1-3

1. Wherefore seeing (considering that) we also are compassed about (surrounded) with so great a cloud of witnesses

2. Let us lay aside every weight, and

3. Let us lay aside every...sin which doth so easily beset us, and

4. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

5. Let us...Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;

a. Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,

b. Who for the joy set before Him...despised the shame, and

c. Who...is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

6. Let us...consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

3. As we prepare to be encouraged by the writer's comments, let us remember Jesus and the price He paid for our Salvation, and for the joy set before us, let us run our race with diligence and patience so that one day, we will sit in the throne with Christ our Lord.

Note Revelations 3:21...

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

4. Scriptures for tonight's lesson is from Hebrews 12:4-13

a. KJV...

4) Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5) And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6) For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7) If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8) But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9) Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10) For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12) Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13) And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

b. NLT...

4) After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. 5) And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. 6) For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child." 7) As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8) If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. 9) Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? 10) For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we

might share in his holiness. 11) No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. 12) So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. 13) Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

Note: The author continues pressing the subject of “patience and perseverance” as we follow Christ

D. Encouragement to Persevere in the Face of Hardship in Hebrews 12:4-13

1. He begins with v4, “You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin.”

Note the Nlt... After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

- i. It is a struggle, but you have not yet given your life in your struggle with sin.
- ii. Jesus gave His life in His struggle with sin so we could be free from sin.
 - a. The writer acknowledges that they have suffered as they resisted sin
 - i. The cause of the conflict in their lives was sin
 - 1) Anyone and everyone who resist sin is fighting a good fight
 - 2) Sin is an enemy to both God and us
 - 3) Fighting a spiritual warfare is an honorable and necessary fight
 - 4) Our fight against sin is a fight wherein we are defending ourselves against that which would destroy us, if it gained victory over us
 - 5) We are fighting for ourselves, for our lives, therefore we must be patient and resolute until victory which will be when we are carried home.
 - ii. Every Christian is enlisted under the banner of Christ which means that we are in the Lord's army
 - 1) To strive, contend, fight against sin and sinful doctrines
 - 2) To strive, contend, fight against sinful practices, sinful habits, and sinful customs both in ourselves and in others.

Note: How do we fight against sin especially in others?

- b. The writer reminds them even though they have suffered much, others have suffered more for the have “not yet resisted unto blood (martyred as of yet).”

i. Let us understand that our Lord Jesus Who is the Captain of our Salvation

- 1) Does not place us in the hardest trials first
- 2) Our Lord trains us with sufferings that are not as difficult in preparation for the harder and more difficult sufferings and decisions that life for and in Him brings
- 3) Consider
 - a) Suffering must come
 - i) 2nd Timothy 3:12
Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
 - ii) James 1:1-3

2) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3) Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4) But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

b) Suffering, persecution, troubles cannot take us from God

- i) 1st Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

- ii) Romans 8:35, 37-39

35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ii. When we face a test, trial, temptation, let us understand that Christ in His gentleness and love is accommodating our trial to our strength.

- 1) Do not magnify your difficulty
- 2) Praise God for His abounding grace that enables you to endure and persevere
- 3) Be patient for this too shall pass, and we have not as yet resisted unto blood

4) While enduring, be thankful where you are, and uphold those who are going through much greater persecution than what we are at the moment.

iii. Let us refuse to be defeated in our trials

1) Especially when we see others who have it worse than we do

Note the poem, "Lucky I am," by Randy McClave

Some of us don't know how well we have it
In this land of ours of good and plenty,
While many say and think that their life is unfit
While their souls and stomachs are never empty.

I once cried out for a new pair of shoes
Until I saw a man who had no feet,
Then I heard a child cry for food that she refused
Then I saw another child that had nothing to eat.

I once saw a man whom had everything
Then I saw a another man who had nothing at all,
Then that homeless man to God he did sing
While the man with everything was afraid to fall.

I once knew of a woman who pitied her life
Screaming out that no one had it as worse as her,
Then I read of a woman whom died from her own knife
But, of her own problems to no one did she say a word.

I never had any holes in any of my pockets
Then once I saw a man carrying change in a can,
Then I thought about mans own work docketts
I then realized, how lucky that I truly am.

