

## Conclusion: The Walk and Worship of the Believer

### “Looking unto Jesus”

#### Hebrews 12

Chapter 12 doesn't bring with it something new, but rather we're building on everything we've already learned. We've seen that Christ is better: better than angels, prophets, priests, and sacrifices. We've been warned not to drift, not to turn back, and not to harden our hearts, but rather to hold fast our faith (confidence) in Him.

In chapter 11, we saw what that kind of faith looks like: faith that endures, obeys, and trusts even when the promises seem far off. And now, in chapter 12, the author says, “*Wherefore seeing we also...*” In other words, *you're in this too*. We're not to be spectators to the race but participants *in* the race.

And the only way to run well, the only way to endure, is by looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. That phrase will serve as the guiding theme as we work through these final chapters: *Looking unto Jesus*.

#### I. AS WE RUN OUR RACE – VS. 1-3

Before we get into what Hebrews 12 tells us about running the race of faith, it's helpful to remember that this isn't the only place in the New Testament where the Christian life is pictured as a race. The Apostle Paul used the same metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, drawing from the athletic culture of the ancient world, particularly the Isthmian Games held near Corinth.

In that passage, Paul exhorts believers to run not just for participation but for victory. He encourages them to strive for an incorruptible crown by living a life of discipline, focus, and purpose. While Hebrews 12

emphasizes perseverance in suffering and keeping our eyes on Jesus, both passages convey the seriousness of our spiritual race.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Corinthians 9:24-27                                 | Hebrews 12:1-3                                  |
| Run to obtain the prize (v. 24)                       | Run with patience the race set before us (v. 1) |
| Exercise self-control in all things (v. 25)           | Lay aside every weight and the sin (v. 1)       |
| Fight with purpose, not aimlessly (v. 26)             | Look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher (v. 2) |
| Discipline the body to avoid disqualification (v. 27) | Consider Him... lest ye be wearied (v. 3)       |

Both writers are showing us the cost of faithfulness and the commitment it takes to finish well. With that background in mind, let's look at the text before us in verses 1-3.

## A. We're in great company – vs. 1a

### 1. "Wherefore seeing we also"

- a) The *we also* should be construed with *let us run*. "Therefore *let us also* (as they did) run our appointed race with patience." (Vincent)
- b) Chapter 11 repeatedly emphasizes that these heroes did not live to receive the finished promise (11:13, 11:39) but instead were looking forward to the city built by God (11:10). Yet they persevered in faith. The "also" in 12:1 essentially says: "Since we also are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses, and since we also are called to live by faith (though we have

advantages they didn't have), then we also must run with patience, or patient endurance."

2. *"Are compassed about [completely surrounded]"* – this gives a visual picture of being in an arena or on a racecourse, surrounded on all sides by spectators. But when you understand the "also" as creating continuity, it becomes clear they're not mere spectators but predecessors in the same race, witnesses in the sense that they testify to the possibility of faithful endurance.
3. *"With so great a cloud of witnesses"*
  - a) The word for "witnesses" (μάρτυρες), from which we get "martyr," in the context here means they are bearing witness to us through their example of faith.
  - b) The author is not saying, "They are watching us," but rather, "You are surrounded by their testimony."

Their lives speak, their faith encourages, and their example surrounds us and cheers us on, not because they're looking down, but because their story still speaks (cf. Heb. 11:4, "he being dead yet speaketh").

- c) Hebrews 12:1 does not teach that our loved ones in heaven are watching us. If it did, it would risk turning heaven into an anxious and sorrowful place. If our loved ones saw the suffering, sin, or even spiritual drift of those they love on earth, heaven would not be free of grief (as Rev. 21:4 promises it is).

The Bible teaches us that only God sees and knows everything (Heb. 4:13; Ps. 139:1-4). Those in heaven are at rest (Rev. 14:13), not

burdened by ongoing earthly troubles.

## B. We need to get in great shape – vs. 1b

### 1. *“Let us lay aside every weight”*

- a) *“Let us lay aside”* (ἀποθέμενοι) – in its application to the racing metaphor, it’s seen as taking off clothing or setting aside equipment.

Romans 13:12

<sup>12</sup> The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Ephesians 4:22

<sup>22</sup> That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

- b) *“Every weight”*

(1) The word for “weight” (ὄγκον - only time this word is used in the Greek New Testament) refers to bulk, mass, or encumbrance. In classical Hellenistic Greek, it was often used for a tumor, swelling, or mass.

(2) As used here, it would include things that aren’t necessarily sinful in themselves but become hinderances to spiritual progress. Things like excessive concern with secondary matters, legitimate pursuits that become consuming, or even good things that distract from the better thing. Think of a runner who isn’t carrying anything wrong, but is simply carrying too much.

### 2. *“Let us lay aside...the sin which doth so easily beset us”*

- a) *“Doth so easily beset”* (εὐπερίστατον) –

compound adjective that is only used this one time in the Greek New Testament and forms the idea of something that easily surrounds, entangles, or encompasses. It pictures a loose robe around the feet that can cause stumbling or falling, or vines around the legs while running.

According to the Louw-Nida Lexicon: "sin which easily prevents or hinders a person from doing what they should."

b) *"The sin"* – τὴν ἁμαρτίαν

(1) The use of the definite article here could be pointing to a specific sin, and not necessarily sin in a general sense. In the case of the Hebrew Christians to whom the letter was written, it seems to be speaking of the sin of abandoning their faith when faced with persecution, social pressure, or the delayed fulfillment of the promises as was seen in the previous chapter.

(2) That said, the grammatical structure (definite article and descriptive adjective) creates a transferable application. The definite article says "you know the sin I'm talking about" – but the descriptive adjective (εὐπερίστατον) provides the criteria for identifying what "the sin" is in any given context.

The contextual placement supports this transferable application. By putting this exhortation immediately after the hall of faith, the author connects it to the theme of perseverance. Whatever sin most threatens your perseverance, that's "the easily besetting sin" you need to lay aside.

3. *"And let us run with patience the race that is set*

*before us"*

- a) This is the main verb – *"let us run"* – "laying aside" is preparatory action that should be decisive and completed. The tense of the verb (aorist) points to definitive action rather than ongoing struggle. The voice of the verb (middle) suggests personal responsibility. In other words, this is something each believer must do for themselves. The force is: "Having decisively laid aside..." or "After laying aside..."

This verb carries the primary emotional and volitional force. This is where the author places his main emphasis. The present tense suggests ongoing, sustained effort rather than a one-time action ("*let us start, run on, and continue running, till we get to the goal*" - Clarke). The subjunctive mood creates a sense of corporate urgency – "we must run," "we need to run," "let's run together."

A runner doesn't struggle endlessly with taking off their warm-up clothes – they do it decisively and move on to the real challenge of running the race. The author's grammar mirrors this athletic reality.

- b) *"With patience"* – the word literally means "bearing up under." This speaks to faithfulness throughout life, in the good times and the bad.
- c) *"The race that is set before us"* – this phrase has a powerful corporate tone. We're not running alone. All believers are in this together, running the race of faith, encouraged by those who came before us and strengthened by those who run beside us (Heb. 10:24).

