

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Part IV

STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-ONE - HEBREWS 12:1-13

If you've called many of these corporations you realize that you don't usually talk to a human being anymore you speak to a computer.

And you press the buttons.

**There is now a Psychiatric Hotline.
The phone rings and it says:**

Welcome to the Psychiatric Hotline.

If you're an obsessive/compulsive, press 1 repeatedly.

**If you are codependent,
please ask someone to press 2 for you.**

**If you have multiple personalities,
please press 3, 4, 5 and 6.**

**If you are a paranoid/delusional, we know who you are
and what you want.**

Just stay on the line so we can trace the call.

If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a little voice will tell you which number to press.

If you are manic/depressive, it doesn't matter which number you press. No one's going to answer.

The writer to the book of Hebrews is writing to a group of people that he loves very dearly.

And he is hoping with compassion that these people will not forsake their relationship to Christ and go back under Judaism.

The reason that he feels that way is because the plan of God is for each of us to have a personal relationship with Christ.

And out of that relationship have the security of an eternal destiny.

So he has spent ten chapters describing the superiority of ones relationship to Christ.

After that he starts to put the principles in people.

He takes the facts and he puts them in flesh.

In these past few weeks, we've had a great time looking at God's Hall of Faith.

**As we've looked at that Hall of Faith
we've seen some wonderful people
who've stayed by the stuff.**

**Who hung in there when it got difficult,
and who continued to believe and
trust in God and
they were faithful to finish.**

**I think one of the things we learned last week
is that your faith is not demonstrated
when you get everything you want.**

**You are not demonstrating to me
the quality of your faith
by the fact that you are
healthy, wealthy and wise today.**

**You are demonstrating to me the quality of your faith
when you are really having a hard time and
you are still trusting in God
that He's on the throne and
He knows, what He is doing.**

**You see, God is sovereign and He has a perfect plan
for our lives and
He doesn't tell us all the details.**

**Since we can't comprehend that,
we have to reach out in faith and trust Him,
knowing that He knows what's best.**

I love the way that Tony Evans defines faith.

“Faith is trusting God when He’s not doing what I want and when He’s not conforming at all to my desires.”

Remember many of these people in Chapter 11 died even without the promises, without the fulfillment, but they died in faith as we talked about last week.

Chapters 1-10 have been primarily doctrinal, it’s all teaching.

Then chapter 11, the author wants you to know that others did it, so why can’t you?

Now as we come to chapters 12 and 13, the author puts on his other hat and he begins to exhort and he begins to challenge them.

The writer uses the illustration of a race here to start today’s study for us.

So we are going to the Olympic stadium as the scene of the study opens.

And he wants to really challenge you with something.

v. 1 Therefore, since we are having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us be running with perseverance the race lying before us,

The word “**THEREFORE**” would take us back to what he said in chapter 10.

It would be just like you took chapter 11 and just pulled it out because all chapter 11 is, is just stories of people who illustrate the facts.

If we took that out we would read something like this at the end of chapter 10.

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which is having a great reward. For you are having need of perseverance, in order that, having done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.”

So the word **THEREFORE** is for this very reason, therefore in view of the fact that because I am exercising faith I am going to do three things:

1. I am going to do whatever God commands me no matter how difficult it is.

2. I am going to endure whatever God appoints no matter how bad it is. And

3. I am going to obtain the promises no matter how much they may seem unobtainable.

I am going to be a person who exercises faith.

**“Therefore,” he says, “since we” also
“are having so great a cloud of witnesses.”**

**When you see the word SINCE in a verse
what does that tell you?**

**Everything that follows the word SINCE
refers to an obligation and responsibility.**

**Let me use it in a sentence.
Therefore *since* I’m a parent
I have a responsibility to my children.**

**Therefore *since* whatever follows
is an obligation and responsibility.**

**“Therefore since we are having so great a cloud of
witnesses surrounding us.”**

Now who is this great cloud? It’s Hebrews 11.

The picture here is, you have the stadium and it's full of people sitting down who have already run their race.

They have already finished the marathon of life.

They have been successful.

They are sitting in the stands.

