

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

BOOK OF HEBREWS

ENDURANCE (HEBREWS 12:1-11)

THE PAST SAINTS CHEER ON THE PRESENT

The heroes of the faith mentioned in chapter 11 is a "cloud of witnesses" that along with God and the angels cheer us on to complete our mission on earth

- **God is all about community**, and the testimonies of those before us and around us encourage us to press forward. **We need each other!**

ENCOURAGEMENT SHOULD LEAD TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

As we mature, we cast aside any hindrance that would cause us to sin. We're called to separate from any thought, attitude, or action that impedes our growth. Without the "weight and sin" we can effectively live out the life God has for us.

JESUS IS THE BEST EXAMPLE OF HOW TO ENDURE

He showed perfect endurance through the cross. If we keep focusing on who we're following, we will live according to His will. **Our problem is an unhealthy fixation on everything other than Christ.** These things may not be evil in and of themselves but **have become distractions from our Pacesetter.**

AS WE SUFFER, WE MUST REFLECT ON CHRIST

There is a comfort in the fact that our Creator has suffered far worse than we ever will, and that we can avoid faintness of heart if our attention is on Him and not solely on our circumstances. We must "cast our cares on Him" (Psalm 55:22)

AS CHILDREN, WE ARE DISCIPLINED BY THE FATHER

God uses discipline to create holiness in His followers. The recipients of Hebrews had suffered, but not to "the point of shedding blood" like Jesus. This implies some had turned on Christ in order to avoid persecution.

- **On some level, all of us will be tempted to turn.** Christ was not kidding when He mentioned our cross (Matthew 16:24)

WE TEND TO TAKE DISCIPLINE FOR GRANTED

Proverbs 3:11-12 mentions God disciplines those He loves, and knowing that we should be appreciative of God's attention on us and His willingness to make us better.

- There are long-term benefits of trials, and **we must trust that God is maturing us for His purposes through our circumstances.**

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO INSTRUCTION?

We sometimes are so obsessed with placing blame on circumstances that we forget to ask the important question, **what am I to learn in these circumstances?**

- Believers are not "illegitimate children" but "sons" of the King, and He wants to create something special in us, not zap us with lightning bolts.

EARTHLY PARENTS DISCIPLINE BASED ON "WHAT SEEMED GOOD TO THEM."

God disciplines us in order for us to "share in His holiness." In other words, **to make us even more in His image with our character and mindset.**

- We love to teach grace, but we must know that **grace is shown so we are able to conform to the holiness of God.**

"NO DISCIPLINE SEEMS ENJOYABLE AT THE TIME"

V11 nails it. **It sucks to go through discipline and hard times, but when we make it through, we come out more enlightened and mature.** We also have more to offer people around us and we "yield the fruit of peace and righteousness."

LIVING IT (HEBREWS 12:12-17)

LOOKING AT HIM AND UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLINE

V12-13 gives hope to the people who have "tired hands and weakened knees." If we are looking to Jesus and understand that He disciplines those He loves for our benefit, we will be encouraged. In the church community, some will be strong while others are weak. This is why we must walk with each other.

WITH CHRIST'S HELP WE WALK A LEVEL PATH

We are to "Pursue peace with everyone." Hard times often make us look out for ourselves more than anyone else, but believers are called to unify, not divide.

- Second, **we are to seek holiness.** We are to hate evil and love purity (Matthew 5:8) and live in a manner that pleases God by following His commands.

WE MUST ALSO BE ALERT (V15)

First, so people don't fall short of the grace of God. **We are to assist those who are struggling in their faith and help bear their burdens** (Galatians 6:2)

- Second, we must prevent people from growing bitter. **We must identify and stop any actions that may contaminate the minds and hearts of believers**

IF WE ARE NOT ALERT, THE RESULT IS CATASTROPHIC

- If we are not engaged in a walk with God in our church community we will end up like Esau who sold his inheritance rights for quick satisfaction (Genesis 25).

- **Without a connection to God and church, we will become "immoral and irreverent" to God.** This is an extremely dangerous road to travel.

Grace, and the possible abuse of it: Jesus is quick to forgive and restore (Colossians 3:13), but the abuse of grace leads to a heart that forgets what grace truly is and eventually turns from Him. (Romans 1:28, 6:1)

WE HAVE DIRECTION (HEBREWS 12:18-24)

THE OLD WAY STANDS IN CONTRAST TO THE NEW

The separation of God's people under that law is contrasted by the approachableness under the gospel. We can now approach the throne with confidence (4:16).

- The downside is if **we reject such a gracious invitation, the consequences are much more severe than the OT.**

NOT MT. SINAI, BUT MT. ZION (V22)

Mt. Sinai is where the Law was given to Moses. When he received them, it was a scary event for many onlookers. V22 alludes to the shift from the dread of the Jews to the new spiritual approach we can have after the cross.

MT. ZION IS NOT JUST REFERRING TO THE AFTERLIFE

When we become devoted followers of Christ we get to experience a taste of heaven now. **We can receive contentment and grace to meet our daily needs.**

- There is a fulfillment we receive at conversion, but the full consummation of being in community with God is received in "Zion" or heaven.

WE ARE CITIZENS THAT HAVE A HEALTHY FEAR OF GOD

Even though we are the "firstborn," or born again into God's family, we are to approach God as the "Judge of all."

- This means we should respect God and be aware of the dangers of turning from the truth. We must be not only hearers of the Word but doers (James 1:22)

HIS BLOOD IS BETTER THAN THE BLOOD OF ABEL

Jesus is the "mediator of a new covenant," that is better than the promise Abel lived under. Jesus enables us to be reconciled with the Father, regardless of what we've done. **The blood of Jesus proclaims forgiveness, reconciliation, and spiritual power to all that believe.**

SHAKEN BY FIRE (HEBREWS 12:25-29)

THEY HAD REJECTED A WARNING FROM EARTH

The exodus Jews for the most part rejected the warnings of God given through visible and audible demonstrations and through the Law.

- Presently, God speaks to us "from heaven" through the work that Christ did through the cross, and the work He presently does in pursuing us in His grace

HE PROMISES TO SHAKE ALL THINGS TO THE CORE

V26-27 shows that God once shook the earth to get the attention of His people, but in time, God will shake all things and show what will truly stand. This is referring to the final judgment of Christ on all humanity.

- **If we are not distracted or allured away, we can firmly stand on the only Kingdom that will never pass away.**

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO SUCH AN OFFER?

First, **we respond to the knowledge of the cross with thankfulness and humility.** Do we meditate on the enormity of what Jesus has done?

- Second, **we respond in worship.** We show reverence, joy, hard work, praise, and servitude to Christ. Worship is singing and lifting hands, but it is also **how we live**

OUR GOD IS A "CONSUMING FIRE"

We revere and are in awe of God because He is a consuming fire that refines all things. We celebrate grace, but God's character is balanced by His righteousness.

- We cannot expect mercy if we willingly turn from Christ to sin, rebellion, or false gods. **We must show our faith by how we live in obedience to God.**

ALL THINGS WILL BE SHAKEN

- Revelation 18 tells about the fall of a city that is the epicenter of all culture, technology, arts, materialism, and earthly pleasure, confirming the theme of Hebrews 12—**All things will be shaken.**
- It is inevitable that hard times will come, because we live in a broken world, but also because Christ sets out to refine us like gold (1 Peter 1:7).
- **What are we tethered to?** What are we to learn in our times of trouble? Where do we run in our unstable hours?