

STEADFAST FORTITUDE Sunday School- September 16, 2012

Unifying Topic: FAITH IS ENDURANCE

Lesson Text

I. Running The Good Race (Hebrews 12:1-3)

II. Suffering Is Discipline (Hebrews 12:4-11)

The Main Thought: Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People know that to win a race we sometimes have to suffer some pain, but we must keep our eyes on the goal. What help is available? The writer of Hebrews tells us there is a huge crowd of witnesses of the faith that have trained well, kept their eyes on God and Jesus, and have grown in grace and character.

Lesson Aim: To show students discipline is needed to run the Christian race.

Life Aim: To teach Christians that God will allow us to suffer so that our growth in Christ can mature.

-
- 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
- 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.
- 12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.
- 12:5 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:
- 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
- 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
- 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.
- 12:9 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?
- 12:10 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.
- 12:11 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.

HISTORY:

Hebrews 11 has been called faith's hall of fame. No doubt the author surprised his readers by this conclusion. These mighty Jewish heroes did not receive God's total reward because they died before Christ came in God's plan, they and the Christian believers (who were also enduring much testing) would be rewarded together. Once again Hebrews shows that Christianity supersedes Judaism.

LESSON:

Hebrews 12:1-3 Running The Good Race

12:1 Wherefore — meaning, because of the reason coming from the previous Chapter 11 **seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses**, — The deceased people of Chapter 11 give witness to the value and blessing of living by faith. These are the Old Testament heroes of the faith — the "*great cloud of witnesses*" surrounding us. These people are not witnessing what we are doing, per say, rather, they are bearing witness to us that God can see us through.

12:1b ...let us lay aside every weight, — We are to run as they did; run by laying aside every weight. The "*weight*" (*Gr. ogkos*) refers to that which impedes or burdens by weighing one down. It would include anything that could hinder one's effectiveness for service; whatever does not aid in the race is a weight and must be cast aside. For the diligent runner or the faithful Christian, the weight is an impediment that must be removed; **...and the sin which doth so easily beset us**, — Sin in this context could be unbelief—refusing to turn away from the Levitical sacrifices to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "*Easily beset*" or "*easily entangles*" is the sin that easily hinders us; the one that a person has been addicted to causing weakness. Therefore, it's necessary that sin has to be cast off before running the Christian race.

12:1c ...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, — Now after the race has begun, we are encouraged to run with "patience" (*Gr hypomonēs*). Since this word is not an attribute commonly associated with running, this word would be better translated as endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, constancy, and perseverance. Endurance is a quality that every distance runner must develop. It is the steady determination to keep going, regardless of the temptation to slow you down or give up. One knows that God allows the trials in order to teach more and more patience (endurance).

12:2 Looking — means to fix one's eyes and so to gaze upon **...unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;** — Jesus has blazed the trail for us and has completed the course. Though chapter 11 provided us with many champions to emulate, the supreme example of endurance is Jesus Himself. The word "author" comes from the term originator or preeminence. "Finisher" literally means Perfecter, having the idea of carrying through to perfect completion.

12:2b ...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, — Jesus persevered so that He might receive the joy of accomplishment of the Father's Will and exaltation. The cross of Christ represents the greatest suffering in history, for Jesus not only suffered physically but also experienced God's just wrath in taking upon Himself the sins of the world.

12:2c ...despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. The Jews considered that death on a cross brought great shame upon the one who died. But Jesus was looking beyond death. ¹With the anticipation of such "joy", Jesus "endured the cross" (*the physical pain*) and He "despised the shame" (*the emotional and spiritual agony of the separation of He and His Father*). Just as Jesus looked at the joy set before Him, so we must look to Jesus! Still the promise of future reward and joy gave Jesus strength to suffer despising the shame. He saw the joy that was to come when He went back to His Father in heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. "Consider" (*analogizomai*) meaning compare, reckon, count up, weigh Jesus, who endured. He provides a far better example of persistent endurance than any Old Testament saint. We cannot run with endurance if we become weary and discouraged. Observe and analyze every part of Jesus' life and conduct that we will run the race and faint not in our minds. There were five things to do to run a good Christian race:

1. Lay aside every weight v.1.
2. Lay aside the sin v.1.
3. Run with patience v.1.
4. Look unto Jesus v.2.
5. Consider Him v.3.

