

Better

A Study of Hebrews • Lesson 10

Hebrews 12-13 - "Run the Race"

Hebrews 12:1-2

The great cloud of witnesses is not looking at *you* and cheering *you* on, they are looking to Jesus, standing witness to the fact that He is who He says He is and He does what He says He will do. They are witnesses to the faithfulness of God to all generations, fixing their eyes on Him.

Therefore, let's be like them, running with endurance - Athlete metaphors - In the Greco Roman world, athletes literally wore nothing to the race. They laid aside everything that could encumber them.

The Old Testament sacrificial system was the shadow. Now the substance has come. Lay aside the shadow. Lay aside your sin. How? By looking to Jesus - He is the substance. This is not a sprint, it is a marathon that requires endurance. It is costly but worth it. It requires training. We train in the Word.

Jesus is our founder (Alpha) and perfecter (Omega). For the Joy set before Him - that is future joy - He was willing to endure for a little while, despising the shame of the cross, now seated at the right hand of the majesty of God (fourth mention of Him being seated), soon all enemies will be His footstool.

We fix our eyes on Jesus, the substance - note that we just read the Hall of Faith in Chapter 11 - reading about those whose eyes were fixed on the promise, the shadow - those whose faith is now sight.

Hebrews 12:3-6

You have met with some rejection and more is likely. Know that the race has been run before you and Jesus identifies with you, He sympathizes with you. He is God with you.

Another aspect of son-ship is that if you are His He will discipline you. Discipline is noted 9 times in 7 verses plus 1 "chastise" for an even 10 references!

Proverbs 3:11-12 is quoted

We tend to see discipline as punishment but remember that your sins have already been punished. Jesus took the punishment for our sins already on the cross. Debt paid. The difficulties He sends are used by God to train us.

Athletes need discipline. Discipline is not pleasant at the time.

Hebrews 12:7-11 - He is a Better Father. This is what a good father does. Who does not want the peaceable fruit of righteousness? God will allow difficulty in your life in order to produce in you:

- Maturity
- Completeness
- “Perfection”
- Peaceful fruit of righteousness

Our earthly parents, even the best, were limited by time and their own human wisdom. Children can look back on their childhoods and think about how they might have done things differently. But when we are in heaven, we will NEVER debrief God and say we were treated unwisely or unfairly by Him - we will rejoice at the fruit of peace produced by His discipline.

Hebrews 12:12 - So because discipline is good for you, get this training.

Hebrews 12:13-14

Strive for peace with everyone - with God and with man. Strive to be a peacemaker. Note that this may bring opposition or persecution. See the beatitudes. Being a peacemaker makes the fractious person more fractious. Strive anyways because without holiness no one will see the Lord. A peacemaker will look alien and strange to everyone but it is worth it.

Hebrews 12:15-16

Ways to live a life of holiness:

Esau - he let his appetite and immediate needs drive his decisions. He didn't value the unseen, (his birthright) but only the seen, (the stew). He was unholy due to pragmatism.

The sexually immoral are in the same way only valuing what is seen and immediate, also pragmatism.

Hebrews 12:16

Esau is an example of wanting the benefits of God and not God Himself but later seeing his mistake when it is too late. He is an example of the Word falling on rocky or hard soil.

Hebrews 12:18-21

This is a short retelling of parts of Exodus 19

Mt. Sinai was the thundering, terrifying mountain where the people were told to stay back from God's presence/do not touch. This was the visible shadow.

Hebrews 12:22-24

But you have come to Mt. Zion, a Better Mountain, the invisible substance - By Faith - Draw Near - A Better Covenant - that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Cain said, “Am I my brother's keeper?” but Jesus says, “I am indeed my brother's keeper” because the blood of Christ speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. How?

Abel's blood

- Cries out for justice against sin
- Exposes the horror of sin (the first murder)

- Marks the truth of God's Word that "on the day you eat of the fruit you will surely die" and so it began. This was the first recorded death

Christ's blood

- Cries out mercy for sinners
- Covers the horror of all sin
- It is finished - Christ's blood brings life to those who were as good as dead less concern about your comfort in this life. Faith in what is not seen.