But within that shared race, each of us has a personal course – a path sovereignly laid out by God, with its own challenges, callings, and finish

lines. Your race is not exactly like mine, but we run together, looking unto the same Savior.

### C. We must consider the Great Savior – vs. 2-3

The author shifts from the cloud of witnesses behind us to the One ahead of us, Jesus Christ. We don't run because others have; we run because Jesus already did.

In verse 1, we're told to run "the race that is set before us," but the question arises: How do we know how to run it? Verse 2 answers: Look to Jesus, who not only ran this race first but ran it perfectly.

1. *"Looking unto Jesus"* – The word *"looking"* (ἀφορῶντες) here means more than just seeing – it means looking away (turning away from other things) and fixing your eyes on Christ alone. If you try to run while watching other people, you'll stumble; if you focus on the pain, you'll quit; but if you keep your eyes on Jesus, you'll find strength to keep going.

#### Psalm 25:15

<sup>15</sup> Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

#### Matthew 14:29-30 [Peter took his eyes off the Lord]

<sup>29</sup> And he said, **Come**. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

#### Colossians 3:2

<sup>2</sup> Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

2. *"The author and finisher of our faith"*

- a) *“Author”* (ἀρχηγός) – one who goes first and opens the way. This is what the pioneers did early in the history of America. In its use here in the context of a race, it suggests the idea of a trail-blazing runner who both starts the race and shows others how to run it.

The same word is used for Jesus as “The Prince of life” in Acts 3:15 and “The Captain of our salvation” in Hebrews 2:10.

- b) *“Finisher”* (τελειωτής) appears only here in the New Testament. It comes from a verb (τελειόω) which means to complete, perfect, bring to an end/goal. In this context, it means the one who brings to completion or brings to the finish line. Jesus didn’t just start the race; He crossed the finish line in victory.

John 19:30

<sup>30</sup> When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished:** and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Hebrews 10:14

<sup>14</sup> For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Revelation 1:8

<sup>8</sup> **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,** saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

3. *“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”*

- a) *“Who for the joy that was set before Him”* – Jesus was able to endure the cross because of the joy that lay before Him. He looked past the suffering and focused on the future reward:

- (1) The joy of glorifying the Father (Jn. 17:4-5)
  - (2) The joy of redeeming His bride (Eph. 5:25-27)
  - (3) The joy of His exaltation (Phil. 2:9-11)
  - (4) The joy of bringing many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10)
- b) *"Endured the cross"*
- (1) The word for "endured" (ὑπέμεινεν) is from the same word group as that for "patience" in verse 1.
  - (2) The cross was a place of extreme suffering, shame, and rejection and Jesus "endured" it for us.
- c) *"Despising the shame"* – Jesus didn't ignore or minimize the reality of this shame. The participle structure suggests he fully acknowledged how shameful crucifixion was, but he deliberately chose to regard it as insignificant compared to the greater goal of "the joy that was set before Him."
- 1 Peter 2:23
- <sup>23</sup> Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:
- d) *"And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* – we studied this particular text when we looked at Hebrews 1:3 and again in 8:1 so I will just summarize here and apply it to this particular context.
- Jesus, having endured the agony and the shame, is now seated in glory. The work is

finished, the victory is won, and the throne is occupied. You can run your race with endurance, because the One who ran before you is now reigning above you.

4. Verse 3 encourages us to reflect on Christ's suffering as motivation to stay the course in the race of faith to which He has called us.

a) The word "*consider*" (ἀναλογίζομαι) in verse 3 is a rare Greek term that comes from the world of mathematics and logic. It means to weigh something carefully, to calculate it out. It's the kind of thinking a merchant does with a scale or a student does with a math problem.

b) The author of Hebrews isn't telling us to merely "remember Jesus" in a general or emotional sense. He's calling us to deliberately, logically, and carefully think through everything Jesus endured, in detail, and then weigh it next to our own suffering.

c) The last part of verse 3 stands as "the why" behind everything stated from verse 1 to this point.

(1) "*Lest ye be wearied*" – means to grow tired, become exhausted, or be worn down by labor.

(2) "*And faint*" – means to loosen, relax, or become faint; in the passive it suggests giving up or becoming discouraged.

(3) "*In your minds*" – what we would refer to as the inner life in today's terminology: the seat of thought and emotion.

This phrase diagnoses the specific problem that the intensive consideration of Jesus is meant to solve. The readers aren't dealing with

theological confusion but with spiritual exhaustion and emotional discouragement. They're not questioning whether Christianity is true, but whether they can continue being Christians under pressure.

And if you're wondering why God allows his children to experience this kind of weariness and testing, that's exactly what our text addresses next – the loving purpose behind divine discipline.

Conclusion to this point: This passage began with a call to run our race well, then pointed us to Jesus as the reason we can. It concludes with the directive: Don't give up. Don't let the weight of trials wear down your mind. Don't let the pain of opposition push you off course. Instead, when you feel like quitting, go back to the cross.

## **II. AS WE RESPOND TO CHASTENING – VS. 4-13**

As we saw last week, running the race of faith isn't easy. We are surrounded by faithful witnesses, and we're called to lay aside every weight and sin, and to run with patience, "looking unto Jesus," our perfect example.

But running with endurance means more than just personal effort. It also means responding correctly when the Lord deals with us through hardship. The path of faith has never been, nor is it now, smooth or pain-free. Sometimes, it's marked by trials, resistance, or even sharp correction. So the writer now shifts from encouragement to endurance – to the Father's hand in our struggle. That brings us to the next section.

When life gets hard, it's easy to assume something is wrong; that God is distant, angry, or uninterested in our pain. But Hebrews 12 reminds us of a precious truth: our suffering is not a sign of God's absence; it's a mark of His presence. The trials we face and the

correction we experience are not in *the way* of our race; they are part of the way God strengthens us to run it better.

In these verses, we are reminded that the difficulties we face, whether from within or without, can be the very means by which God, as our loving Father, is shaping us. The Bible calls this “chastening.” It’s not the wrath of a judge, but the care of a Father.

This passage on the chastening of the Lord helps clarify what we’ve already encountered in the earlier warning passages (Hebrews 6:1-8 and 10:26-31). In those texts, we saw the sobering reality that believers who turn from truth and persist in sin can come under severe judgment from the Lord. However, I have taught (and still believe) that these are not warnings about losing salvation, but about falling under the disciplining hand of a loving but holy God. Those who truly belong to Christ cannot be condemned with the world, but they can be judged in this life, sometimes seriously, in order to bring them back to repentance and restoration (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30-32).

Hebrews 12 now gives us the divine perspective on such discipline: it is chastening, not condemnation. It is the action of a Father, not a Judge. The “fiery indignation” in chapter 10 and the “thorns and briars” of chapter 6 are not the fires of hell, but the fire of God’s holy correction toward His children. In this chapter, the writer draws from Proverbs 3 to affirm that God’s chastening is proof of our sonship, not a denial of it. Yes, it is painful, and yes, it is often the result of our own sin and foolishness, but it is always driven by His love, aiming at our holiness, and ultimately yielding the peaceable fruit of righteousness in those who are trained by it.