**They are speaking to you out of their legacy,
that it is worth it and
to hang in there and
to keep going, and
you are not going to believe
what God has prepared for you
in the future.**

So since they did it, you can too!

“Since we are having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,” now you have two LET US's.

These are the LET US statements.

When you have a LET US, it's a command.

So we have two commands in view of what we have just described.

1. “LET US also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us.”

2. “LET US be running with perseverance the race lying before us.”

Laying aside some things.

What do you do when you get ready to run a race?

You strip down don't you?

I mean you take off your warm up suit and your hat and your gloves and everything else unless it's just miserably cold.

And you try to get as light as you can to run.

This word really describes weight.

You lay aside every encumbrance.

You put aside the things that weight us down.

If your going to be a champion, you have to train like a champion.

And part of it, is getting your orientation right and letting go of the stuff that you don't need anymore.

**What are some of the weights
I need to get rid of?**

Well thanks for asking.

**Drinking, smoking, TV, credit cards, banana cream pie,
golf, bridge, indebtedness, pride, gossip, rationalizing,
relationships that aren't right, your personal weight,
certain music, the Internet, talking on the cell phone.**

**What is it that consumes your time and
you have to strip it out and
say no to some of that stuff
so you can say yes
to the good stuff?**

In Philippians 3:8 Paul said:

**“I count all things to be loss in view of the
surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,
for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and
count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,”**

**“Let us lay aside every encumbrance” and
then the next phrase
“and the sin which so easily entangles us.”**

What is the sin that trips up my feet?

**To those Hebrew Christians it may be
the sin of unbelief.**

They actually don't believe that they can finish the race so they're going to quit and go back and live under Judaism.

What are they thinking in their minds?

They are thinking, "Oh it's not worth it."

"We can't make it."

"It's too hard."

Their thought process entangles them, it convinces them, that they need to drop out.

Now I don't know if that's your problem or not but what is the sin which so easily entangles you?

2 Timothy 2:3-4

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

There are entanglements out there like minefields.

They are waiting to blow up all around you and to wound you and to keep you and to knock you out of the race and to keep you from finishing.

Now recognize it and recognize that you not only

lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles itself around your feet but the next one is positive.

Now look at the next LET US.

“Let us be running with perseverance the race lying before us.”

In view of that, I will persevere and I will stay focused on the finish line.

I run with perseverance the race that lies before me.

We don't teach perseverance do we in faith?

We teach patience.

Patience and perseverance are so different.

Patience is sitting around waiting for it to happen and perseverance is making it happen.

It's just a total difference in orientation.

I run with perseverance the race.

The Greek word for race is AGON from which we get AGONY.

Any runner will tell you that running is agony.

It feels so good when you quit.

Now has anybody ever told you that the Christian life is persevering the agony?

Oh no, they never tell you that.

So we might say, “I’m persevering the agony and I’m running the race that is lying before me.”

Now what is the race that’s lying before us?

That’s the will of God for your life.

God has a sovereign program for your spiritual development.

He has a sovereign plan for your life.

Maximum fulfillment comes when you are in the center of that will for your life and you know Him.

Now that creates another problem doesn’t it?

You know to a lot of people the will of God is kind of like a little girl that got a pincushion from her auntie for Christmas.

And her mother made her write a note of thank you.

**She wrote the note of thank you she said,
Dear auntie, thank you for the pincushion.
I've always wanted one, but not very much.**

**Maybe you feel like that today, about the will of God
but listen that's a lie from Satan.**

**It's going to be the most exciting, dynamic, fulfilling
experience for you to be in,
the center of the will of God,
even when you're persevering the agony.**

You can know you have somebody there with you.

**v. 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the originator and
perfecter of faith, who for the joy lying before Him
endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat
down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

**When you run a race you have to have a focus,
you have to have a finish line.**

**Isn't it neat, the Christian race has a model
in front of us and a whole bunch of models behind us?**

We have to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**He is the one who is going to be standing
at the finish line when we finish.**

He is the originator and the perfecter or the finisher

of faith.

You can say, He's the Alpha. He's the Omega.

As a Christian I turn my eyes upon Jesus.

“who for the joy lying before Him.”

We now have three verbs there
that describe what it's like right now.