Hebrews 12:25

5th and Final Warning: Don't refuse Him who is speaking.

Parallels with Mt. Sinai (God speaks and you need to listen - but also stay away) and Mt Zion (God speaks to you and you need to Be faithful - draw near)

Hebrews 12:26-27

At the end of the age all will be shaken and all blinders will fall so we will see fully. Some things are already beginning to shake.

Hebrews 12:28-29

God still dwells on Mt. Zion, the Kingdom that can't be shaken, but don't forget He is an all consuming fire.

In Deut - Israel stood in front of Mt. Sinai and they knew they would die if they approached. So, Moses was their mediator. God's reaction: *"Oh that they would always have feared me like this"*

Perfect love casts out fear BUT fear of the Lord is foundational to right faithfulness. It is not terror, it is reverence and awe, honor and wonderment. He is near but He also transcends in Heaven. All acceptable forms of worship offered to Him are from this reference point. We revere and honor Him but regard Him with awe and wonderment. Who is like Him? None! He is a consuming fire and because of Christ we will not be consumed but let's not forget that the God who calls us near is also the God who shook Mt. Sinai.

Hebrews 13:1-6

Pleasing sacrifices to God are all characterized by familial love, calling us into blessed community, expressed by:

- Hospitality
- Empathy
- Fidelity
- Charity/Generosity

Why generosity? We can't be generous unless our lives are free from the love of money. If we trust that God is who He says He is, we regard possessions differently. We consider that we are stewards and a distributions point, that we have received from Him in order to bless others. This mindset is evidence of our freedom.

Psalm 118:6 quoted

A fear of man can cause us to offer a sacrifice not pleasing to God.

Unbelief stems from fear that God is not who He says He is/won't do what He says He will do, and thus we turn to worship the opinions of others instead of God on high. How many decisions are based on fear of loss? We can lose money but not our inheritance.

Hebrews 13:7-8

Consider our leaders and imitate their faith. Remember Jesus is the same yesterday today and forever. Why does this statement follow? Because the Hall of Fame in Chapter 11 notes faithful people worthy imitating but they were NOT Jesus - they were still flawed humans. Same with our leaders. Remember they are not Jesus but still worth imitating their faithfulness.

Hebrews 13:9-15

Don't be led away by novel teachings. Dallas Willard – teaching the Bible is to teach “old truths recently forgotten.” Jesus doesn't change but our memories are slow. There is nothing novel in the Bible. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever.

We are not strengthened by the Old Testament sacrifices, which were shadows. We are now, under the New Covenant, strengthened by His Grace.

We are priests of the Living God when we partake of the Lord's Supper. We are engaging in the fulfillment, which is more precious than anything in the temple. Jesus Christ was the sacrifice. Let us go to Him outside the camp - we can identify with Him even if it means suffering unto death because we have no lasting city here.

Hebrews 13:16

Continually offer up a sacrifice of praise - yes, indeed, sing praises to God!!! But more than this: Continually acknowledge His Name - let everything you do/say/how you live - demonstrate your submission to Him - and do good.

“Lips that acknowledge His Name” was a costly thing for the original audience. They were going outside the camp to endure rejection. How much more should we make known that He is our Lord?

Hebrews 13:17-19

This is not blind submission to leaders but rather means that we should encourage our leaders, especially through prayer. They are held to a higher standard and they will give an account. They are concerned for the souls of the flock. Most of the time, those who disagree with leaders do not find fault with orthodoxy but with personal preference issues. To be fractious about non-soul level issues only makes their job harder and is not to anyone's benefit.

Hebrews 13:20-21

The author ends the letter as he began it - noting the supremacy of Christ - He is BETTER!

Hebrews 13:22 - interesting that the author of this letter on the supremacy of Christ says it is “brief”

Hebrews 13:23-25

The author here is offering the pleasing sacrifice, and letting brotherly love continue as he sends greetings--

We don't even know the name of the author of Hebrews.. can you serve and honor God even if no one ever knows or remembers your name? Let Jesus' Name be known - his Name is BETTER.

Jesus Only Jesus - Matt Redman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QjbugX8hY0>