

Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews XXXVI Enduring the Race

(Chapter 12)
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The book of Hebrews and the Church of Sardis have much in common. Rev. 3—we find quite a few parallels in Heb. 12.

Revelation 3:1: “And to the angel of the Church in Sardis, write: ‘These things says He Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars....’” Emphasizing the spiritual power of God, and emphasizing the fact that Christ is in the midst of all of His Churches.

“...I know your works... [we’re going to see some works that Paul describes in Heb. 12] ...and that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die. For I have not found your works **complete** before God” (vs 1-2).

Complete could also mean *perfect*. One of the things that Paul is emphasizing in the book of Hebrews is the perfection of Christ and our calling also to perfection.

Verse 3 really makes the tie-in to Hebrews: “Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent...” That’s what you could say is a summary of all of the book of Hebrews.

“...Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you” (v 3). This does not mean coming upon them in the sense of the Tribulation. This just merely means that *God is coming to judge*. Of course, that can happen at any time. God judges us all the time!

Verse 4: “You have a few names even in Sardis... [we don’t know how many were in Sardis, but here He’s saying only a few] ...who have not defiled their garments...”—sin, spiritual compromise with false prophets, with bringing in false doctrines and so forth. As compared with the Laodiceans, the Laodiceans are naked, so it looks like the Laodiceans even lose more than what the Sardisites have lost, because they have ‘defiled garments.’

“...and they shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy” (v 4). We know that the white is the righteousness of the saints.

Verse 5: “The one who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his

name before My Father and before His angels.”

We’re going to see the wording in Heb. 12 is very similar to it. What you have with the Church of Sardis—you have a name that’s to live, but are dead—you have a group of people who are giving up, not looking to Christ. This is exactly the thing that we find in Heb. 12, and exactly the thing that we find in the Church today; there are many, many parallels.

Heb. 12:1 refers back to all of the martyrs that are mentioned in Heb. 11—all of the faithful, all of the martyrs. Here we have people who are giving up in the face of the possibility of being martyred. That’s very easy for human beings to do. No one wants to die. In that light, what Paul is writing here is to help them understand what they need to do and how they need to be prepared. If you give up when the going gets tough, then you’re not finishing the race.

Hebrews 12:1: “Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us **lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps us**; and let us run the race set before us with endurance.” The *King James* says ‘patience.’ Many places in the *KJV* where it says ‘patience,’ it refers to *endurance*. Endurance is a different quality. There are two kinds of endurance that are taught here:

1. to endure to the end of the race

—which Christ said the ‘the one who endures to the end the same shall be saved; because He likens it to a race

2. to endure by bearing up under a great burden

Verse 2: “Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith; Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God.” This shows us the goal, what we need to do.

ENDURANCE

Let’s talk about endurance and running a race:

“...let’s **lay aside every weight**...”—when you’re running a race, especially referring to the Greek culture of that age—how did the runners run? *With virtually nothing on; most of them naked!* He’s

referring to laying aside every weight that holds you back.

“...and the sin that so easily entraps us...”—or distracts us. For example, even in auto racing today, what is the one thing that the driver has to do? *He’s got to concentrate on what’s ahead of him! Beware of what’s on the right and left and in the back of him!* If he gets distracted going at 200-plus mph he’s in a terrible wreck!

Even when you’re running a footrace, you don’t want to wear heavy shoes, heavy clothes, you don’t want anything to burden you down. When you’re running you also have to train. In the training—part of the training is to discipline yourself if you’re going to run. You have to practice; you have to run, because you can’t get into the race unless you’re prepared. You can’t start running the race unless you have built up your endurance. This is what he’s talking about here.

Let’s see how Paul draws another analogy; he has several places where he talks about running a race and so forth. We’re going to look at the racing aspect, or the running aspect, and what it takes.

1-Corinthians 9:24: “Don’t you know that those who run a race **all** run, but *only* one receives the prize?...” There was a runner from Jamaica break the 100-meter world record by 100th of a second. When you watch those guys run—they didn’t run naked like they did in ancient Greece, but now they have very, very tight, but flexible, clothes—which there will be no wind-drag. When they get out there and run, they really go! They have to have the endurance, the strength, the training. This is what Paul’s talking about.

“...That is the way you *are to* run in order that you may obtain *the prize*” (v 24). Today people don’t want to do that. Today people want to have everything easy. For example: We’re all trained with a 12-minute attention span. Where did that training come from? *Watching television!*

Give yourself a little measure on your attention span. See how quickly you get distracted from studying, which is part of the race. How quickly you get distracted from praying, which is another part of the race. How quickly you get distracted from doing the things that you need to do in living your life as a Christian all during the week—from Sabbath to Sabbath. The Sabbath is supposed to be a good time of training so that you learn of the Word of God, you get spiritually exercised and so forth.