#### **A. The struggle against sin – vs. 4**

1. Remember what we saw in verse 1 in *"the sin which doth so easily beset us."* In this verse, the author is showing that the struggle against that sin they were faced with (in their case, the temptation to fall back in unbelief) hadn't ended in martyrdom; they hadn't *"resisted unto blood"* yet.
2. The author is essentially saying: "You're struggling with your circumstances and growing weary (verse 3), but remember that your conflict with sin hasn't yet reached the level where you're dying for your faith. If you can handle where you are now, you can certainly handle God's loving discipline that's designed to help you."

## **B. The Scripture they forgot – vs. 5-6**

This is a reference to Prov. 3:11-12 with the last part of verse 6 being added to the quote (it's actually a direct quote from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament known as the Septuagint).

### Proverbs 3:11-12

<sup>11</sup> My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: <sup>12</sup> For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

1. The viewpoint that was lost (vs. 5a)
  - a) *"And ye have forgotten"* – The Hebrew believers to whom this letter was addressed seem to have forgotten the whole purpose of some of the things they were enduring for their faith, so the author is reminding them of why they may be suffering. Not all the trials we endure are because of sin, but all of it is done with the intent of building our faith and endurance for the race

that God has given us to run.

- b) *"The exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children"* – the word *"exhortation"* here comes from a word (παράκλησις) that carries the idea of coming alongside to urge, encourage, and comfort. It's the kind of firm but loving instruction a parent gives a child, not just to correct them, but to shape them. God isn't speaking to us here as rebels, but as sons. He's not condemning us, but rather correcting us as His own, out of love.
2. The voice of the Father (vs. 5b) – *"My son"* – a personal and affectionate plea from a father to a son, showing fatherly counsel rather than simply a law.
3. The value of chastening (vs. 5c) – *"Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord"*
- a) *"Despise not"* (μὴ ὀλιγώρει) – means to be careless with, or to care little for. The author, quoting Solomon, is saying not to regard what is happening lightly but learn from it.
- b) *"The chastening of the Lord"* – the word for *"chastening"* (παιδεία) means discipline, training, and/or correction for the purpose of education. Not simply punishment, but the entire process of instruction through discipline.
- Be careful not to shrug off or belittle what God is doing in your life, even when it hurts. Chastening is not to be seen as rejection, but as a means of refinement.
4. The vulnerability of the disciplined (vs. 5d) – *"Nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him"*
- a) The word for *"faint"* (ἐκλύου) is the same one

found in verse 3 (means to loosen, relax, or become faint; in the passive it suggests giving up or becoming discouraged).

- b) The word for “rebuke” (ἐλεγχόμενος) means to convict with the purpose of correction. As used here, in connection with “chasteneth” (παιδεύω) in the next verse, it involves training. Carries the idea of being shown the wrong you’re doing and brought to correction.

#### 2 Timothy 4:2

<sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

#### Titus 1:13

<sup>13</sup> This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

#### Titus 2:15

<sup>15</sup> These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

5. The validating love behind it (vs. 6a) – *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth”*
- a) The verbs “loveth” and “chasteneth” are present tense: “He continually loves” and “He continually disciplines.”
- b) The word for “chasteneth” (παιδεύω) means “to bring up a child, to educate, used of activity directed toward the moral and spiritual nurture and training of the child, to influence conscious will and action” (Zodhiates).
6. The visible evidence of sonship (vs. 6b) – *“and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”*
- a) “Scourgeth” (μαστιγώω) isn't primarily about punishment for wrongdoing but about

character development. The author is drawing from the Hebrew concept of “chastening” in Prov. 3:11 (מוֹסֵר) – the complete educational process parents use to shape their children.

In Hebrew wisdom literature, this word (מוֹסֵר) refers to the entire educational process by which a parent shapes a child's character, which includes correction for misbehavior but extends far beyond that to include training, instruction, and character development.

- b) “*Every son*” – if this were mainly about punishment, it would be selective (only misbehaving children). But since every child receives this treatment, it's about universal need for spiritual development.

The Hebrew Christians weren't dealing so much with moral failure as they were with discouragement and the temptation to quit. Their difficult circumstances weren't punishment but spiritual strength training.

- c) “*Whom he receiveth*” (παραδέχεται) – this suggests receiving with approval or accepting with favor.

This isn't just God receiving someone who shows up at his door. The word suggests God welcomes them favorably as genuine sons. The discipline that follows isn't evidence that God is reluctant about this relationship, but evidence that he fully embraces it.

Throughout Hebrews, the author has been establishing that believers have confident access to God through Christ. This word choice reinforces that theme – we're not just tolerated by God but favorably received as legitimate children.

## C. The sonship proof (expanded) – vs. 7-8

1. The proof found in endurance (vs. 7a) – *“If ye endure chastening”*
  - a) The emphasis here is on our responsibility to endure under God’s hand of chastisement. This flows logically from the previous verse: if we are being chastened and we endure, this is proof of our sonship.
  - b) There is a similar conditional phrase in Hebrews 3:14: *“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end...”* When we studied that text, I made the observation that even though this is a conditional statement, it isn’t saying we can lose what we have in Christ... The meaning is simply that continuance is the proof of reality.

In a similar way, the conditional structure of Hebrews 12:7 (*“If ye endure chastening...”*) is not teaching that endurance earns or secures our sonship. Rather, it confirms what is already true. God’s discipline, rightly endured, becomes a visible mark that we truly belong to Him. The son does not become a son *because* he endures; he endures *because* he is a son. As with other conditional statements in Hebrews, the point is not to cause insecurity for true believers, but to expose the difference between empty profession and genuine faith.

2. The privilege of sonship affirmed (vs. 7b) – *“God dealeth with you as with sons”*
  - a) *“Dealeth with you”* (προσφέρεται) – this is a relational word that means God is acting toward us in a way consistent with His role as a Father.
  - b) *“As with sons”* – The implication is clear: If you’re being chastened, God is treating you like family.

3. The pattern seen in earthly fathers (vs. 7c) – *“for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not”*

This is a rhetorical question. Discipline is a universal mark of legitimate sonship, both in earthly and heavenly terms.

Proverbs 13:24

<sup>24</sup> He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 29:15

<sup>15</sup> The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

4. The peril of no chastening (vs. 8)
  - a) *“But if ye be without chastisement”* – if someone never experiences God’s corrective hand, it calls into question whether they are truly His.
  - b) *“Whereof all are partakers”* – same word as in Heb. 3:14 (*“partakers of Christ”*). All true sons share in this experience.
  - c) *“Then are ye bastards, and not sons”* – illegitimate, lacking inheritance rights. In ancient culture, illegitimate children were not recognized as heirs and received no formal fatherly investment or discipline.
    - If there is no evidence of discipline, there is no basis for assurance.

## D. The symbol of earthly fathers – vs. 9-10

1. The comparison with earthly fathers (vs. 9a) – *“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence.”*

Earthly fathers were respected even when their discipline was limited and imperfect. If we submitted to that flawed human discipline, how much more should we submit to God's perfect discipline.

2. The call to submission to our spiritual Father (vs. 9b) – *"Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"*

God doesn't just shape our flesh; He forms our spirit. Submission to His discipline leads to life in the fullest sense ("*and live*").