2) Look around and God will show you someone who is bearing faithfully under a cross heavier than yours, than give thanks to God for His gentleness with you.

3) When you are considering turning away from God, giving in to sin, then consider God's Words to Jeremiah in chapter 12:5 from the AmpC

But the Lord rebukes Jeremiah's impatience, saying] If you have raced with men on foot and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? And if [you take to flight] in a land of peace where you feel secure, then what will you do [when you tread the tangled maze of jungle haunted by lions] in the swelling *and* flooding of the Jordan?

2. Suffering and persecution has its place.

Note v5...

i. KJV...

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

ii. NLT...

And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you.

iii. Suffering

1) At times increases our faith

2) At times increases our patience

3) At times works to perfect us

4) At times could be chastisement so we will see the areas that needs perfecting in our lives

a. Are afflictions persecutions or fatherly rebukes and chastisement?

i. From man's point of view all affliction are persecutions.

ii. Many of our afflictions and persecutions, we cause ourselves with our attitudes and actions

1) In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made this observation in Matthew 7:6

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

2) Then Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:16

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Note: In other words, there are times to keep our mouths shut. We do not have to respond to every situation, nor do we have to offer our opinion at all times. Let the Spirit guide us in our life style and testimonies.

- iii. When we are dealing with a situation, try to back up and get God's view
 - 1) What may appear bad may be for our good
 - 2) God could be bringing us into another realm of faith and spirituality
 - 3) The problem and the affliction is an opportunity for a miracle for people of faith.
- iv. Men and governments will persecute us for our faith, but God chastises us to perfect us
- v. Men and governments will persecute us for our Christian walk, but God chastises us because we have not lived according to our confession of being a Christian.
- b. God has give us direction in His word of how we should conduct ourselves and behave when we are dealing with affliction, persecution, trouble, heartache, etc

Note: Let us avoid extreme reactions.

- i. The devil is really after me.
- ii. Nothing ever goes right
- iii. If anything is going to go wrong, it will go wrong with me.
 - i. Do not despise the chastening of the Lord
 - 1) Do not make light of afflictions
 - 2) Do not be stupid and insensible under God's thumb
 - 3) If what is happening is chastisement, then surrender patiently to the hand and rod of God as He rebukes us for sin, for when we quit struggling, life gets better quicker.
 - 4) Be careful what you say about God when you are dealing with issues
 - ii. Do not faint when you are rebuked
 - 1) Do not fret and fuss when rebuked
 - 2) Respond with faith and patience.
 - iii. Follow God's advice when facing trials, and victory will be yours

- c. Trials, tests, persecutions, temptations endured correctly even though they may be caused by God's displeasure are proofs of God's fatherly love and care for his people

Note verses 6-7 in the Nlt

6) For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.” 7) As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?

- i. The best of God's children need chastisement because we all have our faults that need to be corrected.
- ii. Though God may let others alone in their sins, He will correct sin in his own children, for the children are family which will not escape the Father's rebukes when they are wrong
- iii. No wise and good father will every ignore his children's faults, but will strive to correct them, so our Heavenly Father does the same with us because His relation to us and His affection for us demands that He guides us to enjoy a better life even if it takes chastisement.
- iv. Those allowed to continue in sin without a rebuke is a sign of alienation from the father
 - 1) These are called illegitimate children
 - 2) They may call him Father because they have been to an altar and repented, but they are the offspring of another father and not of God because their rebellion removes them from God's presence.

Note verses 7-8 in the Nlt

7) As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8) If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

- d. When we are impatient under the discipline of our heavenly Father, we are showing Him less respect than we did our earthly fathers.

Note verses 9-10 Nlt...

9) Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? 10) For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so

that we might share in his holiness.

