

Hebrews: A Bridge from the Old to the New

Hebrews Chapter 12

Christianity: A Superior Faith (concluded)

Remember Jesus as the Perfect Example of Obedience (Verses 1-4)

- 1** “Therefore” signals a conclusion of the section on Christian faith ^{Hebrews 10:26-12:29}. The “great cloud of witnesses” were the faith heroes discussed earlier ^{Hebrews 11}, and were not spectators, but their lives of faith are a great encouragement for Christians to reject “darkness” ^{Romans 13:12} and the “old self” ^{Ephesians 4:22}, in order to live faith-filled lives ^{Hebrews 11:1-3} for Jesus. In a running metaphor, the author exhorts believers to “run the race” with perseverance ^{Hebrews 10:36}, which can be accomplished if they “train” ^{1 Corinthians 9:24-25} in the right way so that their “running” will not be in vain ^{Galatians 2:2}.
- 2** Jesus is not only the originator (“author”) ^{Hebrews 2:10} and finisher (“perfecter”) ^{Psalms 138:8, Philippians 1:6} of faith, but He is also the focus of faith ^{Psalms 25:15, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Colossians 3:1-2}. The joy Jesus ‘saw’ was the completion of His Father’s redemptive plan ^{John 19:30}, which provided the strength for Him to do what the world could not understand ^{1 Corinthians 1:18a, 23}: He voluntarily ^{John 10:18} faced the worldly shame ^{Hebrews 13:13} and suffered the torment ^{Luke 9:22} of the cross ^{Philippians 2:8b}. The perfect obedience of Jesus resulted in His exaltation ^{Philippians 2:9-11} and ascension to the right hand of His Father ^{Mark 16:19, Acts 7:55}.
- 3-4** Jesus is the supreme example of being perfectly obedient to the Father ^{Hebrews 5:7}. The author wanted the example of Jesus to strengthen his readers ^{Galatians 6:9} as they faced spiritual attack ^{Galatians 6:17, Revelation 2:3}, because spirit-filled Christians should expect persecution ^{2 Timothy 3:12}. The Hebrew/Christians of that time were struggling “against sin”, but had not yet shed any blood, as some other saints had ^{Acts 7:54-60, 12:1-2}.

Discipline Reflects the Love of God (Verses 5-11)

- 5-6** Jesus promised genuine believers they will have struggles ^{John 16:33}, and even persecution ^{John 15:20}, in life. However, Christians are to remember God is sovereign ^{Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6} and whether He brings trials on them or simply allows them to happen, He will use the times of testing as discipline ^{Proverbs 3:11-12} in the lives of those He loves ^{Psalms 94:12, Revelation 3:19a} for their good, if they will work with Him ^{Romans 8:28}.
- 7-8** God is faithful to discipline ^{Psalms 119:75} His children ^{Deuteronomy 8:5b, 2 Samuel 7:14, Proverbs 13:24}, just as a good earthly father disciplines his sons. Christians are called to “endure” and have joy ^{James 1:2-4} in the discipline. What's more, any believer who does not face discipline must seriously consider if they are saved ^{1 Peter 5:9}.
- 9-10** Christians gain the joy of true life ^{Isaiah 38:15-16} when they are consistent in their humble submission to the heavenly Father (“Father of our spirits”, ^{Numbers 16:22, 27:16, Revelation 22:6}) who leads them to holiness ^{2 Peter 1:4}.
- 11** The discipline God brings into the Christian’s life is not pleasant ^{1 Peter 1:3-6}, but if used as a form of spiritual training ^{1 Timothy 4:6-8}, in the end ^{2 Timothy 4:6-8} it will result in great peace and purity ^{Isaiah 32:17, James 3:17-18}.

Gain Strength from the Leaders of the Faith (Verses 12-13)

12-13 “Therefore” marks the transition into a section exhorting believers to act on the earlier divine truths^{v.1-11} from faith heroes, by using God’s discipline in order to gain^{Isaiah 35:3-4} and give Galatians 6:1a strength in the race of life. Facing trials with the right attitude allows believers to complete the race well^{Proverbs 4:25-27}.