3. The contrast in motives and outcomes (vs. 10a) – *"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure..."*
  - a) *"Their own pleasure"* – Doesn't mean selfish pleasure, but as seemed right or reasonable at the time.
  - b) This implies fallibility – sometimes mistaken, limited perspective.
4. The conclusion of Divine discipline (vs. 10b) – *"But he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."*

The profit in "chastening" (or discipline) is "his holiness." This is a rare word for "holiness" in the New Testament (only occurs here).

This is the ultimate goal of divine discipline. God isn't just trying to correct our behavior or build our character (though both may happen). He's actually transforming our nature so that we share in his essential holiness. This makes divine discipline not just beneficial but

glorious. It's the process by which finite humans come to participate in divine nature.

The rarity of the word suggests the author wants his readers to stop and marvel at what God is actually accomplishing through their struggles. It's not just sanctification (common process) but participation in divine holiness (extraordinary privilege).

## E. The satisfaction of faithfulness – vs. 11

1. The pain that comes with discipline (vs. 11a) – *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous...”*

a) “No chastening” (πᾶσα παιδεία) – all discipline, not just some, but every form. “No chastening” effectively means “every kind of chastening is not joyful in the moment.”

b) The sorrow and pain we feel in the moment of the chastening (discipline) is real and needs to be acknowledged.

### Psalm 118:18

<sup>18</sup> The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

### Proverbs 15:10

<sup>10</sup> Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.

### Proverbs 19:18

<sup>18</sup> Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

2. The product that follows discipline (vs. 11b) – *“Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness...”*

- a) "Afterward" (ὕστερον) – literally, later on; suggests delayed results and that endurance is required.
- b) "It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" – Just as fruit doesn't appear immediately after planting, this "peaceable fruit" doesn't appear immediately during or after discipline. The agricultural metaphor ("yieldeth...fruit") suggests patient waiting for the natural development process to produce its intended outcome.

This answers the practical question: "What does successfully endured discipline actually produce in a person's life?" The answer isn't just moral improvement but peaceable righteousness – a way of living that promotes calm and settled spiritual maturity.

#### Psalm 119:165

<sup>165</sup> Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

#### Isaiah 32:17

<sup>17</sup> And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

#### 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

<sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

<sup>18</sup> While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

3. The people who benefit from discipline (vs. 11c) – "Unto them which are exercised thereby."

- a) The word for “exercised” (γυμνασμένοις) is where we get “gymnasium.” It means trained, conditioned, or disciplined by repeated effort.
- b) This connects back to the racing metaphor from verse 1. Those who train properly under discipline develop the kind of peaceful righteousness that enables sustained endurance in the spiritual race.

## F. The strengthening of faith – vs. 12-13

### 1. The posture of a trained heart (vs. 12)

- a) “Wherefore” – the author is saying, in essence, “Based on everything I’ve just taught you about divine discipline, here’s what you must do.”
- b) “Lift up the hands that hang down” – like a runner (hearkens back to verse 1) who’s getting tired and letting their form deteriorate.
- c) “Lift up...the feeble knees” – like a runner whose legs are giving out.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:14

<sup>14</sup> Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

- d) This is a vivid image of our entire body being renewed spiritually: both what we do (hands) and where we stand (knees, stability) are called to be restored and readied for endurance.
- e) The author is drawing from Isaiah 35:3 (“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees”), which in context is about restoration and healing after a time of judgment and discipline. This reinforces that the goal of divine discipline is restoration, not destruction.

Job 4:3-4 [Eliphaz speaking to and about Job]

<sup>3</sup> Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

<sup>4</sup> Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.

## 2. The pathway to spiritual healing (vs. 13)

- a) *"Make straight paths for your feet"* – like a runner getting back on course.

Proverbs 4:26-27

<sup>26</sup> Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

<sup>27</sup> Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Jeremiah 18:15 [used in a negative way]

<sup>15</sup> Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways *from* the ancient paths, to walk in paths, *in* a way not cast up;

- b) *"Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed"*

This phrase has a corporate concern. The author isn't just worried about individual believers giving up, but about weaker members of the body of Christ being permanently damaged by improper response to discipline.

This connects to the "let us" language from verse 1. The community that runs together must also respond to discipline together, helping strengthen those who are struggling.

Galatians 6:1

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

### Jude 22-23

<sup>22</sup> And of some have compassion, making a difference:

<sup>23</sup> And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Conclusion to this point: God's chastening hand is the very proof of His presence in our lives. The convictions (chastening begins here and should end here), trials, and corrections all testify that we are "sons" and not strangers. He doesn't chasten those outside the faith, but rather chastens those He has welcomed into His family ("receiveth").

No chastening (discipline) feels joyful when it's happening, and God doesn't ask us to pretend it does. He acknowledges the pain, but calls us to see beyond it, to see the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" and the holiness of His presence forming in us.

So, "lift up the hands which hang down" (which have fallen), strengthen the knees that feel feeble, and walk with a renewed purpose. In other words, get back in the race.

Let God's correction become your means of healing and strength, and let your healing and strength become someone else's encouragement.

### III. AS WE RECOGNIZE OUR NEED – vs. 14-17

Keep in mind that this text is part of the previous point on chastening and is dealing with a child of God and not someone who just claims to be. The previous two verses deal with the strengthening of our faith, and

these verses help us understand how.

## A. Need to pursue something – vs. 14

### 1. "Follow peace with all *men*"

- a) The word for "follow" (διώκετε) means to pursue; to chase with determination.
  - b) "Peace" (εἰρήνην) – peace, harmony, absence of conflict, tranquility
  - c) "With all *men*" – this is a universal directive, including believers and non-believers alike.
- Peace isn't something that just happens; it's something we must actively pursue, even when it's difficult. This pursuit applies universally, not just to agreeable people or fellow believers.

### 2. "Follow...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"

- a) The goal God has in view here goes back to verse 10.
  - (1) "Partakers of His holiness" – God's discipline shapes us to share in His character (ἀγιότης).
  - (2) This is God's essential holiness, the foundational attribute of Who and what He is.
- b) The pursuit God calls us to – vs. 14a
  - (1) "Follow peace... and holiness" – we are called to "follow" (literally, to chase after) practical holiness (ἀγιασμός) or sanctification.

(2) This is how we respond, or what we do.

c) The urgency of the warning – vs. 14b

(1) “Without which no man shall see the Lord” – This verse isn’t saying that we must become perfect in order to be saved, but it is saying that no one who is saved will live without pursuing holiness.

God gives us His holiness positionally (initial or positional sanctification), but then He calls us to pursue it practically (progressive sanctification). If there’s no evidence of that pursuit, that is, no change in desires, no hunger for righteousness, no fruit of the Spirit, then something is seriously wrong.

➤ Holiness doesn’t save us, but the saved will be marked by it.

(2) The phrase “see the Lord” is eschatological (relating to last things).

This phrase speaks of ultimate fellowship and future glory, but it also echoes the present experience of knowing and walking with God.

Revelation 22:4

<sup>4</sup> And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

John 3:3

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said unto him, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

d) A word on “The Free Grace” view

(1) Some teach this is only positional holiness

(justification), but the context speaks of active pursuit.