Verse 25: “For everyone who is striving *for mastery* controls himself in all things. Of course, they *do this* so that they may receive a corruptible

crown; but we *are striving for* an incorruptible crown.”

That’s why we need to be aware of ‘the sin that so easily besets us.’ You can’t be running a race and trying to get to the end to win the prize and as you’re running along someone says, ‘take this’ or ‘take that’ or ‘take the other’—pretty soon you’re all loaded down with all kinds of things and you can’t continue. How did they control themselves?

- by discipline
- by exercise
- by training

If you’re going to run any kind of short-term race, you’ve got to have wind sprints so that your body is used to going at top speed so your lungs will work, your heart will work, your legs and every part of your body will work. Spiritually speaking, we are doing the same thing. That’s why we can’t be burdened down with all of these weights. That’s why Paul says to ‘put those aside.’

Verse 26: “I, therefore, so run, not as one who is uncertain...”

- you’ve got to have a goal
- you need to know *where* you’re going
- you need to know *the way* you are going
- you need to know *how* you are going there

“...so *also* I fight, not as beating *the air*” (v 26). Not just out there struggling around and guessing. It’s with purpose!

Verse 27: “But I discipline my body...” That’s what we have to do:

- discipline our body
- discipline our mind
 - ✓ with God’s Spirit
 - ✓ with God’s Word

“...and bring *it* into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself might be rejected” (v 27)

One thing Paul always does, he applies it to himself. He’s not just preaching to others, but he also applies it to himself. Let’s see some of the things we need to bring into subjection; Paul calls it ‘bringing it into captivity.’ He likens it to warfare; warfare is likened to a contest:

2-Corinthians 10:4: “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to *the overthrowing* of strongholds, casting down *vain imaginations*...” (vs 4-5). Setting aside every weight. If you have a mental sin that is a problem, you’ve got to cast it down—that is a weight. If you are discouraged and depressed, that is a weight—you’ve got to get rid of that.

“...and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ” (v 5).

That’s the discipline! We’ll see about the discipline and the correction of God. We’ll put all of those together. When Paul is talking about the race and the sin and the things that do come upon us, then we need to understand what we’re dealing with.

Notice that it’s with *endurance*; that’s the key. Endurance is what we need, and endurance comes from Christ. There’s a way that you build the endurance, much like he was talking about training and disciplining the body. If you’re going to train, you have to build muscles; you have to keep at it. Physical exercise profits for a little while—we all wished it would profit forever. You go exercise once and it’s all done, but that’s not the way that life is. When we come to different things as we’re getting older and the way that our bodies are and the weaknesses of our body, *discipline is harder!* Every excuse is easier! I know what that’s like.

When I exercise, my body tells me every time: *you don’t need to do as much*—I mean, *every time!* I’ve got to have a set thing that I do. I’ve got to make sure that I do it. The one thing about exercise and running a race is that ***no one else will do it for you!***

- no one else can pray for you
- no one else can study for you
- no one else can keep the commandments for you

Not even Christ! He’ll give you the strength to do it, but the endurance is what we need.

FIXED on JESUS

Hebrews 12:2: “Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus...” That is the key. Too many Christians today—not only in the Church, but mostly in the world—are beyond Jesus. Jesus is just a name. I was astonished to hear—I think it was in The Purpose Driven Church—that repentance and baptism was only for the Jews. ‘You don’t have to repent today, God accepts you as you are. God loves the whole world, so just come and join us.’ That’s not the way it is. You have to *fix your mind* on the *real Jesus!* On His life and everything that He stands for, and everything that He taught.

Having our mind on Jesus as far as a race is concerned, let’s see what this terminology has for us. After Paul covered the section on the promises given to Abraham by God ‘swearing by Himself’ and in blessing and multiplying:

Hebrews 6:17: “In this way God, desiring more abundantly to show the heirs of the promise the unchangeable nature of His own purpose, confirmed *it* by an oath.” This is what is important.

Let me just give you a good example: We hired a carpet cleaner to come in and clean the carpet in the office. We had it done later in the afternoon on Friday so it would be able to dry all weekend. Kim was telling him about what we do here: the tapes, books and different things like this. She was going to give him the book *The Day that Jesus Christ Died*. He said, ‘Oh, I’ll read that tonight and I’ll rent the DVD tomorrow. He likens himself to a ‘charismatic Christian’; he’s also Greek by inheritance. I came up because there were a couple of things that I had to do and Kim introduced me to him and I was checking how they were doing the carpet, if they were doing a good job and all that sort of thing.