He **ENDURED** the cross,
He **DESPISED** the shame, it was a reproach and
He **SAT DOWN** at the right hand of the throne of God.
He endured,
He despised and
He sat down.
He finished the work that was given to Him to do.

Now what was the joy?
The joy of finishing.

It's the sacrifice now but the satisfaction later now.

It's the cross now but the crown's coming.

That's the joy that was set before Him.

Now look at verse 3.

v. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, in order that you do not grow weary, giving out in your souls.

The writer says, “I want you to remember what He went through when He was down here.”

**“Consider Him” and you will be strengthened as a result of it
“so that you do not grow weary,
giving out in your souls.”**

The man who goes down swinging is very admirable but the man to watch out for is the one who gets up swinging.

That’s the kind of guy I want to be around.

v. 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

What he’s saying is your Christian profession hasn’t cost you your life yet.

**So what are you crying about?
Why are you having such a hard time?**

While you’re still living, you still have a chance to make it, persevere.

Now the author quotes from Proverbs chapter 3:11-12 in verses 5 and 6.

v. 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, stop regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor giving out when you are being rebuked (corrected) by Him;

Discipline is designed to manifest a spirit of brokenness.

He is saying to them two things:

- 1. Don't pass it off and**
- 2. Don't get discouraged.**

To put it in laymen's terminology.

Don't, stop regarding it lightly what's happening to you. Think about it.

It relates to what you are trying to become.

And then don't give in when you are rebuked.

Don't get discouraged by it.

Now what's the difference between discipline and punishment?

Punishment is from somebody who is angry and it's an execution of justice.

What is discipline?

**Discipline is by a parental father,
a relationship upon children as an act of love.**

**So when I'm having a hard time what do I need to say?
Father teach me, Father make me,
do in me whatever you need to do
through this experience because I know this —
that the Father's hand will never cause me
a needless tear.
He's my Father.
He's my teacher.**

**v. 6 for those whom the Lord is loving, He is
disciplining, and He is scourging every son whom
He is receiving.”**

**You see the suffering is imposed by wisdom and
it's a wisdom of divine love.**

The book of Proverbs is filled with discipline.

In Psalm 119:67 the writer said:

“Before I was afflicted I went astray.”

And then he said in Psalm 119:71:

**“It was good for me to be afflicted
so that I might learn your statutes.”**

To the church of Laodicea, the last of the seven churches in Revelation 3:19, Jesus says:

“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent.”

Every one of us can expect that we are going to have suffering and adversity in our life to produce Christlikeness. It's part of the curriculum.

It's brokenness, it's obedience and God's working in my life and I don't like it, it hurts but I can tell I'm ready to do whatever He wants and I'm listening with all ears and I'm ready to be obedient and I'm willing to fall on His path and I'm willing to cut out of my life whatever He's trying to do in this educational process because He wants growth and He wants character and He wants progress and He wants fruit from my life.

Oswald Chambers said, “the reason we are all being disciplined is so that we will know that God is real.”

**You will know that He is really there and
that He loves you and
that He loves you too much
to just let you keep doing
your own thing.**

Charles Spurgeon a tremendous preacher said this:

**“I bear willing witness that I owe more to the fire,
and the hammer, and the file, than to anything else
in [God’s] workshop. I sometimes question whether
I have ever learned anything except through the
rod. When my schoolroom is darkened, I see most.”**

**You know we have to have an attitude toward God
like that sign that was on the side of the moving van
that said:**

“Any load, any distance, any place, any time.”

**Whatever God wants to do that’s okay
because He’s working in our lives.**

**v. 7 It is for discipline that you are persevering; God is
dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there
whom [his] father is not disciplining?**

**I don’t have to be in self-pity,
I don’t have to be in resentment and
rebellious complaint
because the Lord is doing this.**

He is pruning me and He's working in my life and something good is going to come out of all that.

Now verse 8 here comes on rather strong.

v. 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not real sons.

He said look, if you have been around a whole bunch of religion and you don't have discipline, you don't have any relationship.

You have never really come to know Christ.

He's saying you better go back and check to be sure if you have been born again, that you know Christ.

