

Hebrews Pt 18 “The Endurance Race”

CENTRAL QUESTION:

How do we run the race of faith with endurance in a distracted, hostile world and finish well before Jesus?

I. THE GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES (WHY HEBREWS 11 MATTERS FOR HEBREWS 12)

Key Scripture: Hebrews 11:39–40; Hebrews 12:1

- Hebrews 11: The “hall of faith” – men and women who gained God’s approval through faith but did not yet receive the fullness of the promise because God had “something better” planned that includes us.
- Hebrews 12:1: We are surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses” who testified with their lives to God’s absolute faithfulness.
- Modern “witnesses”: Testimonies in the congregation – stories of where people came from and what the Lord has done – strengthen and encourage us to trust God’s power to save, heal, restore, and deliver.

II. RUNNING THE RACE WITH ENDURANCE (NOT A SPRINT)

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:1

A. LAYING ASIDE WEIGHTS AND SIN

- The Christian life is a race of endurance, not a quick sprint.
- Just as a marathon runner must shed excess weight and anything that can trip them, believers must strip off “everything unnecessary” and “the sin which so easily and cleverly entangles us.”
- The enemy is deceitful and “slick”; sin entangles subtly, not always obviously.

B. PREPARATION FOR THE RACE

- No one wisely jumps off the couch a week before a marathon and expects to finish well; there must be intentional preparation.
- Likewise, those who run to please the Lord must lay aside anything that doesn’t glorify Christ and only drag them down or trips them up.

III. DISTRACTION VS. FOCUS (FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS)

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:2; Genesis 3; Romans 8:18

A. THE DANGERS OF DISTRACTION

- “Look away from all that will distract us” – distraction destroys lives, homes, and marriages.
- Adam and Eve’s distraction: the serpent framed God as withholding something good from them.
- Today’s distractions: politics (Democrat vs. Republican), cultural anxieties, speculation about the mark of the beast, societal shifts, fear of Islam, and social agendas – all can pull our eyes off Christ.
- Illustration: Racehorses wear blinders so they cannot look side to side; believers likewise must focus straight ahead.

B. FIXING OUR EYES ON CHRIST ALONE

- If we get everything else right but get Christ wrong, we lose everything.
- Jesus is the “author and perfecter” of our faith – the foundation, cornerstone, and finisher.
- We must continually build our lives on Him, not on world systems, fears, or controversies.

IV. JESUS: OUR MODEL OF JOYFUL ENDURANCE

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:2–3; Philippians 2:9–11; Romans 8:18

A. THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

- Jesus endured the cross “for the joy set before Him” – the joy of doing His Father’s will and reconciling us to God.
- He disregarded the shame, insults, accusations (“He has a devil”), and mocking, treating them like noise from “a yard full of Chihuahuas.”

B. THE DEPTH OF HIS SUFFERING

- Vivid description of His suffering: spit upon, beard torn out, beaten with rods, crown of thorns pressed into His skull, scourged with a cat of nine tails until bones showed and He was nearly unrecognizable.
- Compared to His suffering, our “bad days” and trials, though real, are not ultimate reasons to quit.

C. CONSIDER JESUS TO AVOID QUITTING

- We are commanded to “consider and meditate on Him” who endured such hostility so that we do not grow weary and lose heart.
- When we’re betrayed, slandered, disappointed, or prayers seem unanswered, our response must be: “Fix our eyes on Jesus.”
- Even Jesus prayed, “If there’s another way,” yet submitted: “Not my will, but Yours be done.”

V. LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS: ENDURANCE IN A HOSTILE WORLD

Key Scripture: Matthew 24:9–13; Revelation 13; Philippians 3:14; Galatians 6:9; Romans 8:18

- Jesus warned that a time would come when people would kill believers and believe they were serving God.
- Concerns raised: political and cultural shifts, digital IDs and currency, governmental agendas, and cultural conditioning that may prepare people to receive the mark of the beast.
- Many will trade eternal life for temporary comfort and security, just as Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of stew.
- This world is not our home; we will eventually face pressure to choose between allegiance to Christ and allegiance to the world system.
- Call: Be mentally and spiritually ready for endurance. Don’t grow weary in well-doing; in due season we will reap if we don’t faint. Press on toward the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

VI. GOD’S LOVING DISCIPLINE AND OUR SANCTIFICATION

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:4–11; Proverbs (discipline and sonship)

A. DISCIPLINE AS PROOF OF SONSHIP

- We have not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding blood as Jesus did.
- When God disciplines us, we must not lose heart; His correction is a sign of His love.
- Personal illustrations:
 - Praying for God’s discipline, then being struck twice by hickory branches at work as a vivid reminder.