He came up to me and he had this gold necklace on and a cross with a Christ on it. He said, ‘What do you think about this?’ I said, ‘How does the Bible read? *You shall make unto yourself any graven image of any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above or on the earth beneath.*’ He says, ‘Well, what if I just have a plain cross?’ I said, ‘It doesn’t say a plain cross.’ He says, ‘Whatever works for me, that’s okay’ ***NO! That’s how you get yourself in trouble!***

How do they come to this point? Because every false Christian minister—and there are millions of them—says that God changed. There are certain things that God improved upon, as we cover and see by the comparison of the two covenants {note Appendix J: [A Comparison Between the Old and New Covenants in The Holy Bible in Its Original Order—A Faithful Version](#)}

Every time God made a change, He made it from physical to spiritual. He made from a basic understanding to a spiritual understanding—and the standard is higher! Never did God lower the standard. But that’s just the way that people think.

He said, ‘Well, if works for me. You know, the Buddhists took a lot of things out of the New Testament.’ I said, ‘Well, Buddhism doesn’t have it. If you’re interested, I’ll give you a New Testament and also *The Day Jesus the Christ Died*. You need to understand, *God doesn’t change!*’

That’s what we are looking to here: the unchangeable nature of His own purpose. You go clear back to the beginning and what was after the sin of Adam and Eve and who was the first one who came along and said that God didn’t mean what He said? *Satan the devil!* Then God promised the

Messiah right there in Gen. 3. It's been God's *unchangeable purpose*, the nature of His own purpose. That's what people don't like, and that's why people give up.

"...the promise the unchangeable nature of His own purpose, confirmed *it* by an oath; so that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie..." (vs 17-18). God cannot lie! God does not lie! Whatever God gives us is absolute!

Here's the reason when we have difficulties, "...we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement..." (v 18). This is what Paul is bringing out in Heb. 12, that through all the difficulties and all the problems and everything that comes along, there's the encouragement that God is dealing with us as long as we have our mind fixed on Christ.

"...to lay hold on the hope *that has been* set before us; which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and steadfast, and which enters into the *sanctuary* within the veil; where Jesus has entered for us *as a forerunner*..." (vs 18-20).

A forerunner in relationship to a race is the one who breaks out ahead of the pack. Every time you watch the Tour de France, somewhere along the way Lance Armstrong breaks out of the pack and goes ahead. That's a forerunner. So, when it's talking about Christ as a forerunner, that's why we keep our mind fixed on Him. He is there as the goal. As a forerunner, He has finished the race. He has entered into the reward.

"...having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec" (v 20). That's quite a tremendous thing for us to understand here. *The forerunner!*

Hebrews 12:2 "Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith..." We can't do it on our own. We have the race ahead of us. Look at the odds. That's what people look to. Whenever there's a race there's betting. What do they have? *Odds!* This is what Paul is talking about here.

Look at everything that was set against Jesus, v 2: "...Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him... [because He kept His mind on the goal] ...endured *the cross*, *although* He despised *the shame*, and has sat down at *the right hand* of the throne of God." That's how Jesus was able to do it.

Think about *enduring the cross*. That is the worst kind of death there can be. It is meant to humiliate, to be painful, torturous, and when they were hanging on the cross, they left them for the birds of prey to come and pluck their flesh right off

of them, starting with the eyeballs—those are the quickest and easiest to get—it was one where there was nakedness; the worst kind of death that could happen. Yet, the One Who is the Creator God did that! That's what Paul is saying.

Now, if you think you have problems in your life, look at what Christ went through. He had human nature just like you and He had to cry out for strength. He had to realize that everything of God's plan hinged on the very fact of His going through the crucifixion and enduring the cross. On top of that, He also prophesied of it. He prophesied in great detail everything that would happen to Him.

This is why the whole focus of the book of Hebrews is on Christ. Let's look at some of the things that He was looking forward to. Heb. 2 talks about His death. We see this all the way through. What happens when you become 'dead' like the Sardisites? *You forget what Christ has done! You have no comprehension of what Christ has done!* When you're confronted with something that's difficult then you give up.

I think today it's going to be very, very difficult for people to face what's going to come down the road. That's why, if you watch the History Channel, look at some of the things that happened to people in WWII, in all the different wars that are there. If you see some of the things like the historical things showing what happened in the coliseums and the death of Christians and the slaughtering and killing that people went through. I mean, it was absolutely horrendous!

Jesus, the Creator God, had to face the worst ignominious death possible. How was He going to do this without the strength of God the Father? How was He going to do this unless He had the discipline of mind, the discipline of body and the yieldedness to God to endure it? When you look at the parable of the talents—God gave the five talents to one, two talents to one and one talent to the other. The one talent to the one who went and hid it and buried it is very typical of people who wait until the last minute and have done nothing up to that point and expect everything to work.