Listen to 2 Corinthians 13:5,

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?

v. 9 Furthermore, we were having indeed fathers of our flesh (earthly fathers) to discipline us, and we were respecting them; shall we not much rather put ourselves in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?

v. 10 For they were disciplining us for a short time as was seeming best to them, but He is [disciplining us] for our good, that we may share His holiness.

The contrast is between the discipline of parents and the discipline of my heavenly Father.

v. 11 In fact, all discipline for the moment is not seeming to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it is yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

God gets results.

And Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

The author goes back to the illustration of a race to wrap up the study and we have another **THEREFORE at 12.**

v. 12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees which have become disabled,

v. 13 and be making straight paths for your feet, in order that [the limb] which is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

**This is a picture of running and
you have all kinds of leg cramps and
the knees are getting weak and
you can't run anymore.
He says they have become disabled.
You need to strengthen those.**

**If you sense that God has you in a curriculum
to produce Christlikeness,
you persevere but you demonstrate obedience.**

**You demonstrate a sweet, broken spirit,
sensitive to what He is trying to do and
learn what He is teaching you.**

Listen to Proverb 15 from *The Message*,

Proverb 15

**A life frittered away disgusts God;
he loves those who run straight
for the finish line.**

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: The “cloud of witnesses” are bearing testimony to the fact that the race can be won in victory.

LESSON #2: We must lighten the load and separate ourselves from those things which will trip us up in order to win the race.

LESSON #3: We are to “be running with perseverance the race lying before us.”

LESSON #4: Our focus should be on the Lord Jesus as we are running our race.

LESSON #5: We are strengthened and encouraged in our own race when we consider all that He, our Savior, went through for us.

LESSON #6: Suffering in our lives can be explained sometimes as a part of the disciplining process.

LESSON #7: We are to take discipline seriously and hang in there when we are being corrected by Him.

LESSON #8: The Lord spends His time disciplining those He is loving. He is loving all of us who are His children.

LESSON #9: God is “disciplining us for our good, that we may share His holiness.”

LESSON #10: Discipline is not a “joyful” experience but a “sorrowful” one that eventually “is yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

PART IV

STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-ONE — Hebrews 12:1-13

v. 1 Therefore, since we are having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us be running with perseverance the race lying before us, v. 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the originator and perfecter of faith, who for the joy lying before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

v. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, in order that you do not grow weary, giving out in your souls.

v. 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

v. 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, stop regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor giving out when you are being rebuked (corrected) by Him;

v. 6 for those whom the Lord is loving, He is disciplining, and He is scourging every son whom He is receiving.”

v. 7 It is for discipline that you are persevering; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom [his] father is not disciplining?

v. 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not real sons.

v. 9 Furthermore, we were having indeed fathers of our flesh (earthly fathers) to discipline us, and we were respecting them; shall we not much rather put ourselves in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?

v.10 For they were disciplining us for a short time as was seeming best to them, but He is [disciplining us] for our good, that we may share His holiness.

v.11 In fact, all discipline for the moment is not seeming to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it is yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

v.12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees which have become disabled,

v.13 and be making straight paths for your feet, in order that [the limb] which is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-13 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.
2. What two things are we commanded to do in verse 1?
3. Who are we to be “fixing our eyes” upon as we are running our race, according to verse 2?
4. Why are we to be considering Him, according to verse 3?
5. What must we be careful about with regard to the discipline of the Lord, according to verse 5?
6. What is the Lord’s attitude toward us in the disciplining process, according to verse 6?
7. If we are not experiencing the discipline of the Lord, what should be our major concern, according to verse 8?
8. Why does our heavenly Father discipline us, according to verse 10?
9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?
10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: The “cloud of witnesses” are bearing testimony to the fact that the race can be won in victory.

LESSON #2: We must lighten the load and separate ourselves from those things which will trip us up in order to win the race.

LESSON #3: We are to “be running with perseverance the race lying before us.”

LESSON #4: Our focus should be on the Lord Jesus as we are running our race.

LESSON #5: We are strengthened and encouraged in our own race when we consider all that He, our Savior, went through for us.

LESSON #6: Suffering in our lives can be explained sometimes as a part of the disciplining process.

LESSON #7: We are to take discipline seriously and hang in there when we are being corrected by Him.

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