

Hebrews 12

Jesus, Founder and Perfecter of Our Faith

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Do Not Grow Weary

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **4** In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reprov'd by him.

6

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? **8** If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. **9** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? **10** For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. **11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, **13** and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. **14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. **15** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; **16** that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. **17** For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

A Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken

18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest **19** and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. **20** For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." **21** Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." **22** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, **23** and to the assembly^[a] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, **24** and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. **26** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." **27** This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, **29** for our God is a consuming fire.

When I was in high school, the seniors got a special part in our yearbook: each person would get a bigger picture compared to people in the other grades, and we were given a small space to put down a few words of wisdom or express our thoughts about graduating. I don't remember exactly what I was thinking but having been on the cross country team and having mostly runners for my group of friends, I thought I'd quote something about running. I ended up quoting a small part of Hebrews 12 verse 1: "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Did I understand what the verse was really talking about? No. I just saw that it had something to do w/ running, endurance, and life and I thought it was cool.

Now, high school Kevin understood a part of what Hebrews 12 was about - in this journey of life, we need endurance to metaphorically run well in this race that's set before us. However, in its context there's a lot more to it. More than just endurance for life in general, this is all about running this race of faith, running this race well that's all about Jesus. Let's look at the "why" and the "how" of running this race of faith.

First, the "why": this chapter starts off w/ the reason, as we can see by the first word being "therefore." "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..." The reason goes back to the previous chapter which talks about this great cloud of witnesses. Remember, Hebrews 11 was all about these different examples of faith throughout history, from Abraham to Jacob to Moses to the judges and so on. As Christians, we've had forerunners of faith, people who have lived not as the world would want but out of trust in God's promises, and they will receive an everlasting kingdom w/ God. The author of Hebrews encourages us that we are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, that we are to live in the same way w/ that same level of faith and look forward to the same reward of being w/ God in

the everlasting kingdom. This reminds me of the phenomenon of Strava in running. Strava is an app where you can share your runs w/ others who follow you, including how long and how fast you ran each time. Sometimes, just seeing on Strava that others have run recently, can be that motivation to go out yourself. Like “if that person can go out for three miles when it’s freezing outside, so can I.” Similarly, b/c we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, we can also throw aside sin and press on spiritually ourselves.

Hebrews 12 also gives the “how” for all of this. From verse 2: “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” How do we run w/ endurance the race set before us? We look to Jesus. He is the ultimate forerunner of our faith, w/o whom nobody else can even draw near to God b/c he is the founder and perfecter of our faith. His endurance through all the suffering and shame of the cross brought many “sons to glory” as we read earlier in Hebrews. He mediates a way to the Father for us. In addition to that, his endurance is an example to us. We too can follow in his attitude and way of life.

The middle section, verses 3 to 17, gets into this more, of how we can endure by looking to Jesus. From verses 3 and 4, we can consider how he resisted sin to the point of shedding his blood. In our struggles, we have not resisted to that point. I think this is an encouragement that God has given us the strength to resist sin and endure more, that we haven’t realized how much we can endure yet. From verses 5 and on, we see that Jesus also shows us how the Father disciplines b/c we are really his children. Verse 11 says, “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” This is a theme we’ve seen elsewhere in Hebrews already: that trials and learning to stay true to God through temptations are part of this process of discipline where God shapes and trains us to become who He wants us to be. Even Jesus was perfected by enduring trials and temptations. In this life, there *will* be challenges and temptations, just like how Esau was tempted to give up his birthright to satisfy his momentary hunger, but we are called to endure and keep our eyes on Jesus.

So let me ask you: how are you running this race of faith that is set before you? Are you laying aside the sin that clings so closely? Are you running w/ endurance? Our encouragement from this passage is that we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses who have run faithfully before us and have shown us that it’s possible to live by faith. And we look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. By him, we find strength to resist sin and be true to God through various trials and temptations, knowing that God is disciplining us as his children. Today, let’s renew our commitment to run this race w/ endurance. Let’s pray.