Well, I tell you what, if you start running a race and you haven't trained and disciplined your body; and if you don't have the strength and endurance; you're going to get weary. You're going to get tired! Your lungs are going to start burning; your heart's going to start pounding. Maybe—if you're really weak—you'll drop over dead of a heart attack. This is why we have to be spiritually strong! I would have to say that we have a long way to go to even be physically strong. I can say 'Amen' to that and know how much I have to do just to keep my

body in shape. I'm not as physically strong as I need to be, but I have to keep at it. If I get weary and don't do the things that I need to do, no one else is going to do it for me.

Spiritually speaking, here's what Christ had in mind, Hebrews 2:9: "But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor..."

Every time that Paul starts talking about the death of Christ, he also shows that Christ has accomplished, that Christ has attained, and as a forerunner He's done it for us.

"...on account of suffering the death..." (v 9). That's the greatest thing that God can do. That God could come in the flesh and die.

"...in order that by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone; because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (vs 9-10). That's what Paul is talking about in Heb. 12

Verse 11: "For both He Who is sanctifying and those who are sanctified *are* all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." That's a fantastic blessing and relationship with God that gives us hope, that gives us inspiration.

Here's one of the things that He looked forward to, v 12: "Saying, 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; in *the* midst of *the* Church I will sing praise to You.' And again, 'I will be trusting in Him.' And again, 'Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me'" (vs 12-13).

So, in spite of the loneliness of the crucifixion, what happened? *Everyone left Him!* He was totally alone between Him and God the Father, and that's how Jesus kept His mind on the things so He could *endure the race*. He did it for us!

Let's see what else Jesus did and see how He accomplished it while He was in the flesh. He couldn't just come to the day of the crucifixion and then all of a sudden it was there. Here's what happened:

Hebrews 5:7: "Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because *He* feared God. Although He was a Son, *yet*, He learned obedience from the things that He suffered" (vs 7-8).

This is our example! God wants us to learn from the things that we suffer. Suffering is not

pleasant. No one likes suffering, but how many here are without some kind of suffering along the way.

Then you start thinking about some of the things that we suffer today, and some of the things that we get upset about, that we think we're suffering over, are nothing! I mean, NOTHING! What's going to happen when we're really facing difficulties! The tendency is, *instead of being in training and learning and obeying*, we want to avoid confrontation, difficulties, because we live in an age of compromise. For us to have the mentality that we need, the very mentality of Christ, then we have to really study these Scriptures and get these things fixed in our mind, ***having our mind fixed on Christ!***

Verse 8: "Although He was a Son, *yet*, He learned obedience from the things that He suffered; and having been perfected..." (vs 8-9). That's quite interesting! How can God Who's perfect be perfected? *When Christ divested Himself and became a human being and took on human nature He could not be totally perfect as God in heaven above is perfect!* Could not be! He had to learn through the things that He suffered and was perfected!

"...He became *the* Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him" (vs 8-9).

Let's see what Christ did. Let's see the things that we are also to do. Here's another aspect of the crucifixion. Not only despising the shame of it, but considering what He did to humble Himself to come to that position. I think that if we could do as Heb. 12 says and keep our mind on Christ and what He went through, and ask for the help and strength—especially the spiritual help, the emotional help and the physical help that we need—we will be able to understand more why we go through the things that we do and allow the character of God to be developed in us, through it. That's what to keep in mind. Keep in mind what Christ gave up. Then ask yourself when you stop and think:

- Will I ever make it?
- Does God love me?
- Does God care for me?
- Does God know what I'm suffering through?

Yes! Yes! He gave up His glory to become a human being to save every one of us. The task was not easy, so therefore, all these feel-good, comfortable, tolerant, compromising sermons, teachings and churches are going to fall apart when the going gets tough! How many left when the way of the door to Sunday-keeping and Christmas and Easter and all those false doctrines were opened and people were told 'that's all right, you don't have to

struggle against these things any longer”? Just like that broadband phone ad—people do stupid things—that’s what they did! They just went right out, because they didn’t understand what God had done for them, and they didn’t understand what Christ personally did for all mankind and each one individually!

Philippians 2:6: “Who, although He existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, *and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a **servant**... [Greek ‘doulos,’ which can also mean *slave*] ...and being found in *the* manner of man...” (vs 6-8).

He had human nature; every bodily function of a man; everything that we are confronted with in our life He took upon Himself.

“...He humbled Himself, *and* became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross” (v 8). Here Christ *willingly* did this. He prophesied about it; understood what was going to happen; worked out all the circumstances so that it would occur. Then on top of it, we find that Jesus said, ‘No man takes My life, but I lay it down for the sheep. This I have commandment from the Father that I lay My life down and commandment that I receive it back.’ That was His point of view.

Stop and think for a minute: Any point along the line, with all the temptations, with everything that Jesus went through—the pull of human nature—He could have given into it.

