

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's turn your bibles with me to Hebrews 12

We are continuing our verse by verse study through the book of Hebrews

This letter that was written to a group of Jewish believers who were seriously contemplating turning their back on Christianity and going back to Judaism

And so the writer of Hebrews is encouraging this group of believers to remember the sufficiency of Jesus in all things.

Remember, they were contemplating going back because of the opposition they were facing as a result of their Christian faith.

And we are now in the portion of the letter where the writer of Hebrews tells them how to practically do it -

Let's pray...

In our study two weeks ago in Hebrews 12 –

We looked at this illustration that the writer of Hebrews provided for us where he described our Christian walk as a long race.

The moment we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ – that is the starting line of the race.

The moment we breathe our last and immediately before His presence – that is the finish line of the race.

Jesus is both the author and finisher of our faith

As believers, we are in the race together

We are not competing against one another –

And the whole goal is to finish and to finish well

And – as we saw in the first two verses, the writer of Hebrews provided for us how we should run the race -

First – he told us to look at those examples of believers who ran the race before us – those who endured by faith – specifically everyone in chapter 11,

The cloud of witness that we can look to – as individuals who also went through difficult circumstances and yet they endured.

They persevered.

The writer of Hebrews also told us how to run the race -

We get rid of any excess weight – anything that impedes / hinders or prevents us from moving forward in our race.

We also need to lay aside the sin that stops us from running the race – and I mentioned that in context – the sin that the writer of Hebrews is speaking of – is the sin of unbelief.

Not trusting in God promises – will keep us from running the race.

And he made the point that each of us – we have our own race to run.

We don't run other people's races – we run the race that God set before us.

And as we run the race – we keep our eyes on Jesus.

Why? Because He ran the race that God set before Him

“Jesus, You are going to be born in Bethlehem in a trough”

Jesus, You are going to live a perfect life –

Jesus, You are going to go to the cross and rise three days later

Jesus ran the race

He did all those things

And ignored and despised the shame on the cross – in order to finish in perfect obedience to His Father.

And because He endured, He received His reward and is exalted at the right hand of the Father

Now the writer of Hebrews tells us how to prepare ourselves when we “hit the wall”

For those that do not know what “hitting the wall” means – it is the point in a long race where the runner comes to the point where there is no further progress.

In a marathon – that is about mile #17 or 18

It is where your body begins to shut down -you begin to cramp up – you want to quit.

But endurance results in you taking the one step and then the other until the finished line.

[Heb 12:3-11 NKJV] 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

In verse two – the writer of Hebrews tells us that we should run the race looking unto Jesus and here in verse three – the writer tells us to consider Jesus who endured such hostility.

The word hostility that is used here – means, to speak against.

Opposition

Rebellion

And as we study the Gospels – we find that Jesus certainly faced plenty of hostility.

You have the religious rulers that were after Him

You had His own brothers and sisters that didn't believe Him

He was betrayed by someone close to Him

And then – you have the word, consider that means to carefully evaluate – to compare – to weigh one vs the other

So the writer of Hebrews is inviting the reader (that is us) to run the race while maintaining our eyes focused on Jesus and while we are running the race – to evaluate or weigh our own opposition and suffering and weigh it against the opposition and suffering that Jesus endured.

We will all face hostility as we run the race – Jesus warned us that we would.

But Jesus endured and He faced greater opposition than anyone of us would ever face.

How many of us have ever been tried in a court and found “innocent” and still punished.

Jesus did and He was then tortured and then crucified.

So why would we compare what Jesus went through and what we go through?

We do this - so we won't give up.

We do this so we will continue to run the race – so we will endure - so we will finish strong.

Yes, there will be times when we get weary – we will get tired.

And there will be times when we get discouraged –

But notice – the writer is not talking about physical exhaustion or discouragement.

He is talking about spiritual exhaustion and discouragement.

Once again – we keep everything in context –

These Jewish believers are struggling, they face opposition for leaving the Jewish faith, they are outcasts, even in their own family – they can't make a living.