– Ignoring God’s warning about a tree job, leading to a serious accident and a helicopter ride – a painful but merciful wake-up call to listen.

- Earthly parents discipline out of love; how much more our heavenly Father? If we are without discipline, Scripture says we are illegitimate, not true sons.

B. THE GOAL OF DISCIPLINE: HOLINESS

- Discipline is painful in the moment, never pleasant.
- For those trained by it, discipline yields the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” – right standing with God and a lifestyle that seeks His will and purpose.
- God disciplines us “for our good” so that we may share in His holiness and reflect Christ’s character.

VII. SANCTIFICATION: WALKING THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW

Key Scripture: Hebrews 12:12–17; Matthew 7:13–14

A. STRENGTHENING THE WEAK

- “Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are trembling.”
- Our testimonies and encouragement can lift those who are burdened, discouraged, or ready to give up.
- We have something greater than a cure for cancer: the gospel of eternal life, peace, and joy unspeakable.

B. STRAIGHT PATHS AND PEACE WITH ALL

- Make straight paths for our feet – clear away what doesn’t belong, avoid crooked and twisted ways, and stay on the straight and narrow path that leads to life.
- Continually pursue peace with everyone – even those who hate or slander us.
- “Sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord”: sanctification is the ongoing process of denying self and allowing Christ to live and be glorified in us.
- Practically, sanctification sounds like God saying, “Let’s delete that,” “Don’t watch that,” “Don’t listen to that,” and our response: “Yes, Sir.”

C. ROOTS OF BITTERNESS AND THE EXAMPLE OF ESAU

- Guard against a “root of resentment” that can spring up, cause trouble, and defile many.
- Esau traded his birthright for a single meal – distracted by immediate hunger, he despised his long-term inheritance.
- Even with bitter tears, he could not reverse his decision; some choices carry irreversible consequences.
- Parallel to Revelation 13: those who take the mark of the beast will trade eternal destiny for present comfort, with no opportunity for repentance afterward.

VIII. THE BATTLE OF FLESH AND SPIRIT

Key Scripture: Galatians 5:16–17; Romans 7–8

- Our greatest struggle is not primarily with the devil, but with our own flesh.
- When we are surrendered to Christ, the enemy is defeated; the Holy Spirit in us is greater.
- There is a daily battle between flesh and Spirit; the key is to starve the flesh and feed the Spirit.
- Distractions and fleshly desires can pull us off course, but by the Spirit we can endure and overcome.

IX. THE CALL TO PERSEVERE AND RESPOND

Key Scripture: Romans 8:18; Hebrews 12:1–3; Matthew 25:21

- Many in the last days will let their love grow cold and will quit; we must not give up, give in, or give out.
- The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in Christ Jesus.
- The martyrs and heroes of Hebrews 11 are not in heaven saying, “It wasn’t worth it,” but rejoicing that they did not miss the eternal reward.
- Personal resolve: after messing up much in life, the preacher is determined not to miss hearing, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”
- Invitation: If you’re unsure where you stand with Christ, come, surrender, ask for forgiveness, ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and seek strength, peace, and wisdom to live for His glory in these last days.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Fix your eyes on Jesus and run the race of faith with endurance, laying aside every weight and sin, submitting to God’s loving discipline, resisting distraction and compromise, and pressing on in holiness until you hear Him say, “Well done.”

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

- In what areas of your life are you most easily distracted from fixing your eyes on Jesus?
- What “weights” (not just sins) is the Holy Spirit prompting you to lay aside so you can run more freely?
- How have you experienced God’s loving discipline, and what fruit has it produced in your life?
- Where is God calling you to strengthen weak hands and feeble knees in others with

encouragement and testimony?

- Are you prepared—mentally and spiritually—to endure faithfully if following Christ puts you at odds with the world’s system?

Scripture References for Further Study:

*Hebrews 11:1–40 | Hebrews 12:1–17 | Romans 8:18 | Galatians 6:9 | Philippians 3:14 |
Matthew 24:9–13 | Matthew 7:13–14 | Revelation 13 | Proverbs on discipline (e.g., Proverbs
3:11–12; 13:24)*