Hebrews 12:4-11 Suffering Is Discipline

12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Many of those whom we read about in the last chapter, died for their faith. The readers of this letter had not yet had to risk their lives. Though they may have endured "a great struggle with sufferings" they had not resisted to the point of shedding blood. How do we know this? Because they were alive reading the letter. They were still striving against sin.

12:5 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: They had not kept in mind; they had forgotten the exhortation of the scripture in Prov.3:11-12. The exhortation concerning discipline is a three-fold exhortation:

1. Do not "despise" (*meopigorei*) discipline. The word "despise" means to scorn, to make little of, or to treat lightly. If we heeded the discipline of God, then we could correct our small misbehavior and no big sin would happen. As we do, life would be much more triumphant.
2. Do not faint or give up when disciplined. The word "faint" (*ekluou*) means to give up, lose heart, to buckle under, to lose courage, or to weaken.

Discipline is only the correction of the Lord to keep us in line; to keep us focused in the right direction. We are not to take it lightly or give up and lose heart while going through it.

12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. "Chastening" means

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/he/he_28.htm

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

discipline, nurture, instruction, and chastisement. "Scourgeth"-means draws forth "blood." A father who loves his children will teach, correct, and punish them. He tries by all methods to train his children for their benefit. God disciplines us because He loves us and because we are His children. ²The very fact that He corrects us shows that He has toward us a father's feelings, and exercises toward us a paternal care. If He did not, He would let us go on without any attention, and leave us to pursue a course of sin that would involve us in ruin. To restrain and govern a child; to correct him when he errs shows that there is a parental solicitude (*concern*) for him, and that he is not an outcast. I can't see any scourging or flogging going on to the point of blood to discipline. ³This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint (*a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible*). The meaning is the same as in the former part of the verse that every one who becomes a child of God is treated by Him with that watchful care which shows that He sustains toward him the paternal relation.

12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

There is an "if" to begin this verse because you can always choose not to endure. You have a "free will." Your response toward "if", may be I will: 1.) accept it with resignation. 2.) accept it with self-pity.

3.) be angry and resent God for it. 4.) or we can accept it gratefully.

3. Endure the chastening of God. This is the third part of the three-fold exhortation.

We are God's sons, and as His sons, He will discipline us whether we like it or not. He deals with us as sons who are under the Father's covering, to live the better life He desires us to live, and that calls for us to endure the chastening of God. We are to stand fast against all trials and sufferings. We are to become soft to the guidance and urgings of the Spirit of God. There are too many things that would love to attack and keep us down. God's way of guidance is always the best way for us. To endure is to follow the Word of God and His Spirit in the tough times; follow the urgings and convictions within our hearts when they are of God. God is disciplining us, teaching, and correcting us because He loves us as our Father.

12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. If a person is not disciplined by God, then he knows something: he is not a son of God, he is an illegitimate child; he is only a person who professes to be God's but who is not. You know sometimes you see others getting away with everything and you are the one who God is always talking to, telling you "don't do that" or "you go apologize." Well, then you know you are a son being taken care of (chastised) by the Father; and you know who the others are following. The purpose of discipline is fourfold.

1. God disciplines us to assure us that we are His children. Unless a person is taught, instructed, disciplined, and corrected by the Spirit of God, he is not a son of God.

12:9 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? Our human fathers correct us, and we respect them for it. We knew to obey them after they corrected and whipped us. And as we had gotten older, we somehow now understand and thanked them for what they did. It didn't kill us; it made us stronger. Should we not expect the same from the "Father of spirits", and submit to His correction? God knew what parents we would have because He knows everyone of His creations.

