

Triumphant Endurance

Lesson Scope: **Hebrews 12**

References in brackets refer to Hebrews 12 unless otherwise noted

Lesson Focus

Hebrews 11 catalogs a partial listing of Old Testament saints who lived by faith, many of them at great cost. They constitute a "cloud of witnesses" (12:1) whose lives and actions testified to the worth and effect of faith. The Scriptures, in turn, bear witness to the validity of their faith.

Hebrews 11:40 provides a transition with the words, "God having provided some better thing for us" (as New Testament saints). Chapter 12 expands on those better things. We have the ultimate example of Jesus' life as given in the four Gospels. We also have the blessing of divine chastening "for our profit" (12:10). We are more accountable than Old Testament Israel because of the New Covenant (12:24) and Christ's invincible kingdom (12:28).

The Christian life is like a race that is set before us. The way is strenuous and dangerous, but looking continually to Jesus, our perfect example, assures ultimate victory.

May we be inspired to make the most of their lives, especially the times of pain and sorrow. God has a plan for our lives, though rough and rocky at times. Consider this poem:

I learn as the years roll onward,
And I leave the past behind,
The much I had counted sorrow
But proves that God is kind.

The many a flower I'd longed for
Had hidden a thorn of pain,
And many a rugged bypath
Led on to a field of grain.

Spend some time studying verses 22-24. These verses contain much inspiration that can inspire the suffering saint today and sharpen his hope for the future.

Lesson Aim: To see essentials for unwavering faithfulness.

Theme Verse: [1 Corinthians 15:58](#). Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Lesson Text:

The Supreme Example

[Hebrews 12:1-4](#) ¹ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. ⁴ Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

The Father's Love

[Hebrews 12:5-11](#) ⁵ And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

The Christian's Conduct

[Hebrews 12:12-15](#) ¹² Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; ¹³ And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. ¹⁴ Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: ¹⁵

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled; **Hebrews 12:18** For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, **Hebrews 12:22-28** ²² But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel. ²⁵ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: ²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. ²⁷ And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Questions for Study

The Supreme Example

1. Compare the Christian life to a race.
2. What joy was set before Jesus?
3. What are some spiritual weights that hinder our faithfulness?

The Father's Love

4. What is God's purpose for chastisement?
5. What are some undesirable responses to chastisement?

The Christian's Conduct

6. Enumerate the blessings of the New Covenant from these verses.
7. What is so dangerous about the root of bitterness?
8. How can we serve God acceptably?

Analyzing the Passage

Patience (12:1) is an "abiding under." It also has the meaning of "steadfastness, constancy, endurance." These meanings all suggest that life is a battle.

Set before (12:1-2) means "to be placed in front of the eyes as a goal, incentive, or responsibility." Jesus saw not only the agony of the cross but al-

so the joy of redeeming lost souls.

Author and finisher (12:2) means "chief leader" and "completer" respectively. This corresponds with Jesus' words, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21:6).

The "root of bitterness" (12:15) suggests a concealed form of life that can quickly send forth shoots if favorable conditions develop. It emphasizes the urgency of controlling one's thoughts.

Hebrews 12:18-27 compares the establishment of the Law with the introduction of the New Covenant. The spectacular events at Sinai were short-lived and local, but the New Covenant set off worldwide reverberations with permanent effects even on the spirit world.

Principles and Applications

The Supreme Example

1. The witness of departed saints calls us to lay aside every hindrance to the Christian race (12:1). The great cloud of witnesses has proven that faith is possible even in the face of trial and persecution. Their witness is a constant encouragement to us. The baggage of self and sin must be crucified to be successful in this race. The cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches could quickly overcome us. The Christian must set his priorities and sometimes lay aside legitimate pursuits for the sake of Christ and His kingdom.

2. Victorious saints keep their spiritual vision fixed upon Jesus (12:2). Jesus, as the Author and Finisher of our faith, will see us through. We need to keep our eyes on our Master, or we, like Peter, will sink (Matthew 14:29-30). Success requires focused attention.

3. Considering Jesus' example in suffering encourages perseverance (12:2-4). Jesus had a goal in mind when He lived on this earth, suffered, and died on the cross. His desire was to fulfill the Father's will. His purpose never wavered, and His focus was not clouded in temptation. He knew that the cost of failure was higher than the shame of the cross. What reason have we to falter?

The Father's Love

4. Every true child of God will experience chastening (12:5-8). Chastening is promised to the Christian. We must discipline ourselves in times of chastening to think that this experience is proof that I am one of His rather than to question His goodness and love. Rays of God's love shine through even in the midst of chastening. As we see those rays, we can respond rightly.