Why are they contemplating walking away – because they are spiritually exhausted – they have hit the wall – they want to quit.

But look at what the writer tells them in verse 4

4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

The writer of Hebrews is reminding this group of Jewish believers that they hadn't come to the end yet – that they were still alive.

And because they were alive – it meant that God still had plans for them – God wanted to use them.

They had not been nailed to a cross

They had not been hanged

So they had to endure -

And I believe that the sin that the writer of Hebrews refers to is the most difficult sin of all.

It is the temptation and then the sin – to walk away, to give up, to abandon the gospel, to turn their back on Jesus.

In the Garden of Gethsemane – Jesus resists temptation to give up.

When He is faced with the temptations by Satan – Jesus resists temptation to give up

When He is faced with Calvary's cross – Jesus resists temptation to give up.

How did Jesus endure?

He looked beyond the temporal

He ran the race that the Father made for Him.

Now the writer of Hebrews is going to shift –

He wants this group of Jewish believer to stop focusing so much on the trials that they were currently going through – and focus on the “why” or the cause of their trials and suffering.

5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

One of the areas in our walk that we tend to overlook is that we have forgotten that God disciplines us.

That is what the word chastening means.

It is God entering into our life to bring about correction.

That is His chastening / that is His discipline

And the writer of Hebrews uses this familiar picture of a parent

And every parent understands discipline of their own children

And for those who are not parent, we understand what it feels like to be on the receiving end of such discipline.

We all understand what it means to do something wrong – to go against our parents and receive the consequences from it – usually in some form of discipline.

But for whatever reason – we have forgotten that God disciplines His children.

Listen church,

God will not allow His children to get away with anything

God will not turn the other way and let His children do whatever they want to do.

And even when it seems like everyone else can get away with it – if we are a son or a daughter of God, we will not get away with sin in our life.

God will bring about the necessary discipline on top of whatever else we may be going through in life so you and I can be conformed into the image of Christ.

So - How could this group of Jewish believers forgotten this???

The writer of Hebrews actually quotes from the book of Proverbs – something they were very familiar with - as Solomon looks back at the discipline that was given to him by his father David – who by the way, was not a very good father to his other kids – but in his old age, he was a good father to him – how do we know?

He disciplined Solomon.

So how could they forget about God's discipline?

The same way that we forget about God's discipline.

They focused so much on their circumstances and their troubles and the issues of their life - that these things clouded their vision of remembering – that God loves them, and that discipline is a part of His love.

Sometimes we have the misconception that discipline is God's disapproval of us.

That is not so church.

God approves of us – what He doesn't approve of – is the sin in our life – resulting in discipline.

Now, I want to make sure to make something very clear –

Not all hard times in our lives come as a direct response to our sinful choices.

That is a false concept of God.

Hard times come to us all – and sometimes, God will even send us into a storm – allow a trial or two or three or four into our lives in order to discipline us and train us to follow Him.

You see, one of the issues that was facing this group of Jewish believers was that they were spiritually immature.

The words that the writer of Hebrews uses in verse 5-6 for God discipline are words refer to child training / to child discipline.

Bach in ch 5 –

[Heb 5:12-14 NKJV] 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need [someone] to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes [only] of milk [is] unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But

solid food belongs to those who are of full age, [that is], those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

So- in their spiritual immaturity

They felt that their suffering was a result of God not approving of them.

Most young children – when they are disciplined – many will not even know why they were being disciplined in the first place.

Here is the problem church -

It is easy, in difficult times to sit around and feel sorry for ourselves.

“Woe is me”

“It is so hard”

“I am the only one that is suffering”

“no one understands me”

“I should just quit”

And then the enemy comes in and continues to speak lies to us and we drift further and further away from God.

We allow everything to become “all about me”

But God wants us to look up – He doesn't want us to look within ourselves

He wants us to gain the right perspective that God is working all things together for good to those who love Him.