- i. The writer commends those who were submissive to their earthly parents when as children they were corrected for “we gave them reverence” when they corrected us.
 - 1) It is the duty of children to give reverence and obedience to the just commands of their parents, and to reverence them when they correct us for disobedience.
 - 2) Parents have the authority and charge from God to correct and guide us in preparation for life
 - 3) Children are commanded to receive their correction and guidance with a positive attitude, for in doing so, they are obeying a commandment that promises long life.
 - 4) When we are stubborn, discontented, and rebellious to the authority of our parents, we just make life more difficult and we displease God.
- ii. The writer of Hebrews is recommending that we have a humble and submissive attitude toward our heavenly Father when we are under his correction, for He is greater than our parents knowing what is best for you and I.
 - 1) Earthly fathers are “fathers of our flesh” while God is “Father of our spirits.”
 - a) Our fathers on earth are instrumental in the production of our bodies which are flesh formed out of the dust of the earth produced in such a wonderful way as to house our soul and spirit, and so we owe them respect.
 - b) Our heavenly Father deals with our spirits, and so we owe Him respect also, for His correction which involves our flesh and soul is to perfect our Spirit with Him and for the saving of our soul.
 - 2) Our earthly parents “chastened us for their own pleasure,” or as the Nlt said, “For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how.”
 - a) At times earthly parents correct us from their passion, anger, and even fear
 - b) Earthly fathers do the best they know how, and we are to respect them
 - c) Our heavenly Father never makes mistakes, and He is correcting us for our own good, for our benefit and profit.
 - d) Our heavenly Father is perfecting us to be and look like Him

- 3) Earthly father correct us for a few days, while we are children
 - a) We owe them respect
 - b) Our heavenly Father corrects us throughout our lifetime, for it seems that we are always in need of being perfected more than what we are, and in doing so, we owe Him respect and reverence and thankfulness that He loves us enough to perfect us through correction.
 - c) Let us submit to the correction of God and stop squirming under His thumb
- 4) God's correction is not condemnation.
 - a) Some cry out like Job in Job 10:2
Do not condemn me, but show me wherefore thou contendest with me
 - b) Remember John 3:17

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

- c) Chastisement is not condemnation but correction

Note 1st Corinthians 11:31

i. KJV...

31) For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32) But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

ii. NLT...

31) But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. 32) Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

- d) God's chastisement, correction is to prevent the eternal death and destruction of our souls
- 3) God's chastisement and correction is so that we may live here to God, be like God, and live with God forever, so that we may have life, and life more abundantly.
- e. We, the children of God should not when under afflictions judge our heavenly Father's dealings with us according to the present moment.

Note: Instead of looking at the moment, let us look at our experiences with God, grab hold of our faith in God, and use reason to consider what we must do to move to the place God wants us in Him.

Note: We need to understand that chastening, correction in the moment is not pleasant, as noted in v11.

i. KJV...

11) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

ii. NLT...

11) No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

- 1) Chastisement, afflictions, corrections are not pleasant to our senses but grievous because the flesh feels them, is grieved by them, and groans under them.
- 2) God's reality is one of faith, so while enduring the affliction, correction, even though we may not know and understand why, we know that "good is planned for us" so God is working in us to produce greater faith, righteousness, and holiness in our lives.
 - a) Seeing things through the eyes of faith instead of natural eyes causes us to face life with greater peace and quietness
 - b) Faith enables us to endure with patience, which is the writer's desire for us

Note verses 12-13...

i. KJV...

12) Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13) And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed

ii. NLT...

12) So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. 13) Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

- c) Trouble, affliction, is prone to cause us as Christians to grow weary
- d) We must strive against this weariness believing that God has us safe within His hands and is working for our good in two ways.

- 1st. We fight against the weariness so we can run a good spiritual race for the Lord, and we need to understand that faith, patience, courage, and resolution will enable us to run and walk steadier while, will enable us to keep a straighter path, and assist us to not waver and wander for God's course set for us.
- 2nd. So that we may encourage others who are facing like tests instead of discouraging them
 - i) Let us walk in faith to encourage others
 - ii) Careless words, testimonies, and actions in tests can be discouraging to others.
 - iii) People are watching us, and they are observing how we handle life, whether with fear or faith.
- e) Facing life with faith as we endure affliction brings us to a greater degree of holiness.
 - i) This is God design for us
 - ii) As we endure patiently with faith, we have renewed strength as we wait upon the Lord and our patience is strengthened as well which enable us to be patient with those around us.