(2) This verse challenges any idea that grace removes the call to godliness. Quite the contrary – it enables it.

- Holiness is the mark of those who will see God – not because they've earned it, but because they've been changed by grace.

## **B. Need to protect someone – 15-17**

By being watchful – “looking diligently”

- The word translated “looking diligently” (ἐπισκοποῦντες) means more than just watching yourself. It carries the idea of watching over others.
  - It's the same root from which we get the word for “bishop” or “overseer” (ἐπίσκοπος - 1 Tim. 3:1).
  - So, while not everyone is called to church leadership, all believers are called to look out for one another spiritually.
  - Just as a shepherd watches over the flock, we are to watch that no one among us falls short of God's grace or veers toward bitterness or sin.
1. Watch for individual discouragement that leads people to conclude God's grace isn't sufficient for their situation – “Lest any man fail of the grace of God.”
    - a) The provision of grace – God gives ongoing grace to His children, not just to save them, but to sustain, discipline, and sanctify them (Heb. 12:10-11). This grace is designed to enable us to grow in holiness and endure the Father's

correction with hope.

- b) The purpose of grace – This grace isn't passive but is God's active provision to help believers benefit from His discipline, producing "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). To fall short of it is to miss the transforming purpose behind God's correction.
- c) The peril of neglect – To "fail of the grace of God" is not to lose salvation, but to miss out on the sanctifying work that grace intends to accomplish. It's a spiritual deficiency caused by resisting, rather than cooperating with, God's ongoing work in us.
- d) The pattern of warning – This warning aligns with earlier passages in Hebrews:
  - (1) In Hebrews 6:1-8, those who "fall away" are likened to unfruitful land (6:8) that is "rejected" or disqualified – not eternally condemned but judged as unfit for service. The context speaks of believers who do not press on to maturity and risk disqualification from reward and usefulness.
  - (2) In Hebrews 10:26-31, the one who sins willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth does not face eternal damnation but fiery judgment as a covenant child who has "done despite unto the Spirit of grace." This is chastening, not the fires of hell – aimed at those who treat the blood that sanctified them as a common thing.

These parallel passages reinforce that Hebrews 12:15 is not introducing a new category of danger but repeating and refining a warning already given: believers who resist the grace designed to perfect them risk spiritual barrenness, temporal judgment, and forfeiture

of reward. This is a call not to abandon the race, but to “run with patience” (Heb. 12:1).

Just like the earlier passages, this is a warning with a purpose. It is not meant to produce despair but urgency – a wake-up call, if you would, to continue in grace and not grow weary (Heb. 12:3, 12). God disciplines because He loves.

2. Watch for church family bitterness that develops when discouraged individuals begin poisoning others with their resentment and doubt – “Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled...”

The grammatical structure suggests a cause-and-effect relationship: the root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble (ἐνοχλέω), and through this troubling (δι’ αὐτῆς), many are defiled (μιανθῶσιν).

- a) “Root” Development – someone develops bitterness toward God, church leadership, other believers, or their circumstances. This might start as personal resentment that isn't immediately visible to others.
- b) “Trouble” (disturbance) – the bitter person begins expressing their bitterness in ways that disturbs peace in the church family. They become chronically negative, critical, and divisive. They spread discontent and undermine confidence in leadership or in God's goodness.
- c) “Defilement” (contamination) – other members of the church family don't just become annoyed by the troublemaker; they become infected with the same spirit of bitterness. What started as one person's spiritual problem becomes a

church-wide spiritual condition.

Notice that the text says, "many are defiled" (μιανθῶσιν πολλοί). This suggests that spiritual contamination has a multiplying effect. One bitter person doesn't just trouble many (which would be bad enough), but actually defiles many – meaning the spiritual toxicity spreads from person to person like a contagious disease.

3. Watch for values being corrupted where the church family begins prioritizing immediate relief over eternal inheritance, like Esau choosing immediate satisfaction over birthright privileges (vs. 16-17).

a) Esau is a case study in spiritual compromise

- (1) Esau is called both a "fornicator" (πόρνος) and a "profane person" (βέβηλος) – not because of sexual sin, but because he sold his sacred inheritance for a bowl of stew (Gen. 25:34).

Genesis 25:34

<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

- (2) This act was a profane exchange: surrendering covenant blessing for bodily satisfaction.
- (3) The term "fornicator" (πόρνος) can reflect not only moral impurity but spiritual impurity – betraying God-given privileges for immediate gratification.

b) The meaning of profanity in Bible terms

- (1) The word for “profane” (Βέβηλος) means “common” or “unholy.” A profane person treats what is set apart by God (holy) as something ordinary, cheap, or dispensable.

Ezekiel 22:26

<sup>26</sup> Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

Ezekiel 44:23 [the priests of the future temple]

<sup>23</sup> And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

- (2) Esau didn't value what was spiritual. He regarded it as something that could be tossed aside if it didn't meet a present need.
  - (3) In this way, Esau is the biblical picture of someone who lives by appetite, not conviction.
- c) The warning to believers then and now
- (1) The Hebrew Christians were tempted to do the same: trade the enduring riches of Christ for temporary relief from persecution.
  - (2) Esau's example warns that such exchanges may lead to irreversible loss. He “found no place of repentance,” not because God was unwilling to forgive, but because what he gave away couldn't be recovered.
- d) Understanding the tragedy of irreversible loss –

vs. 17

- (1) "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing..."
  - (a) The context here is inheritance, not justification.
  - (b) The passage refers to Esau's desire to "inherit the blessing," which was tied to the birthright – the covenantal privileges of the firstborn.
  - (c) Esau had already "despised" this birthright earlier (Gen. 25:34), treating it as worthless by selling it for a single meal.
- (2) "He was rejected" – by Isaac, not by God.
  - (a) Genesis 27:34-38 records Esau begging Isaac for the blessing, but it could not be undone. The covenantal blessing had been given to Jacob.
  - (b) "He was rejected" refers to disqualification from the blessing, not from eternal life.
- (3) "For he found no place of repentance" – this is a change of mind about the decision made.
  - (a) "Repentance" (μετάνοια) here refers not to repentance toward God for sin, but to a reversal of course or regret over the outcome of a prior decision.
  - (b) Esau "sought" not forgiveness, but the restoration of the blessing. He wanted the consequences reversed.

- (4) "Though he sought it carefully with tears" – these tears were for the loss, not for the sin.
- (a) Esau's sorrow was over what he had forfeited, not genuine repentance toward God (2 Cor. 7:10-11).
  - (b) His tears show remorse, but not necessarily repentance in the spiritual sense.

4. Watch for a gradual sellout.

This passage continues the concern raised in verse 15 – "falling short of the grace of God." The progression is subtle:

- a) First comes drifting (Heb. 2:1),

Hebrews 2:1

<sup>1</sup> Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip.

- b) Then dullness (Heb. 5:11),

Hebrews 5:11

<sup>11</sup> Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

- c) Then despising (Heb. 12:16).

5. Watch for modern expressions of this profane exchange (trading something sacred for something secular):

- a) Believers today can imitate Esau without realizing it:

- (1) Choosing popularity over truth.