5. Divine chastening is always intended for our good (12:9-11). Chastening

makes fruitful Christians more fruitful (John 15:2). How is patience developed except through trials? It is the rocks that give a stream its song. Job came to the right conclusion in the midst of his suffering. "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

The Christian's Conduct

6. Enduring faithfully requires divine grace for sanctified attitudes and holy living (12:12-15). Our attitudes toward others do matter. Allowing bad attitudes to grow in our hearts feeds the root of bitterness. When bitterness thrives, serious consequences follow: Usefulness to God and others is ruined, a defiling influence spreads to others, and eternal destinies are affected.

Divine grace is available to heal the hurts that cause bitterness. Focusing on peace, forgiveness, and holiness will strengthen us and others. And the troublesome root of bitterness will not grow.

7. The New Covenant brought superior provisions for faithful endurance (12:18, 22-24). The New Covenant is much better because of Jesus' work on the cross. We can experience the peace of knowing our sins are under the blood, we can know our names are written in heaven, and we can be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We can be a part of the church, the bride of Christ, and can join the faithful saints of all ages in glory.

8. The Christian must recognize the dire consequences of failing in the race (12:25, 26). The Christian race offers no vacations or second attempts. God has spoken His final Word; He offers abundant resources. If this plan of salvation and the resulting life of separation are rejected, all that is left is the judgment of consuming fire.

9. Identity with God's everlasting kingdom calls for reverence and godly fear (12:28). The kingdom of Jesus Christ is a victorious and enduring kingdom. To be a part of this kingdom is a joyful privilege. It also brings responsibility and accountability. The righteousness and justice of God demands our honor, worship, and careful obedience. Humble service is the way of God's blessing.

Important Teachings

1. The witness of departed saints calls us to lay aside every hindrance to the Christian race (12:1).

2. Victorious saints keep their spiritual vision fixed upon Jesus (12:2).

3. Considering Jesus' example in suffering encourages perseverance (12:2-4).

4. Every true child of God will experience chastening (12:5-8).
5. Divine chastening is always intended for our good (12:9-11).
6. Enduring faithfully requires divine grace for sanctified attitudes and holy living (12:12-15).
7. The New Covenant brought superior provisions for faithful endurance (12:18, 22-24).
8. The Christian must recognize the dire consequences of failing in the race (12:25-26).
9. Identity with God's everlasting kingdom calls for reverence and godly fear (12:28).

Answers to Questions

1. Compare the Christian life to a race.

The Christian has a goal to reach for. Heaven is at the end of the race, and it requires endurance to the end to win. The Christian needs to lay aside those things that hinder his running. It takes every nerve and muscle to win the prize. We need to follow all the rules to assure the prize.

2. What joy was set before Jesus?

Jesus' joy was to do the will of the Father. The joy of saving men from eternal loss and ruin kept Him from wavering. Redeeming the church and taking it as His bride brought joy, and there will be great joy when the church is married to Christ. The prospect of "bringing many sons unto glory" and welcoming faithful saints home was another source of joy.

3. What are some spiritual weights that hinder our faithfulness?

Sin is always a weight that will hinder us from winning the prize. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches will keep us from experiencing heaven. If our occupation keeps us from feeding on the Word and praying, it is a weight that will bog us down.

4. What is God's purpose for chastisement?

God sees potential gold in us, and He controls the fire that is needed to purify that gold. He sees in us also a tendency to go astray, and He uses trials to bring us back to Him. He desires better vessels and more fruitful service. It is the pruned branch that yields increased quality and quantity.

5. What are some undesirable responses to chastisement?

One shows that he despises chastening by turning bitter against God, by looking to wrong sources for help, or by losing patience and giving up in despair. A fatalistic view removes God from the picture and prevents Him from working His desired results.

6. Enumerate the blessings of the New Covenant from these verses.

Instead of alarming and solemn demonstrations of the Lord's presence in giving the Law, we can come directly to the throne of grace. Rather than not being able to bear what was spoken from the Lord, we can be encouraged as we hear God's Word through His Holy Spirit. We can identify with the church, the bride of Christ. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ. Rather than sprinkling the blood of animals on our doorposts, our hearts can be sprinkled from an evil conscience.

7. What is so dangerous about the root of bitterness?

It is a root that is hard to remove. It will sever our relationship with the Lord and ruin our usefulness. It affects many other people.

8. How can we serve God acceptably?

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (12:25). Acceptable service includes following Holy Spirit direction, allowing Jesus to fully cleanse our hearts, thanking God daily for His goodness, and pulling others out of the fire. Hating sin and claiming victory over the evil one are also important.

Summarizing the Lesson

It is man's tendency to focus on present circumstances. The call in Hebrews 12 is to view the broader picture. "Our light affliction ... worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). realities. We will hear the welcome words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Seeing our Lord face to face will surely be worth it all.

Research Guide

1. Study Exodus 19—the giving of the Law.
2. Read the booklet "*Triumphant in Suffering*" by Merle Ruth.