

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 26TH–27TH, 2025 // HEBREWS

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES (HEBREWS 12:1–2) “THEREFORE...”

The recipients of Hebrews were facing great temptation to turn away from their faith and back to the Jewish religion.

- In Chapter 11, we see the life of faith continues to follow God in the expectation of an eternal and enduring reward.
- Because of this, we're encouraged to continue in obedient faith, just like the heroes of the O.T.

“...A LARGE CLOUD OF WITNESSES SURROUNDING US...”

The picture is of a heavenly grandstand of those who went before us and have finished their race cheering us on as we run our race.

- The idea of a “cloud of witnesses” doesn't conclusively prove that the saints before us actively observe everything we do (it might suggest this, but it doesn't prove it)—the point is that their examples encourage us.

“...LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY HINDRANCE...”

Because there are so many faithful heroes of the faith who endured to the end and are now receiving their heavenly reward, let's run our race well. They endured to the end, and so can we!

- We must not let any sin or spiritual hindrance slow us down or ensnare us. We are to lay aside anything that is preventing us from loving and serving Jesus with everything we've got.

“LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE...”

This race of faith is a long haul, and it requires patience and wisdom.

- The life of faith requires tenacity and resilience: the qualities of determination and persistence despite challenges and obstacles.
- Zeal without character, wisdom, or teachability leads to burnout. Spiritual endurance is built by a lifestyle of spiritual discipline/training.

“...KEEPING OUR EYES ON JESUS”

There is a finish line for your race. At that finish line, there is a grandstand of heavenly heroes, and also the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus.

- The reward Jesus has for you is better than any of the painful and difficult moments you may experience during your race.
- Keep your eyes on Jesus and the finish line!

“FOR THE JOY THAT LAY BEFORE HIM, HE ENDURED...”

Jesus completed His race perfectly and endured the shame and pain of the cross, even when He could have called on His Father and called the whole thing off (Mt. 26:53).

- How did He endure the cross? For the “joy that lay before Him”—the reward, blessings, and victory that lay on the other side of His obedience motivated Him to endure!

The world entices us with immediate gratification—the instant pleasures of sin and a life lived in the pursuit of self-satisfaction in all its forms.

- There is always a price to pay for a life that chooses the temporal pleasure of sin over God.
- The life of faith is the ultimate exercise in delayed gratification: it is the deliberate choice to resist immediate gratification for a greater, long-term reward.

THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE (HEBREWS 12:3–13) CONSIDER JESUS (VS. 3–4)

These Believers endured hostility and persecution just as Jesus did! If the same Spirit that was in Jesus dwells in us, we too can avoid growing weary and giving up.

- For all the difficulty these Believers had faced, they had not had to shed any blood over it.
- The suffering we go through could always be worse.

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW HARD TIMES? (VS. 5–6)

One reason for their discouragement may have been that they saw their difficulties as pointless and meaningless.

- Have we forgotten? God sometimes allows His children to go through hard times and trials as a form of His loving discipline.
- Discipline is God's loving tool for correction, growth, and maturity.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT GOD'S DISCIPLINE:

1. Discipline is not condemnation, but correction and teaching—Jesus took our condemnation.
2. God's discipline is seen when He grows us through discipleship and spiritual training.
3. God's discipline is seen through trials, suffering, and difficulties.
4. God's discipline is seen when He reproves us through consequences when we sin.

A SIGN THAT WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN (VS. 7–8)

If you're a Christian, God has an agenda and a perfect program for your life to make you look like Jesus and help you bear fruit.

- Your Father knows exactly what discipline you need, when you need it, and how to give it.
- God's discipline is a sign of His love for you. If we're experiencing it, we're to endure it. If we never experience it, then we're not His children.

BETTER THAN ANY EARTHLY FATHER (VS. 9–10)

Respectable, godly fathers are dads who love their kids by disciplining them. Children who aren't disciplined by their dads make life unpleasant and miserable for everyone around them (including themselves).

- If we know God's discipline for us is because of His love for us as our perfect dad, we should submit to and respect Him.

THE RESULT OF DISCIPLINE (VS. 11)

Nobody enjoys discipline—it's always painful.

- Later, however, we can look back and see the result of that discipline and training is the fruit of righteousness.
- Simply put, there are some aspects of your character as a Christian that can't be grown unless God takes you through something difficult and painful.

BE ENCOURAGED, BE STRONG (VS. 12–13)

Tired hands and weak knees appear in people who are absolutely exhausted and demoralized.

- When we understand that the pain and suffering we're going through aren't meaningless, but are shaping us, it gives us the strength and encouragement to keep moving forward.
- We must understand that our Father loves us, He's got a plan for us, and move forward.