- (2) Prioritizing career over conviction.
  - (3) Letting spiritual responsibilities die in favor of worldly pursuits.
  - b) Churches too can sell out, trading doctrinal clarity for social relevance or biblical faithfulness for cultural comfort.
6. Watch to hold sacred what God calls sacred
- a) Esau's story is not just a moral caution but a theological warning: Don't sell what God gave you at the Cross.
  - b) Cherish your inheritance in Christ: your access to God, your hope of glory, your place in the new covenant.
  - c) Guard it when it becomes costly; prize it when it feels inconvenient; count it precious even when the world mocks it.

Conclusion to this point: As we bring this portion of our study to a close, we're reminded that the Christian life isn't something we just "coast" through. It requires pursuit – following after peace and holiness. It requires diligence – looking diligently lest anyone fail (fall short) of the grace of God. And it requires reverence – treating the things of God as sacred, not common or worldly.

Esau stands as a sobering example of someone who had something of tremendous value, but didn't realize it until it was gone. He traded away what was eternal for what was immediate, what was spiritual for what was sensual, what was sacred for what was satisfying in the moment. And though he wept over his loss, he could not recover what he had surrendered.

That is the warning to us: not that God's grace has limits,

but that our opportunities do. Holiness, inheritance, fruitfulness – these things are not automatic. They must be pursued, valued, protected.

We need grace to endure hardship, we need one another to remain vigilant, and we need hearts that treasure what God calls holy, lest we sell what cannot be bought back.

With that in mind, let us look unto Jesus, not just to begin the race, but to finish it well, holding fast to what He's given, and refusing to sell our birthright for anything this world can offer.

#### **IV. AS WE REMEMBER WHAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST – vs. 18-24**

This portion of Hebrews 12 contrasts Mount Sinai, and the events that took place there, with Mount Sion (Zion) to demonstrate the wonderful privilege believers have in Christ under the New Covenant.

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Mount Sinai (vv. 18-21) | Mount Sion (vv. 22-24) |
| Earthly                 | Heavenly               |
| Fear, Fire, Terror      | Joy, Fellowship, Peace |
| Distance from God       | Nearness to God        |
| Judgment under Law      | Mercy through Christ   |
| Death for touching      | Life through faith     |
| Moses trembling         | Believers rejoicing    |
| Voice that repelled     | Voice that welcomes    |

##### **A. The dread of the Old Covenant – vs. 18-21**

1. Distance – “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched...”

Through the old covenant, God was unapproachable.

Exodus 19:12-13

<sup>12</sup> And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that* ye go *not* up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: <sup>13</sup> There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it* be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

2. Dread – vs. 18b-19

Exodus 20:18-19

<sup>18</sup> And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. <sup>19</sup> And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

3. Death – vs. 20; Ex. 19:13

4. Despair – vs. 21

While the exact phrase “I exceedingly fear and quake” isn’t found in the Old Testament, the writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records something Moses did in fact say. This does not contradict Scripture; it simply reveals something not recorded elsewhere. It’s a reminder that the human authors of Scripture weren’t just historians but divinely guided messengers who could speak authoritatively, even about unrecorded events.

**B. The delight of the New Covenant – vs. 22-24**

The word translated “ye are come” (προσεληλύθατε) is in a verb tense (perfect) that describes something that happened in the past but still has effects in the present. In other words, believers haven’t just *visited* Mount Zion, *we’ve arrived* there spiritually and remain there. It’s our settled, ongoing position in Christ under the New Covenant.

Albert Barnes makes the following observation regarding this phrase:

That is, they had “come” to this by the revelations and hopes of the gospel. They were not indeed literally in heaven, nor was that glorious city literally on earth, but the dispensation to which they had been brought was what conducted them directly up to the city of the living God, and to the holy mount where he dwelt above. The view was not confined to an earthly mountain enveloped in smoke and flame, but opened at once on the holy place where God abides. By the phrase, “ye are come,” the apostle means that this was the characteristic of the new dispensation that it conducted them there, and that they were already in fact inhabitants of that glorious city. They were citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and were entitled to its privileges.

#### Philippians 3:20

<sup>20</sup> For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. Mount Zion represents:
  - a) God’s presence – “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (vs. 22b); “to God the Judge of all” (vs. 23b)
    - (1) “The heavenly Jerusalem” IS “the city of the

living God.” It’s presented elsewhere in Scripture as a literal future city (Heb. 11:10, 16; 13:14; Rev. 21:2).

#### Revelation 21:2

<sup>2</sup> And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

It’s not just a future city – it is now “the spiritual mountain and city where God dwells and reigns” (Vincent).

- (2) “And to God the Judge of all” – this is meant to remind us that even though we’ve come to Mount Zion, the city of grace, we are still approaching the same holy God who judged at Sinai. But now, through Jesus our Mediator and the sprinkled blood that speaks better things, we come not in fear of condemnation, but in confidence of acceptance. The Judge has not changed, but our standing before Him has.

#### b) God’s people – (vs. 22c-23)

- (1) “Ye are come... to an innumerable company of angels” – this is both the angels in heaven and around the throne that joyfully worship God, as well as those spoken of in Hebrews 1:14 that God sends to minister to believers on earth.

#### Hebrews 1:14

<sup>14</sup> Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

- (2) “Ye are come...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven”

- (a) This refers to the community of believers who belong to Christ and whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- (b) "The general assembly" (πανήγυρις) – this word is defined as "a festal gathering of the whole people to celebrate public games or other solemnities; a public festal (festive) assembly" (Thayer).

It describes a joyful celebration or festival gathering, emphasizing the celebratory nature of the heavenly community.

- (c) "Church of the firstborn" – this is describing believers (both those in heaven and those on earth) who share in Christ's firstborn status. Through union with Christ, Christians become adopted children of God with full inheritance rights. Just as an adopted child in a Roman family gained all the legal rights and privileges of a natural-born child, believers become "firstborn" through their relationship with Christ, the ultimate Firstborn.

Colossians 1:15 [speaking of Christ]

<sup>15</sup> Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Colossians 1:18

<sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

- (d) "Which are written in heaven" – the

believer's names are permanently recorded in heaven.

#### Philippians 4:3

<sup>3</sup> And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

#### Revelation 3:5

<sup>5</sup> He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

#### Revelation 13:8

<sup>8</sup> And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

#### Revelation 20:12

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

#### Revelation 20:15

<sup>15</sup> And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

c) "Ye are come...to the spirits of just men made perfect"

- (1) Speaks of all the saints from all the ages, including Old Testament saints.
- (2) "Spirits" – speaks of their current disembodied state as they await the resurrection of the body.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: <sup>17</sup> Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

- (3) "Just men" (δικαίων) – this is the righteous through Christ, the justified, both Old Testament saints that had faith in Christ through the types, as well as the New Testament saints that have died in Christ.
- (4) "Made perfect" (τετελειωμένων) – A perfect participle meaning "having been brought to completion."