We need to understand that the strength that Christ had from God the Father—which He had to receive—likewise we can receive that strength from Christ and God the Father, too, to face the things that we need to face down the road. People will react: ‘Well, we’re not facing it, yet.’ *True!* Will you be ready when it comes? What is going to come? *We’ve read of some of those things in the book of Revelation!* How bad is it going to be? *We’re going to reach a time when it’s going to be the worst that it’s ever been in history!* Are we looking to Christ and preparing for those things in the way that we need to?

Hebrews 12:2: “...He [Christ] despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God.” He is our High Priest. We can come to Him continually

- knowing that He will help us
- knowing that He will forgive us
- knowing that He will strengthen us

so that we realize that we can receive these things from Christ, because Christ is the forerunner. He has

run the race and has completed it. Now we need to finish it.

Verse 3: “Now meditate deeply on Him...” How do you meditate deeply on Him? *By studying the Gospels; by understanding what Christ went through.*

“...Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself...” (v 3). Great hatred even to this day. He says, ‘You consider that. You understand that.’

“...so that you **do not become weary and faint in your minds**” (v 3). If you become faint and weary in your mind you are going to give up.

One way you can think on that is: {note books: *The Day Jesus the Christ Died* and *A Harmony of the Gospels* the 28 prophecies in one day concerning the crucifixion.} It would be good to take each one of those, read it, think about it, mediate on it:

- What does it mean?
- What did Christ go through?
- How did He endure?
- Notice, He didn’t talk back!
- Notice, He didn’t answer back!
- Notice, none of those things took place!

Go back and read the things in the book of Isaiah and see all that He was going to go through, and in the Psalms. Here the Creator God came as a human being and everyone rejected Him; even the night that He was arrested all of His disciples fled. There He was, truly alone:

“...Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds” (v 3)—because it’s too easy for people to faint and give up in their mind and go against what God says.

In this endurance, this is the kind of endurance to bear up when the pressure is on. You compare yourself with Jesus and His endurance so that:

- you don’t get weary
- you don’t despair
- you don’t get discouraged

and not detour from obedience or abandon the faith.

When the whole world is doing something, *it’s easy* to go along with what the world does. But to go against it and obey God, that takes an awful lot. What Christ went through here with the “...hostility of sinners...” was the total, active oppression against Him—through scourging, beating and everything that He went through. It’s quite a

thing when we stop, meditate and think on Christ and think on the things that He went through.

Verse 4: “You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin.” Now the athletic thing changes a little bit from a footrace to a boxing match. They had boxing back there in ancient Greece. One of the hallmarks of someone who was really an athlete was when they were able to, even against the fact of shedding their own blood, to win. It was a mark of distinction, that in shedding your blood and winning, you became a real hero.

To give you an example of what I’m talking about, there’s a movie out called *The Gladiator*. That was a very good movie in depicting all of the horrible things that went on at the coliseum and how that fighting and warring was so ingrained in these people. As we sat there and watched it, we just had to ask how could people become so filled with ‘blood-lust’ that they enjoyed and cheered and watched people killed, slaughtered, eaten? As I was watching I was thinking that that was a lot of what the Christians in Paul’s day went through. That’s what a lot of them were facing in the very near future. That’s why Paul was writing this in Heb. 12.

- How are we going to make it?
- How are we going to endure when those times come?
- *Well, the answer is right here!*

So, we just have to conclude that we have not yet given the utmost. *No, we haven’t!*

PREPARE

Now, let’s look about how Jesus told us to prepare for that time. A lot of our training is spiritual training, looking to Christ and Christ *in* us, *leading* us, and having been the forerunner and preparing the way, and that we received the Holy Spirit of God so that we can have the strength to do it. We look at ourselves and we don’t have the strength—not at all. But we can be mentally prepared. How many times in any athletic contest it comes up and it’s mental: make mental errors. Spiritually, if we are not mentally and spiritually prepared, then we’re going to make those mistakes.

Luke 14:25: “And great multitudes were going with Him; and He turned *and* said to them...” Yes, when He was doing the miracles and healing the sick and raising the dead and causing the blind to see and the deaf to hear and dumb to speak, everyone was cheering Him on. ‘Oh, Master, this...’ Thousands were healed! But how quickly they forgot.

Verse 26: “If anyone comes to Me and

does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

This is the whole point of counting the cost. This is the mental preparation of having our minds fixed on Christ and what we need to do so that if at anytime it’s called upon us to do it, we are ready because we have been exercised mentally and spiritually to that point. “...cannot be My disciple”—the utterly impossibility of it!

