**Hebrews 12 - Perseverance**

**November 16-17, 2016**

*The book of Hebrews was written in a climate of persecution. The Jewish Christians were harassed mostly by their Jewish friends for turning their backs on the religious traditions in which they had been raised. The persecution was largely in the form of social and economic pressure, though some of them had been imprisoned (10:34). Surely many of these believers were wondering why, if God was a God of power and of peace, they were suffering so much. “Where is the God who is supposed to supply all our needs? Why, when we turned to a God of love, did everything get so hard?*

*They needed to hear a call to persevere. The author encouraged these weary believers to “run with endurance” the race that is the Christian life. This message reminds all wavering believers that God uses hardship and affliction as a means of discipline, as a means of training His children and helping them mature. It exhorts struggling believers to continue diligently and vigilantly in the faith. Finally, it warns fearful believers not to fear men more than God, for He is “a consuming fire.”*

*If you are struggling or tempted to throw in the towel on your faith, this study is for you!*

When is a time in your own life that discipline produced something good? Was it difficult and frustrating in the moment, but later you appreciated it? Do you feel like discipline is necessary?

*Discipline: Early childhood teaching requires parental discipline, exercised with kindness and love. There is great hope that discipline will produce godly virtue and parental joy. Such a discipline must have the right motivation and appropriate severity. One who has genuine affection for his child, but withholds corporal punishment, will produce the same kind of child as a parent who hates his offspring. Believers are God’s children. Trials and sufferings in the Christian’s life come from God, who uses them to educate and disciplne believers by such experiences. Such dealings are evidence of God’s love for His own children. Because all are imperfect and need discipline and training, all true children of God are chastened at one time or another, in one way or another. Those who willingly receive the Lord’s chastening will have a richer, more abundant life.*

**Read Hebrews 12**

Review what was discussed from Chapter 11. What is the connection between Ch 11 and Ch 12 (what is the therefore, there for in V.1)?

What does it mean to throw off anything that hinders us or the sin that entangles? How have you been successful (or where is this a struggle) in your own life?

How is running a race a metaphor for Christian life? How have you seen the truth of this in your own life?

The writer discusses the pain and suffering that Jesus endured. What is the importance of this, how does this effect your own walk in the faith?

How do you feel about the quoted passages from Proverbs in V.5-6? Do these encourage or discourage you? Are you willing to endure the discipline of the Father? Have you witnessed this discipline in your own life? What do you think it means that God disciplines so that we may share in his holiness (V. 10)?

How can you follow the commands in V12-13? How have you done this in the past, what are some areas in your life where you need discipline or need to build strength? How can you do this?

Do you think we follow the command in V14? What does it mean to you to be holy?

In V.16 the writer mentions the story of Esau- how can this story be used as an analogy to our own life? In what way, may we or someone sell their “inheritance” for a “meal”?

Compare Mt. Sinai (V18-21) to Mt. Zion (V.22-24). Why are they contrasted in this passage? What does this mean for you in your own life? Do you find comfort or fear from these passages?

What does the charge (V.28-29) speak to you? Do you identify with whom he is writing to? How can you live out these commands?

Reflection:

Do you feel like God may be pruning you in specific parts of your life? How so?

From reading this passage, are you encouraged to continue running after Christ with all you heart, even amidst being tired, weary, or enduring hardship?

How can you begin or continue to fix your eyes on Christ this week, fixing your eyes on how great and Holy he is and the promise that something so much greater awaits you?

References: Hebrews by John MacArthur