You want to know something truly amazing

Every morning of everyday –

God looks at us and He says, “I am going to make you like Jesus”

[Rom 8:29-30 NKJV] 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

God has all the resources of the universe available to Him

There is nothing hidden from Him

And there are no resources that are not available to Him

Including you and me –

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are **illegitimate and not sons.**

The word illegitimate in the Greek – it speaks of a child that is born of parents that are not married.

But it also speaks of the father not acknowledging the child's presence.

This is a child who grows up without a father because the father will not acknowledge him or her.

The father will not support him/her

And the father will not discipline him/her

So what the writer of Hebrews is pointing out here in context –

Chastening proves lineage

Nobody likes a spankin', but it proves that you belong to the one with the paddle.

This group of Jewish believers – they were being spanked – they belonged to the one with the paddle

If you never experience "chastening" from God, then perhaps you are not His child.

9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected [us], and we paid [them] respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened [us] as seemed [best] to them, but He for [our] profit, that [we] may be partakers of His holiness.

For some of us – this can be a very difficult few verses because some of us may not have had the best example of a father growing up.

So it may be difficult to relate to the chastening of a father to the chastening that God has toward us.

The writer of Hebrews – he is providing the picture of an ideal home.

You have a loving mother and a loving father who very much care about the safety and wellbeing of their children.

They did the best they could in disciplining their children

They chastened their children as seemed best to them.

And as the child grows up – even though they may not have fully understood the chastening at the time – they appreciate or they pay respect to their father or mother in the discipline that they provided.

I know growing up – my father and mother disciplined us as best they could – it may have not always been just discipline or fair discipline –

Sometimes the discipline was out of anger or frustration and not out of love

but I can look back pay respect in knowing that they did the best they could.

However, our heavenly Father – His discipline is out of love

That's what the writer is doing here – reminding his readers that the reason they are going through trials is because the Lord, in His love, is chastening them so that they will be refined and made pure.

And if we don't grasp that God chastens us – then we really misrepresent who He is.

Because this is the world's definition of what a loving God would do –

A loving God would let me do whatever I want to whomever I want, whenever I want –
is that really the definition of love?

Is that the definition of a loving parent?

How could it possibly be the definition of a loving God?

So it shouldn't surprise us

That a patient God

That a kind God

That a merciful God

That a loving God will deal with His rebellious children in such a profound and permanent way.

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

One of the bible verses that we like to quote as believers – especially when we are going through trials or a time of difficulty is Rom 8:28 – I referenced earlier -

[Rom 8:28 NKJV] 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to [His] purpose.

Here is the thing that the writer of Hebrews is telling us in the last seven words we find in verse 11 –

That good that He brings out of all things is not automatic.

It only becomes good as we open ourselves and submit to the training that is part of what God is trying to communicate.

Sometimes we don't submit to His discipline or we don't ask Him to reveal what He wants to teach us through the circumstances we are going through – we simply blame other people for our circumstances and hardships

And what happens to those people is that they begin to become bitter

Because God's discipline can make us better or it can make us bitter

[Mat 11:28-30 NKJV] 28 "Come to Me, all [you] who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Isn't this what we have been talking about all evening?

29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 "For My yoke [is] easy and My burden is light."

We should be taking advantage of this invitation –

And when we do, we begin that process of submitting to the training that God is wanting to bring about in our lives – through the difficulties and through the hardships so that it will ultimately bear good fruit in our lives.

During times of discipline – we tend to ask the question, “Why?”

It was the same question that Job’s friends tried to answer throughout the book of Job

–

Why did those things happen to Job and Job argued that their reasons were not the reason why –

And when you get to the end of the book of Job – God never answers the question “why”

God simply asked Job question after question after question to Job –

to show His sovereignty

to show His power

and His wisdom

The real question we need to be asking is, “Will I trust Him – to take what is happening to me and bring good fruit from it?”

Don't lose sight of what the writer of Hebrews is doing here

He wants to change the perspective of this group of Jewish believers from an earthly perspective to a heavenly one

The earthly perspective is – my problems, they hurt, I am discouraged.

A heavenly perspective or God's perspective is – I am using this in your life to form Christ in you and if you trust me – the glory you will experience will not be comparable to the suffering you experienced.