Verse 27: “And whoever does not carry his cross...”—showing that you’re going to have your difficulties, struggles, trials, disappointments, discouragements and things in life that don’t turn out the way you expect. I don’t think there is one human being on earth today whose life has turned out exactly as they expected. Not one of us! We have to ‘carry our cross.’

- What happens?
- What is the difficulty?
- What is the problem?
- How do we overcome it?
- How do we handle it?
- Do we collapse?
- Do we give up?
- Do we accuse God?
- What do we do?

Like one movie on *The Gladiators* in the coliseum, when the Christians were thrown to the lions, I think the movie producer had something in it that was very affective. Here the Christians were all locked up in this pre-release to the coliseum floor with the lions and so forth. They were all in there and they were all praying. One boy said, ‘Lord, you didn’t tell us about this!’ As if, ‘if I would have known that I would be meat in the coliseum, I wouldn’t have become a Christian.’ That was kind of the attitude that was there.

That’s why Christ made it clear when we study the life of Christ then we can meditate on it. When we know His teachings then we understand what we need to do.

Verse 27: “And whoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” That’s clear! Unequivocal! That’s what Paul is expanding there in Heb. 12.

Then He gives an example, v 28: “For which one of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has *sufficient* for its completion; lest perhaps, after he has laid its foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him” (vs 27-29). That’s what happens.

Driving through the area of Utah and Idaho, we saw a lot of houses that they didn't have enough to finish. They dug the basement and they had these little basement windows above ground—part of the basement was above ground—and where they were to have the first floor and build the rest of the house they put on a little roof. Everyone of them—I've talked to several of them—intended to finish, but couldn't do it. When that happens, they either have to have the gumption to get up and do it, or have someone come along and be able to loan them the money so they can finish it. The worst ignominy in the world is to start to build a house and you don't finish it. That's why He used this analogy here.

“...begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish’? Or what king, when he goes out to engage another king in war, does not first sit down *and* take counsel, whether he will be able with ten thousand to meet him who is coming against him with twenty thousand?... [What are the odds?] ...But if not, while his *enemy* is still far off, he sends ambassadors and desires the *terms* for peace” (vs 29-32).

Here's another analogy for us: As human beings with our carnal nature and our hostility to God, what are we? *We're at war with God!* It says, ‘the carnal mind is enmity against God and not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.’ *We're at war with God!* If you're at war with God you'd better figure out how to make peace, because you're going to lose. Hands down you're going to lose. No one yet has defeated God, not even Satan the devil! Satan was cast down!

Here's the mental training, v 33: “In the same way also, each one of you who does not forsake all that he possesses cannot be My disciple.”

So, today we have to ask what is it that I cannot walk away from today to serve God? Doesn't mean you have to give it up today, but mentally speaking, have you resolved in your own mind that there is absolutely *nothing* that you will hold onto, that you will forsake all that you possess. “...**who does not forsake all that he possesses cannot be My disciple.**”

Then He shows that when we do that, v 34: “Salt *is* good; but if the salt becomes tasteless, with what shall it be seasoned?” There's a new ad out that they have on a sports channel, and they're outside doing some things and all of a sudden it starts raining. It's a take off on the difference between good tasting beer and bad tasting beer. Here comes all this water from the sky and a man tasting it and says, ‘It's beer! It's beer!’ Then it ends up him running over and looking in the window of a tavern

where there's a Miller Lite and that has better taste than the beer ‘from heaven.’ So, it's showing that the beer that came raining down from the sky was tasteless.

Well, likewise with salt. If you have salt that is so bad that you can't even taste the salt. Have you ever had salt like that? You put the salt on and taste it and you can't taste it. You put some more on and pretty soon you have all kinds of salt on and it's no good. You have to have salt that tastes.

Verse 35: “It is fit neither for the land, nor for the manure; *but* they cast it out. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.” That's all a part of *meditating on Christ!* To be first mentally and spiritually prepared, regardless of the circumstances!

Here's the thing that's hard to do: When the times are good, when the times are easy, when the times are comfortable—you've got a nice bed to sleep in; if it's too hot you turn on the air-conditioner; if it's too cold you turn on the furnace; if you have a draft you put on a coat; or a robe; or some socks on your feet. If you're thirsty you go get a drink of water; if you want a treat maybe you fix yourself a lemonade; or if you have nice glass of wine and sit back and relax. I mean, today it is so easy you don't even have to get up to change channels. You just sit there with your remote. How many remotes do you have in your house?

It's like another ad: This guy comes out to look for his car and all the cars look the same, so he's got his remote and *beep, beep, beep*—trying to find his car. Then it shows another car of a different kind coming out and it says if you own a Saab you'll always keep your identity. We have it so easy today. I mean, just look at us here in church. We're comfortable. If you're cold you have a coat on, or a blanket. We're able to have tables to lay out our Bible. We have snacks over here, we have something to eat. The temperature is just right.