These are believers whose salvation has reached its fulfillment – they are no longer struggling with sin or walking by faith; they now see clearly.

d) God's Provision – vs. 24

- (1) "Ye are come...to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" – as pointed out in previous studies, this reference to Jesus as mediator is found three times in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 8:6

<sup>6</sup> But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is

the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

#### Hebrews 9:15

<sup>15</sup> And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

- (a) A mediator is someone who stands between two parties to bring reconciliation.
  - (b) In the Old Testament, Moses (and then Aaron and the high priests to follow) acted as a mediator between God and Israel (Exodus 19-20).
  - (c) Jesus, however, as we have seen on more than one occasion in our study, is a far better, perfect mediator because His sacrifice was complete and final.
- (2) "Ye are come...to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel"
- (a) The "blood" is the means by which Jesus, "the Mediator," secures the covenant and speaks on our behalf.
  - (b) "Sprinkling" speaks to Old Testament sacrificial language as found in Exodus 24 and Leviticus 16 (Day of Atonement).

#### Exodus 24:8

<sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you

concerning all these words.

- (c) This text, along with many others in the Bible, point to the necessity of the blood of Christ being shed. It wasn't just His death that was necessary but His literal blood being shed. The blood is not merely symbolic of death. It is the God-prescribed means by which Christ's death is applied to us. His blood is not just a token of death – it is the efficacious element by which God forgives, redeems, and reconciles sinners to Himself.

#### Romans 5:9

<sup>9</sup> Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

#### Ephesians 1:7

<sup>7</sup> In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

#### Colossians 1:20

<sup>20</sup> And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

#### 1 Peter 1:18-19

<sup>18</sup> Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

<sup>19</sup> But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish

and without spot:

#### Revelation 1:5

<sup>5</sup> And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

- (d) "That speaketh better things than that of Abel"
  - (i) Abel's blood cried out from the ground for justice and vengeance (Gen. 4:10).
  - (ii) Jesus' blood cries out for mercy and forgiveness (cf. Luke 23:34; Heb. 9:14).
  - (iii) Abel was a righteous man murdered by his brother; Jesus, the Righteous One, laid down His life willingly for His enemies.
- Abel's blood called for retribution while the blood of Christ calls for reconciliation.

2. There is a connection in these verses to Ephesians 2:6.

#### Ephesians 2:5-6

<sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) <sup>6</sup> And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

- a) The tense of the verbs for "raised us up together" (συνήγειρεν) and "made us sit together" (συνεκάθισεν) are in a form signifying

completed action in the past (at our salvation) with a present positional reality.

b) In both passages, the authors are affirming that believers share in the heavenly realm now, not merely in the future:

(1) In *Ephesians*, this is tied to our spiritual union with Christ – what has happened to Him (resurrection and exaltation) has, in God's eyes, happened to us. This is our positional identity.

(2) In *Hebrews*, this is framed as our spiritual access to the heavenly realm – we have not come to Sinai (Old Covenant), but to Sion (New Covenant, heavenly Jerusalem, and all its realities). This is our experiential fellowship by faith.

3. So, “ye are come” means we are already in heaven positionally, which explains how believers can now, even while on earth have:

a) Fellowship with the Father ("to God the Judge of all" – vs. 23b)

b) Union with Christ ("to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant")

c) Communion with the saints ("spirits of just men made perfect")

d) Participation in worship with angels ("innumerable company of angels")

#### Revelation 5:11-12

<sup>11</sup> And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; <sup>12</sup> Saying with a loud

voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

As we've seen in these verses, the writer of Hebrews invites us to look unto Jesus by remembering what we have in Him. We are no longer at Sinai. That mountain thundered with judgment and demanded distance. It revealed guilt but gave no power to cleanse it.

But now, in Christ, *we are come* to Mount Sion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, where worship abounds, where angels rejoice, where the names of God's people are permanently written, where the saints are made perfect, where the Judge still reigns, and where the blood still speaks.

This is not a future hope only – it is a present reality. Spiritually, we already stand in that place because of Jesus, our Mediator. His blood doesn't cry for vengeance, but mercy. And that changes everything.

So let us worship – not with fear, but with reverence.

Let us draw near – not because we are worthy, but because He is.

And let us never forget what it cost to bring us to this mountain of grace.

## **V. AS WE REVERENCE THE GOD WE SERVE – vs. 25-29**

In our last study of this chapter, we were reminded of the wonderful privileges we have in Christ: the access we enjoy to Mount Sion, the fellowship of the redeemed, the presence of God Himself, Jesus our Mediator, and the blood that speaks mercy. These are blessings the people at Sinai could never have imagined, and they are ours now by grace.

But with privilege comes responsibility. If those under

the Old Covenant were held accountable for how they responded to God's voice on earth, how much more are we, who hear His voice from heaven, responsible to listen, obey, and serve Him faithfully? That's exactly where the writer takes us next: from remembering what we have, to reverencing the God who gave it.

## A. Hear the Word – vs. 25

### 1. The primary audience

- a) The immediate context of chapters 12 and 13 is clearly that of believers: those who have come to Mt. Zion (vs. 22-24), those who are to run the race of faith (vs. 1-3), those who endure chastening (vs. 4-11), and those who pursue holiness (vs. 14).
- b) The "we" in verse 25 is consistent with how the author of Hebrews included himself with those to whom he wrote.

### 2. The nature of the warning

- a) The warning is not "see that you do not reject salvation" (as in an evangelistic appeal), but "see that you do not refuse Him who is speaking."
- b) The word "see" (βλέπω), as used here, has the idea of "see to it." The verb is in the present imperative which speaks of continuous action. The idea is "ever keep a watchful eye open," thus, "ever be seeing to it that you refuse not him that speaketh."
- c) The term "refuse" (παραιτήσηθε) has two ideas with it:

- (1) Turning away from an invitation

| Luke 14:18-19

<sup>18</sup> And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. <sup>19</sup> And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

- (2) Declining to hear or obey – as found in verse 19, speaking of Israel at Sinai refusing to hear God’s voice.

Hebrews 12:19

<sup>19</sup> And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

- (3) The force of the term used here is that of a present and ongoing responsiveness to God’s voice, not just an initial reception.

### 3. Old Testament parallel for believers

- a) The example given in this verse is the generation of Israelites who wandered in the wilderness hearing God at Sinai (Ex. 19-20; Deut. 4-5).
- b) They were already God’s covenant people but suffered judgment for disobedience, not for failing to become His people. Although the type or analogy doesn’t hold in every respect, the basic understanding and application does, as we have seen throughout our study of the book of Hebrews.
- c) We can understand the warning given this way: If God judged His covenant people for refusing His earthly word through Moses, how much more should we, His New Covenant people, heed His heavenly word through the Son?

4. The application for the believer
  - a) This is not threatening the loss of salvation.
  - b) It's rather a warning of severe consequences for disregarding the voice (Word) of God. We've seen this to include things like loss of rewards and God's corrective discipline.
5. Connection to verses 18-24 (as part of the same paragraph)
  - a) After describing the privilege of our access to God at Sion, the writer issues this responsibility: greater privilege means greater accountability.
  - b) In the Old Covenant, God's voice on earth shook a mountain; in the New Covenant, His voice from heaven shakes both earth and heaven (next point - vs. 26-27).
  - c) If grace has brought us into such closeness, grace also obligates us to listen carefully (vs. 28-29)

## **B. Heed the warning – vs. 26-27**

1. Past historical reference – “Whose voice then shook the earth” (vs. 27a).
  - a) This refers to Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19), when God's voice and presence caused the mountain to shake.
  - b) That was a literal, physical shaking tied to the giving of the Law, and it serves as the “earthly” illustration for what the writer is about to describe.
2. Prophetic promise quoted from the Old Testament – vs. 27b

- a) The quote “Yet once more...” comes from Haggai 2:6-7.

