

Hebrews Study

The Runner's Discipline Hebrews 12:1-29

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

– Hebrews 12:2

Imagine competing in a marathon race where they do not distinguish between first place and last place. You all get the same prize. The only thing that counts is that you finish the race. The race pushes you to your limits as a runner. As you round the corner on the last leg of the marathon you see the sidelines filled with the people that have gone ahead of you cheering you on to finish the race. This is the race that the author of Hebrews has in mind in chapter 12.

God Disciplines His Sons vv. 1-13

Who is the "great cloud of witnesses" that is referred to?

The OT Saints that were named in the previous chapter. Some will add other Christians that have gone before us.

How should we understand the word "witnesses" in verse 1?

Both as people that are watching us, specifically the OT saints. Also people who have given testimony to us of their faith in God that have finished the race before we do.

How does the author of Hebrews encourage people to run the race? What three things in verses 1-2 are we to do?

The words "let us" are used three times. Six in the whole chapter. Let us... "throw off everything that hinders and the sin..." v. 1
Let us... "run with perseverance" v. 1
Let us... "fix our eyes on Jesus" v. 2

How can considering Jesus and what He did for us help us to not grow weary and lose heart?

We have a Savior that we can identify with and vice versa. Jesus claimed victory and so can we because of Him.

What is the discipline that the author alludes to in verse 5-6

The quote comes from Proverbs 3, which speaks of following the Lord's commands. We face consequences when we disobey God's law. Verse 7, connects "hardships" as discipline.

How does the illustration of family connect to discipline? What does God's discipline mean for us as His children?

Parents discipline their children because they love them. God loves us and it's for our good too.

Who are the "Witnesses?"

(martyrs) "The word means 'one who bears testimony', particularly in a judicial setting (Heb. 10:28). More generally, it refers to anyone who observes some activity or event and testifies to it. Then the term came to have the nuance of 'martyr', describing those in the early church who bore witness to Christ and suffered violent death as a result of their testimony. Martyrs was also used of a spectator for whom the element of vision was more significant than that of testifying."

— Peter O'Brien, Hebrews NAC

"Sin that so easily entangles"

"In particular, it's possible for sin of one sort or another to get in the way and constrict our movement; though some translations speak here of sin 'clinging closely' to us, the word properly means 'obstructing' or 'constricting'"

- N.T. Wright, Hebrews for Everyone

Discipline is a Good thing!

Most people frown at the idea of discipline, but we must remember it is a positive character trait. The author reminds us that "God uses everything, even suffering and persecution, to help his children grow spiritually in dependence on him. However, they have forgotten and ignored this essential truth."

- Grant Osborne, George Guthrie
Hebrews Verse by Verse

What does spiritual discipline produce according to verse 11?

“a harvest of righteousness and peace”

Warning Against Refusing God vv. 14-29

The author tells us to “live at peace with all men” what will this practice lead to according to verse 14?

Holiness—“to be holy” v. 14 then, holiness leads to people finds the Lord.

“without holiness no-one will see the Lord” v. 14

What are the admonitions the author gives in verses 15-16?

“See to it that no-one misses the grace of God” v. 15

“that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble...” v. 15

“See that no-one is sexually immoral” v. 16

What examples of a “bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” v. 15 can you imagine in a church today?

What two mountains does the author contrast in verses 18-24?

What are the differences between the two?

Mount Horeb where Moses talked with God and received the Law

A heavenly Mount Zion where Jesus reigns and where angels worship.

What is the warning in verse 25 about?

“See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks” v. 25

The author tells them not to ignore “him who warns us from heaven” v. 25 like the others did to “them on earth” v.25, who do these places refer to?

The prophets, Moses, all the godly people versus God from heaven.

The author quotes from Haggai 2:6 which is a prophecy about the end times. How should we understand this verse about removing “what can be shaken” v. 26?

God will not only shaken the earth, but also the who universe will be shaken and made ready for the end times.

“heavens” v.26 should not refer to our final resting place, but the sky and space beyond in the universe.

What do verses 28-29 say we will have after God shakes and removes the created things? How should we worship God?

A heavenly kingdom, that cannot be shaken.

Thankfully, in an acceptable way, “with reverence and awe” v. 28

Holiness

“Since his plan for us is to share in his holiness (v. 10) and because we have already been sanctified (10:10) through the cleansing of our consciences, the obligation is laid upon us to be holy here and now. ‘We must seek that practical holiness of life ... which flows from a genuine dedication to his service and obedience to his will’. Believers must reflect in their life together attitudes and behaviour that are consistent with their new relationship with God in Christ.”

— Peter O’Brien, Hebrews NAC

Lesson from the Past

“He [Esau] had been out hunting in the countryside and when he came back home Jacob was cooking a meal. Esau was famished with hunger; Jacob refused to give him food unless he gave him his rights as the firstborn son, in other words, the principal share of the inheritance from their father Isaac. Esau, it seems, happily swore away his birthright in exchange for the food. Short-term relief, long-term misery.”

- N.T. Wright, Hebrews for Everyone

“At the centre of the contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Sion, in fact, is the contrast between a holiness which is terrifying and unapproachable and a holiness which is welcoming, cleansing and healing.”

- N. T. Wright, Hebrews for Everyone

“Two characteristics define this worship and service. It is “acceptable” (euarestōs), meaning the desire to please him in all things... Second, the attitude is “reverence and awe” or “reverential awe” in which we serve him “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12), wanting desperately to obey and glorify him in everything we do.”

- Grant Osborne, George Guthrie
Hebrews Verse by Verse

Hebrews Study

For the Road

Preparation for Next Week:

Read: *Hebrews 13:1-25*

Be Ready to Discuss:

Hospitality, Marital Purity, Supporting Leaders, A Heavenly Home, Living a Pure Life with a Clear conscience.

How has this book study helped you?

Further Study...

A Personal Look at How God Disciplines You

Now that we are out of the group setting, how has God disciplined you over the years? What have you learned to strengthen in your life through God's discipline?

What value is it to keep your eyes on Jesus? How can you work on that this next week?

How have you been able to “strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees” when under discipline (v. 12)?

How could you identify a “bitter root” or a “godless Esau” in your life (vv. 15–16)?

What encouragement do you find in verses 18–24 to run the faith race with perseverance?

We’ve all been tempted to drop out of the race. Why would the warning of verses 25–29 cause us to reconsider?

In what ways does your worship reflect (or fail to reflect) the fact that God is a “consuming fire” (v. 29)?