Then to talk about how do we mentally and spiritually prepare for the time when we don't have these things. Let's talk about the person who is just unable to get out of bed and come to church on the Sabbath. There are some like that. If you're sick, don't come. Same way with keeping the Feasts.

Hebrews 12:3: “Now meditate deeply on Him Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself so that **you do not become weary and faint in your minds.**” Ask yourself:

- What am I weary of doing in relationship to God?
- What is it that I won't do, or don't do, that you know that God says to do; but you've

become weary in well doing?

- Didn't Paul warn against that?

Don't become weary in well-doing! This is where we are today.

I remember years ago—of course, gas was cheaper then—if we had to drive 150 miles to church, no problem, we'd be there. Whatever it may be. How far we had to go to keep the Feast, no problem, we'd be there. Whatever God required of us, we did. When you become weary and faint in your mind because you haven't trained spiritually, to be mentally prepared for it, then you give up. Then what happens?

Verse 4: "You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin." Compare the struggle that Christ had with the opposition and the hostility of all of those against Him, and the struggle that we're fighting. We have to sit down and think about it. ***You have to be prepared!***

Let's use the analogy of Homeland Security. What happened when we weren't prepared for 9/11? Look what occurred. What's going to happen to the Church of God that is not prepared for the times ahead? There will come correction before the disaster hits; God is going to correct! *He promises it!*

This is where we come to, v 5: "And you have already forgotten the admonition that He addresses to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise *the* chastening of *the* Lord, nor grow weary of being reproved by Him; for whom *the* Lord loves He chastens, and He severely disciplines every son whom He receives'" (vs 5-6).

In looking at the trials and difficulties that we are going through, let's begin to have this perspective that Paul brings us. That we go through these things so we can learn. We go through these things so that we can be corrected. What is the greatest pleasure of all when you've gotten through a trial and you look back with 20/20 hindsight and you understand it? You can find that back in Prov. 3.

But look at this. God loves us. That's why we're going through it. What happens when there is no correction, when there needs to be correction? Just look at this society today. How would God's Church be if God never intervened to correct it? Notice the promise:

Verse 7: "If you endure chastening, God is dealing with you as *a Father* with *His* sons. For who is the son whom *the* Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons.... [there's a reason and purpose for it] ...Furthermore,

we have had our fleshly fathers who chastened *us*, and we respected *them*; should we not all the more *willingly* be subject to the Father of spirits, and live *forever*?" (vs 7-9). In other words, God is doing this so we can receive eternal life—which is fantastic!

Verse 10: "For in the first case, they chastened *us* for a few days in whatever way seemed good to them; but in the second case, He *chastens us* for *our own* benefit that we may be partakers of His Holiness." Again, what is the end purpose of all of these things?

When a trial comes, if we focus on the misery and the difficulty that is immediate, we get discouraged, despaired, overwhelmed, more than we can handle; we get weary and give up. That's what people do when they focus on it. But if you're looking to Christ and focusing on Him and realizing the purpose of why these things are taking place and ask God to help us to use these things that we can grow in grace and knowledge, to use these things to be strengthened spiritually and mentally, then we'll get through it. We're going to be partakers of His Holiness!

Also keep this in mind: That's why God has the Sabbath, the Holy Days. Spiritual growth is a constant thing. Overcoming sin and human nature is a constant thing. Not just when you come to Church on the Sabbath, that's for strengthening, training, learning and all of this sort of thing. But the application has to come during the week. That's why when some people think that if they can 'just get to church everything will be wonderful.' NO! ***It encompasses your whole life everyday of the week.*** Everything that you do, everything that you think, everything that you experience, and God has the power, capacity and ability to use those things to teach us, train us, to help us to grow and overcome—so we can be *partakers of His Holiness!*

Here's what Paul said, Romans 8:14: "For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God." God is dealing with us as sons. God loves us! Part of the difficulty of going through the things that we suffer is that we don't see that the great benefit will be when we enter into the Kingdom of God. We are looking for the immediate benefit now! That may not happen. It's the spiritual benefit, because He's dealing with us as sons.

Verse 15: "Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God" (vs 15-16). That's why you have to know that:

- God has called you!
- God has given you His Spirit!
- God loves you!
- God knows you!
- God is dealing with you!

He is in all circumstances, at all times.

Verse 17: “Now if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs...” Just like Christ looked ahead to the things that would be once He got through the crucifixion, death and resurrection, so we need to look beyond the immediacy of the things we’re going through and see that God has a great purpose for us, that we are partakers of His Holiness! To be as God is! Satan comes along and says you ‘can be God now.’ God says, ‘NO! at the resurrection!’

“...*we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (vs 17-18).