Live Like Jesus, not Like Esau (Verses 14-17)

This section emphasizes (“make...effort”^{v.14} & “See...”^{v.15,16}) the Christian’s responsibility for action.

14 The believer is called^{Romans 14:19} to live a life of holiness^{Romans 6:20-23, 1 Peter 1:16} and in peace with everyone^{Matthew 5:9, James 3:18}, because this conduct proves them genuine and leads to seeing Jesus^{Matthew 5:8}.

15 Believers are exhorted to do everything they can to help people embrace God’s grace^{Hebrews 3:12-13}, not let anyone seeking God to fall short^{Hebrews 4:1-2}, “make sure no one turns away from God”^{Deuteronomy 29:18a} and ensure no apostates (“bitter root”) are allowed to teach false doctrine (“bitter poison”)^{Deuteronomy 29:18b}.

16-17 Spiritual and physical immorality are among the worst of sins^{1 Corinthians 6:18, Hebrews 13:4, 2 Peter 2:14}. Esau wanted God’s blessing (he grieved for it), but he did not have respect for God^{Genesis 25:29-34, 27:1-40}. Like an apostate, Esau knew truth, but continued to sin (he did it his way), so he could not be forgiven^{Hebrews 10:26}.

Lessons from Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion (Verses 18-29)

18-21 The author reminded the readers that they did not have to face the sobering terror experienced by the Israelite nation at Mt. Sinai (captured in the OT quotes^{Exodus 19:12-13, Deuteronomy 9:19}), when God presented His Law to Moses and the Hebrew people^{Exodus 19:10-25, 20:18-21, Deuteronomy 4:10-24}.

22-24 Mt. Sinai was terrifying, because no one could please God on the basis of the Law^{Galatians 3:10-12}, this is in contrast to the heavenly Mt. Zion, where the presence of God^{Isaiah 24:21-23} is inviting and gracious, to all genuine believers. For them, the heavenly Jerusalem represented peaceful access to the presence of angels, the church, God the Father, the OT saints, and Jesus^{Revelation 4-5}. The sprinkled blood of Jesus referred to how His blood of salvation^{Romans 5:8-9} was used to consecrate both God’s and the people’s parts of the Mosaic Covenant^{Exodus 24:3-8}, as well as the New Covenant^{1 Peter 1:1-2}. Accordingly, the blood of Abel cried out for justice^{Genesis 4:10}, while the blood of Jesus shouts for mercy and forgiveness^{Colossians 1:19-20}.

25 God spoke to the OT Israelites^{Hebrews 1:1}, warned them about what He expected^{Hebrews 11:7} and judged the disobedient^{Deuteronomy 18:19}. The author reminded NT believers of their accountability^{Hebrews 2:2-3, 10:28-29}.

26-27 God (His voice) shook Mt. Sinai during the time of Moses^{Exodus 19:18}; however, as an OT verse^{Haggai 2:6} stated, God will once again shake the heavens and the earth^{Isaiah 13:13a} and even destroy the corrupted first Creation^{2 Peter 3:10-11a, Revelation 20:11}, preparing the way for the new eternal Creation^{2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1}.

28-29 Knowing an eternal kingdom is ahead, every believer should give thanks^{1 Thessalonians 5:18} and reverently worship^{Malachi 2:5, Hebrews 13:15}, since God will cleanse everything with fire^{Deuteronomy 4:24, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15}.

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Deuteronomy 8:5b ...as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

Deuteronomy 18:19 If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

Psalms 119:75 I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

Isaiah 13:13a Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place...

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Romans 13:12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

1 Corinthians 1:18a For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

Galatians 6:1a Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

Philippians 1:6 ...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus.

Philippians 2:8b ... he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Colossians 1:19-20 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

2 Timothy 3:12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Hebrews 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,

James 3:18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

1 Peter 1:16 ...for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

2 Peter 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

2 Peter 3:13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Revelation 2:3 You have persevered and endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Revelation 3:19a Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.