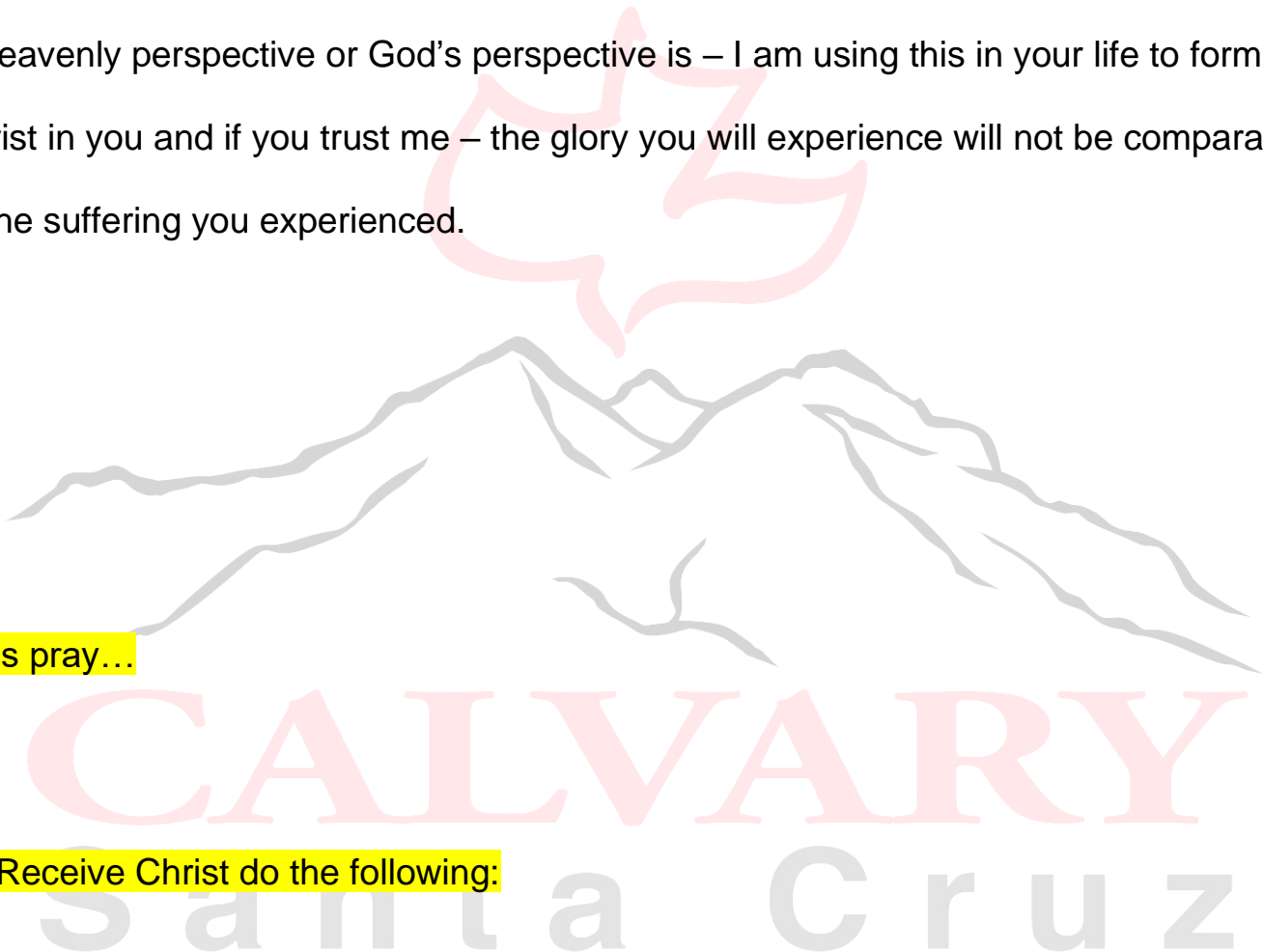
Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.



Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

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