This is part of the mental and spiritual training that we need to understand when we are going through things. This will help us go through. This will help us overcome. That we might be *partakers of His Holiness!*

Hebrews 12:11: “Now truly, no chastisement for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous...” That is true! Especially for any of you have been in the service, and the Sergeant gets out there and ‘dresses down’ everybody, make you all stand at attention, makes you do this and makes you do that. When you’re a young recruit, and this happened to me right after I joined the Army:

They said, ‘We want to welcome all of you recruits here. We’ve had a whole week of marching and training and drilling and things like this. Tonight we’re going to have a party—a GI party.’ Once you get done with that, you can get a pass. ‘You want to party tonight?’ *Yea!!!* Everyone wanted to party. Well, it wasn’t the kind of party that people had in mind. This GI party was cleaning the barracks to where there was not a speck of dust anywhere to be found! The beds had to be made just right and if they weren’t made just right, the Sergeant rips them all up and says, ‘make it again.’ Those who really had the ‘joyous work’ were the latrine detail. Of course, down at Ft. Ord where I was, they had old plumbing—rusty toilets and so forth. Those had to shine and sparkle. You clean it and everything looks good to you and the Sergeant comes along and he has a little dentist mirror and he says, ‘Look at all of that; get all of that off.’ Makes you clean it and do it

again. The floor wasn’t done good enough, so you’ve got to do it again.

Everyone is upset with this! It’s grievous. It’s the same way with any trial we go through. It’s grievous! I’ve been through some grievous ones. I know it’s not joyous!

“...nevertheless, afterwards it yields *the* peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it” (v 11).

Let’s see how correction comes; let’s look at the easiest correction. There is always going to be correction. Everyone wants easy correction.

1. Self-correction with conscience

1-Corinthians 11:31: “Now, if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged.” Examine yourself! How do you examine yourself? *Compare yourself with the Word of God!* That’s why you study the Word of God. You examine yourself. Self-correction with your conscience is the quickest, easiest way. Even people in the world can do that. Their conscience is stricken and they change their ways.

2. Self-correction with the Word of God

Wherever you read something in the Word of God and you find that convicts you of doing things you shouldn’t be doing, then you repent and the Word of God corrects you. No one else is involved. It’s just you, the Word of God and God. You have the correction and you don’t need any great trial coming down on you.

3. Led by the Holy Spirit

You’re going along and the thought comes ‘don’t do this’ but you do it. Then you’ve gone against the leading of the Holy Spirit. The leading of the Holy Spirit you need to pay attention to.

4. Circumstances and Situations

Now it’s beginning to involve other things and other people. The fastest I’ve ever driven my car is 105 mph and that was about when I was 20-21-years-old and I just bought a brand new 1956 Ford Fairlane V8 hardtop and I going on down to visit my mom in California. I came to a stretch of freeway in Oregon and no access, so I said to myself, ‘boy, I want to see how fast this goes.’ I got it up to 105 mph and the thought struck me: ‘what would you do, stupid, if a tire blew out?’ I immediately quit going 105 mph and got down to 65, and I never again went 105 mph. In some cases, with better cars, I’ve gotten up to 90 mph. On the freeways in California only 85 mph. But I tell you what, every time you see an accident that happens to someone else, that’s corrective.

5. Other people—fathers, mothers, brethren, ministers

That's harder to take. When other people are involved and the correction comes and you know you're wrong. That's not as hard as the next one.

6. God's direct intervention in your life

That can expand considerably! Think of the four sore punishments of God:

- Famine—haven't been though that, have we?
- Sword—haven't been through that, have we?

The other punishments of God you find in Ezek. 14:21—the four sore punishments of God. They didn't listen! They wouldn't listen! God sent the warning.

How many people are weary of hearing about the Laodiceans? And the very ones that weary of hearing it are the ones who need to hear it, because they're going to end up with God intervening in their lives for the correction. The ultimate correction is:

7. Captivity!

All of those are grievous!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 3:1-5
- 2) Hebrews 12:1-2
- 3) 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
- 4) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5
- 5) Hebrews 12:2
- 6) Hebrews 6:17-20
- 7) Hebrews 12:2
- 8) Hebrews 2:9-13
- 9) Hebrews 5:7-9
- 10) Philippians 2:6-8
- 11) Hebrews 12:2-4
- 12) Luke 14:25-35
- 13) Hebrews 12:3-10
- 14) Romans 8:14-18
- 15) Hebrews 12:11
- 16) 1 Corinthians 11:31

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 3
- Proverbs 3
- Ezekiel 14:21

Also referenced: Books:

- *The Day That Jesus the Christ Died* by Fred R. Coulter
- *A Harmony of the Gospel* by Fred R. Coulter

Appendix J: A Comparison of the Old and New Covenants (*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order*)

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