

"Running the Race"

Part 3

Hebrews 12:1-4

Introduction: Last week in our study of Hebrews we looked at one verse which was Hebrews 12:2.

Notice Hebrews 12:2

The word "looking" means "to look away from that which is distracting and focus upon a distant object". The writer exhorted his readers to LOOK UNTO JESUS. The point was they were to take their eyes off of the things of this world and they were to set their gaze upon the Supreme Example.

The writer referred to Jesus here as the Author and the Finisher of our faith. We did not spend much time on these 2 titles for Jesus last week so I need to just take a few moments and point to something here. First of all I need you to notice that the word "our" is in italics which means it was added by the translators.

So the verse could read "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith". This fits the context really well for the writer is pointing to Jesus as the Example of what it is to live by faith.

The word "Author" here is the word "*archegos*" and it is the very same word which we had looked at in Hebrews 2.

Hebrews 2:10

¹⁰ For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Here is the definition of the word ARCHEGOS.

"one that takes the lead in any thing and thus affords an example, a predecessor in a matter, pioneer..."

Jesus took the lead in showing us what it is to walk by faith for He looked away from the riches of heaven and He set His focus upon the cross as He came into this world. The writer tells us that Jesus is also the FINISHER of faith. Let me show you the definition for the word FINISHER.

"one who has in his own person raised faith to its perfection and so set before us the highest example of faith..."

Jesus came to this world and He lived by faith and was able to endure the cross to pay our sin debt and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

Notice Hebrews 12:2 again.

The word "for" means "instead of". Jesus turned from a life of glory in heaven and He set His focus upon the cross instead. The writer tells us He "despised the shame". This means "He looked down upon the shame" which He endured on the cross.

Let me just say that shame is one of the most difficult things for man to endure. Shame brings embarrassment and humility. Jesus looked down upon the shame as something which meant nothing in light of what He was accomplishing through His death on the cross.

Application:

The Hebrew believers who received this letter were being shamed for their faith in Christ. They had been cast out of the Temple and some out of their families. As Jews they were truly shamed for their faith but what awaited them in glory would far out-weigh the shame they were experiencing. They could look down upon the shame as something that was very small compared to the bigger picture. If they had been growing in their faith they would have realized that it was an honor to suffer shame for Jesus Christ as long as they were in the will of God.

Acts 5:40-41

⁴⁰ And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

Let us notice what Peter wrote.

1 Peter 4:15-16, 19

¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

¹⁶ Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

¹⁹ Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

I. The Focus
Part 2

Notice Hebrews 12:3

Let us notice the definition of the word "consider".

"It means to think, reckon, count up or reason with thoroughness and completeness and so to think out carefully, reason thoroughly and with careful deliberation, consider accurately and distinctly or again and again. The verb can also include the idea of meditation. This word was used in calculations. Consider by way of comparison."

When the writer says to "consider" Jesus he is not just commanding us to think about Jesus but he is commanding all who read this letter to REALLY LOOK CLOSELY at His life and see how He walked by faith. Let me show you what another Bible teacher says about the word.

"It is a command calling for the reader to give this his or her utmost attention. Do this now! Don't delay. It calls for the reader to carry out a specific act (consider Jesus) with a note of urgency."

Now it is not just the faith of Jesus that we are to CONSIDER.

Notice Hebrews 12:3 again.

We are to look closely at how He endured such "contradiction" of sinners against Himself. We need to see the meaning of the word "endured" here.

Hupomeno does not describe a grim resignation or a passive "grin and bear it" attitude but a triumphant facing of difficult circumstances knowing that even out of evil God guarantees good. It is courageous gallantry which accepts suffering and hardship and turns them into grace and glory. It is the ability to endure when circumstances are difficult and is not a passive sitting down and bearing things but bearing up in a way that honors and glorifies our heavenly Father.

*The difficulties in our lives,
The obstacles we face,
Give God the opportunity
To show His power and grace.*

The word "*contradiction*" means "to speak against". This is a reference to how the religious leaders as well as many others stood against the Truth which Jesus taught. The Truth which He spoke was often met by opposition and violence.

John 10:24-31

²⁴ Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

²⁵ Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

²⁶ But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

³⁰ I and my Father are one.

³¹ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

This all came to the climax at the cross. But Jesus continued to endure. Now let us notice the writer's concern.

Notice Hebrews 12:3b again.

The writer's concern was that they would grow weary and faint in their minds. The idea here is that they would become discouraged and they would then quit. Discouragement and disappointment are 2 of the greatest tools of Satan which he uses against God's people in order to get them to stop serving and to walk away from using their gifts. Our hearts can grow weak and weary very easily when things become difficult. Let me remind you that the

Christian life is a marathon and not a sprint. It takes perseverance and commitment. There are many times when we can see no visible results of our labors and it is then that Satan will whisper in your mind, "You are wasting your time." It is then that we must be disciplined to look away from the temptations of the world. The leisure and the pleasures of the world can become very appealing when discouragement sets in. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians and spoke of the remedy for weariness.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 13-18

⁸ *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

⁹ *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

¹³ *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;*

¹⁴ *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*

¹⁵ *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.*

¹⁶ *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

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

¹⁸ *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.*

Notice the words of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:28-31

²⁸ *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*

²⁹ *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

³⁰ *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:*

³¹ But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

The word "wait" here in verse 31 means "to live in expectancy waiting upon the coming of the Lord".

Let me pull these thoughts together here. As we serve the Lord it is going to be difficult. There are going to be times of discouragement and disappointment this is the result of the sin filled world which we live in. BUT WE MUST NOT QUIT! We MUST keep pressing forward and not allow ourselves to become distracted with the temptations of the world. We must LOOK UNTO JESUS and at the same time we must be there to encourage and exhort one another.

Hebrews 3:12-13

¹² Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

¹³ But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider [watch out for] one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Conclusion:

I want to leave you with a clip from the Daily Bread.

"I was in my second year of widowhood and I was struggling. Morning after morning my prayer-life consisted of one daily sigh: "Lord, I shouldn't be struggling like this!" "And why not?" His still, small voice asked me from within one morning.

Then the answer came—unrecognized pride! Somehow I had thought that a person of my spiritual maturity should be beyond such struggle. What a ridiculous thought! I had never been a widow before and needed the freedom to be a true learner—even a struggling learner.

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At the same time, I was reminded of the story of a man who took home a cocoon so he could watch the emperor moth emerge. As the moth struggled to get through the tiny opening, the man enlarged it with a snip of his scissors. The moth emerged easily—but its wings were shriveled. The struggle through the narrow opening is God's way to force fluid from its body into its wings. The "merciful" snip, in reality, was cruel.

*Hebrews 12 describes the Christian life as a race that involves endurance, discipline, and correction. We never get beyond the need of a holy striving against self and sin. Sometimes the struggle is exactly what we need to become what God intends us to be."—
Joanie Yoder*