Haggai 2:6-7

<sup>6</sup> For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land*; <sup>7</sup> And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

- b) In Haggai’s day, it was a promise of God’s future intervention: shaking the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land, and filling His house with glory. It is Messianic in tone, pointing forward to a climactic act of God in history.

3. Future fulfillment – both physical and heavenly – vs. 27c

- a) The writer of Hebrews says this promise will involve not only the earth, but also the heavens, expanding it to a shaking of all creation.
- b) This best fits the events tied to the Day of the Lord, specifically:

(1) The Tribulation judgments (Revelation 6:12-17; 16:17-20).

(2) The final removal of the present creation before the new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1).

Revelation 21:1

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

- (3) These are literal, physical upheavals, not just allegorical or metaphorical, affecting both earth and heaven.

#### 4. How does this apply today?

- a) Primarily prophetic: Hebrews 12:26-27 points to the final, cataclysmic shaking during the Tribulation and into the transition to eternity.
- b) Secondly applicable now: God allows shakings in our present world to remind us that only His kingdom will stand.

The God who shook Sinai will one day shake all of creation, both earth and heaven, in judgment, removing everything temporary so that only what is eternal remains. This final shaking will culminate in the Day of the Lord and the establishing of His unshakable kingdom. Even now, He shakes the kingdoms of this world and the foundations of our lives, so we'll cling to what cannot be moved.

### C. Honor with worship – vs. 28-29

- 1. The response to the unmovable kingdom – vs. 28a – “Let us have grace”
  - a) “Wherefore” – connects to what immediately preceded in verse 27, but it also connects to the both the greater context of what began in verse 18 with the contrast between the two mountains, as well as the greater context of the entire book of Hebrews as it consistently made the comparison between the Old and New Covenants.
  - b) “We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved”
    - (1) The form of the verb “receiving” (παραλαμβάνοντες) is one of continued action (present participle). We are already citizens of the “kingdom” (of heaven, so to speak – Phil. 3:20), we are just waiting on the final

fulfillment (Luke 17:20-21; 1 Pet. 1:4-5).

(2) The word for “cannot be moved” (ἀσάλευτος) has the same root word as that for “shaken” in the previous verse. It has the alpha privative prefix which negates the “shaking” or “moving.” It is literally saying that the foundation we have in Christ and His kingdom is absolutely and eternally unshakable or unmovable.

c) “Let us have grace” – there are three aspects of grace in the Bible:

(1) Grace that saves us – Eph. 2:8-9

(2) Grace that keeps us – 2 Cor. 12:9

(3) Grace that enables us to serve the Lord and live for Him. This is its use here.

d) “Whereby we may serve God acceptably...” – the flow of this verse gives us a cause and effect:

(1) Cause: “We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved.”

(2) Effect: “Let us have grace” so *that* (whereby) “we may serve God acceptably...”

2. The call to acceptable worship – “whereby we may serve God acceptably”

a) “We may serve God” – the word for “serve” here (λατρεύω) is not the normal one that means bond slave (δοῦλος), which is more common. This word means to serve or worship without compulsion. It originally meant to work for reward or to serve.

This same word is translated “worshippers” in Heb. 10:2 and “worship” in Acts 7:42; 24:14;

and Phil. 3:3.

b) "Acceptably"

- (1) This adverb modifies the entire phrase ("serve God...with reverence and godly fear") and not just "serve God." This suggests that all aspects of Christian service, not just formal worship is to be acceptable, or well-pleasing to God.
- (2) It goes to the attitude of the heart, not just "perfect service and worship." It's to be in a manner pleasing to God, not ourselves.

c) "With reverence and godly fear"

- (1) "With reverence" (αἰδοῦνς) – focuses on the internal attitude of the heart that recognizes one's position before God. It's a kind of humble modesty that understands the tremendous privilege of approaching the holy God.

This word is used one other time in the New Testament and is translated as "shamefacedness" in 1 Tim. 2:9, a word that means, in its use there, modesty which is rooted in character.

1 Timothy 2:9

<sup>9</sup> In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

There's an interesting aspect to this word that has to do with what we call "modern worship" today. It should help us to address tendencies toward:

- (a) The casual irreverence that treats worship as entertainment rather than an encounter with the holy God
- (b) Presuming familiarity that forgets the absolute privilege of approaching God
- (c) Spiritual arrogance that assumes access to God equals equality with God
- (d) Carelessness in “going through the motions” of church without heart engagement.

(2) “With...godly fear” (εὐλαβείας)

- (a) This is the outward expression of the internal attitude of the heart in “reverence.”
- (b) The author is emphasizing that serving God acceptably requires careful attention to how we approach Him and serve Him. It's not just about having the right feelings (though αἰδώς addresses heart attitude), but about thoughtful carefulness in our worship and service.

3. The reason for this “reverence and godly fear” – “For our God is a consuming fire” (vs. 29).

- a) The conjunction “for” at the beginning of the verse, coupled with the colon at the end of verse 28 provides the theological foundation for the worship attitude of verse 28.
- b) The author is essentially saying: “Here’s why you need to serve God with reverence and godly fear – because the God you’re approaching is a consuming fire.”
- c) This is a quote from Deut. 4:24: “For the LORD

thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." Moses is warning Israel about the jealous and holy nature of God.

- d) God's "consuming fire" nature is why our worship can be truly acceptable (εὐαρέστως). The same divine holiness that would have destroyed us under the old covenant now purifies our worship under the new covenant when it's offered through Christ with proper reverence.

Conclusion: The Christian life is a lifelong race, the course of which God has already marked out for us. Along the way, the author of Hebrews, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has shown us how to keep running with patience (endurance):

1. As We Run the Race (vv. 1-3) – laying aside every weight and sin, running with patience, and keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.
2. As We Respond to Chastening (vv. 4-13) – receiving the Father's correction as evidence of His love and training for holiness.
3. As We Recognize Our Need (vv. 14-17) – pursuing peace and holiness, guarding against falling short of God's grace, and avoiding the profane spirit of Esau.
4. As We Remember What We Have in Christ (vv. 18-24) – rejoicing that we have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the assembly of the redeemed, to Jesus our Mediator, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks mercy.
5. As We Reverence the God We Serve (vv. 25-29) – listening carefully to His voice, heeding His warning, and worshiping with reverence, godly fear, and gratitude for the unshakable kingdom we have received.

The message is simple, but it is serious: Greater privilege

brings greater responsibility.

We have more light than those at Sinai, more access than the prophets, more reason than ever to run faithfully – because we have Christ.

One day, we will stand before the Judge of all – the same God who is a consuming fire – and we will see the One who endured the cross for us. On that day, every step we took with our eyes fixed on Him will have been worth it all.