2. God disciplines us to save us and to stir us to truly live. He saves us to live in this life and the life to come. Is He not trying to save us from the wrath to come? He is saving us to live forever; ⁴training us for the life which never ends. So when He disciplines us, we should be happy to accept it. We know that He does it, or allows it, so that we may learn how to live. He knows what is best for us and He wants it for us.

12:10 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. Our earthly fathers corrected us after their own pleasure. Sometimes they were severe,

² <http://www.godvine.com/bible/Hebrews/12-6>

³ <http://www.godvine.com/bible/Hebrews/12-6>

⁴ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/hebrews-lbw.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

other times concerned only for their own interest. But our heavenly Father always corrects us for our profit (*good*) that we might share in his holiness. The persistent endurance which God desires of His people is not to weaken them but to strengthen them. It is to produce maturity and holiness. When passing through affliction, one must always remember that it is brief. With our earthly fathers it was for a few days. Remember holiness means to be different; to be completely and wholly set apart and separated from imperfection and impurity.

3. God disciplines us for our good, to make us partakers of His holiness. The more sin and evil we do, the less like God we become. The less sin and evil we do, the more like God we become.

12:11 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. We didn't like it when our earthly fathers chastised us; it wasn't a joy at the time. We really hated it. However, we never forgot the lessons; we never forgot what it taught us. With God, there is also an "*afterward*", during which the benefit of our training is enjoyed; there is a yield of fruit harvested.

4. God disciplines us so that we can bear the fruit of peace and righteousness. The discipline and correction may be grievous and painful to bear at first, but it will bring peace and righteousness if we will only bear it. It's just like the farmer plowing up the fallow ground for the fruit of harvest to come forth. The plowing of the ground is hard to bear and offensive, but afterward...comes the yield.

SUMMARY:

⁵The heroes of faith in Chapter 11 are examples of those who trusted in God. Their example encourages us to trust God in the same way. God did not fail them. We are like runners in a race. The race contends with discipline and all of us must run a good race. The runner makes sure that his weight is not too heavy. While he is running, he does not carry or wear anything he does not need. He trains himself so that he becomes strong to win. He throws off anything that would slow him down. ⁶Our focus must be upon the Lord as we "*run the good race*" of faith. We might "*glance*" at others (Heb.11), but we are to "*gaze*" upon the Lord our Savior. He is the author and finisher, meaning He blazed the trail and completed the course of our faith. With joy He endured death on the cross, despising the shame, but counted it an honor to be worthy to suffer shame, for He was exalted to the highest place of dignity and honor in the universe—sitting on the right hand of the throne of God. There were many who were against Him. There will be many who are against us, because of our faith in Him. As we consider Christ, we will not become weary or fainthearted (12:1-3).

The Lord does not call upon Believers to go to the Cross and shed their blood regarding the resistance of sin. Jesus has already done that for us. However, speaking to Believers as sons, they weren't to forget the exhortation which came from Proverbs: don't despise the chastening of the Lord; don't faint when you've been rebuked by Him; and endure the chastening of the Lord. It lets us know that, if a son, you will be chastised by the Father just as you were corrected by earthly fathers, for it will lead to the peaceable fruit of righteousness and share in His holiness.

If you looked at the Olympics at any time, some ran the race or jumped on the bars with pain. They endured with steadfast fortitude to receive the prize. They were disciplined to keep going in spite of the pain. It would only be one shot at winning the goal. In the Christian race there is the discipline of you laying aside every weigh and sin that hinders you, and would run with patience the race set before you. Being a son, the Father will chasten those that are His and those that He loves. It may not seem great at the time, but it yields a harvest of righteousness and peace. Our best training comes from God. Will you have faith to endure?

APPLICATION:

To have a teachable spirit, you have to submit. To have steadfast fortitude (*staying power*), you have to endure.

⁵ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/hebrews-lbw.htm>

⁶ http://executableoutlines.com/he/he_28.htm

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>