PURSUING HOLINESS (HEBREWS 12:14–24) THREE MORAL IMPERATIVES (VS. 14–15)

1. “Pursue peace with everyone.” Constant conflict, bickering, gossip, drama, and fighting are not to characterize our lives as Christians.
2. “Pursue...holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.” If we are not pursuing holiness, we cannot say we are running toward heaven.
3. Make sure to care for others in your community and be forgiving and gracious (no “root of bitterness”).

In Genesis 25, Isaac's son Esau sold his inheritance rights to his brother Jacob for a bowl of soup. He gave up his spiritual portion for the temporary gratification of his flesh (v. 16).

- The temporary pleasures of immorality are just like that bowl of soup! It may taste really good for a few moments, but after it's gone and we realize how much we gave up for those brief moments of pleasure, we're absolutely horrified.

Esau apparently felt a lot of sorrow and regret for his choice of selling his birthright and he wept bitterly because of it (Gen. 27:38).

- Although he felt terrible and regretted the consequences of his sinful choice, Esau never really repented (v. 17).
- There is a difference between regret and repentance—repentance requires a hatred of sin and a commitment to stop, not just tears.

At the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, there was blazing fire, darkness, gloom, and a storm—God's presence on that mountain was so powerful and fearful no one was allowed to come near or touch the mountain (vs. 18–20).

- Even just the sound of God giving Moses the law was so terrifying that the people begged for it to stop (v. 19).
- Even Moses was scared (v. 21)!

The separation of God from His people under the law stands in stark contrast with God's approachableness under the new covenant.

- While the people of God were not permitted to approach God at Mt. Sinai under the old covenant, because of the new covenant, we are invited to approach God at Mt. Zion (v. 22).
- Mount Zion represents the true worship of God in a heavenly (not earthly) place.

Jerusalem symbolizes God's people in community with Him.

- The “myriad of angels,” “festive gathering,” and “assembly of names written in heaven” is language that indicates God's victory, favor, and pleasure (v. 23).
- Through Jesus, we've come to something better—something joyful, powerful, and permanent.
- Heaven is a place full of joy, not fear.

Live a holy life that's pleasing to God, but don't live in fear. Unlike Mount Sinai, where God's holiness brought fear and distance, Mount Zion is about closeness, joy, and access through Jesus (v. 24).

- You have hope that cannot be shaken—even if life is hard, your destination is sure.
- You are heading toward a Kingdom filled with joy, justice, peace, and perfect love.

A CONSUMING FIRE (HEBREWS 12:25–29)

We have it so good—all the goodness, glory, and beauty of Mount Zion, not Mount Sinai!

- We have the perfect and finished work and the new covenant through Jesus.
- But if we choose to refuse this from God, we cannot ignore the consequences.
- There were consequences for rebelling at Mt. Sinai, and there will be even worse consequences for rejecting Jesus (vs. 25–26).

When God gave the law at Mt. Sinai, the earth shook (Exodus 19:18).

- But when Jesus returns, everything that can be shaken is going to be shaken (v. 27).
- The entire universe (“not only the earth but also the heavens”) is going to be shaken in the white-hot fires of God's perfect, furious judgment.
- If we reject Jesus, we set ourselves up in the crosshairs of that terrible judgment.

The only thing that will remain and never be shaken is God's Kingdom. This is what we receive as a reward if we finish our race (v. 28).

- Because of this, we are to serve God in an acceptable manner with reverence and awe.
- That reverence and awe are linked to the realization that our God is a “consuming fire.” His power and judgment are great (v. 29).

THE GREAT LIE

- The great lie is that the pursuit of pleasure, comfort, convenience, and the life of ease is the path to lasting happiness and fulfillment.
- This is the path of immediate gratification via sin.
- The easy road will always be the popular road that will seem to be the most appealing.
- “The road [is] broad that leads to destruction” (Mt. 7:13).

WHY DOES THIS ROAD LEAD TO DESTRUCTION?

- Temporary and fleeting: for moments of pleasure, we sometimes sacrifice everything.
- False promises: it leads to a cycle of us seeking more and more until we're led to death itself.
- Distraction from reality: it diverts us from the realities of heaven, hell, and judgment.
- Enslaving: these pleasures we live for ultimately will end up controlling and enslaving us.

THE GREAT PARADOX: DISCIPLINE EQUALS FREEDOM

- Freedom, which is what we want, is not achieved by simply having permission to do whatever we want, but rather by having the ability to do good and grow into what we are meant to be.
- Submitting to the Lord's discipline (His program for growing, maturing, correcting, and strengthening us) is painful, but it is the path to freedom and holiness in our Christian life.

FINISHING YOUR RACE

- This narrow road that leads to life is a marathon, not a sprint. If you are on it, you will need endurance (endurance is built via training).
- There is a prize waiting for you at the finish line that will make all the difficulties and pains of the race seem so small and insignificant.
- What sins and hindrances do you need to lay aside? What discipline do you need to embrace?