

"The Chastening of God"

Hebrews 12:5-24

Part 7

Introduction: In our study of Hebrews we have been considering what the recipients of this letter were facing because of their faith in Jesus Christ. The persecutions which had come upon them were very difficult. They had been banned from the Temple, some were turned away from their own families, some had lost their positions in the community, and some had lost their jobs so it was a struggle to make ends meet in their everyday lives. All of this was wearing on these believers. In the section we are currently in the writer has explained to them that ALL of what they were facing was part of the "chastening" of God which means it was ALL permitted by God and it was used by God as training for them in their new life in Christ. The writer explained that they were to submit to the chastening and then their surrender would lead to the abundant life in Christ.

Notice Hebrews 12:9

The writer also made it clear that if they faced the chastening of God with the proper attitude then the end result would be a deeper holiness in their lives.

Notice Hebrews 12:10

The writer went on to agree with them that no chastening was easy but it was always for the benefit of the believer.

Notice Hebrews 12:11

Now based upon all of this Truth the writer encourages them to not give up.

Notice Hebrews 12:12

Last week we looked at this verse but we need to be refreshed because of what is going to follow. Here in this verse the writer has in mind the believers running the race which he referred to back in Hebrews 12:1. The "hanging hands" and the "feeble knees" are signs of weariness and discouragement. Last week we looked at the fact that the writer did not tell them to "LIFT THEIR HANDS AND TO STRENGTHEN THEIR FEET". He skipped the word "YOUR" because it is the responsibility of the body of Christ to come alongside one another and to aid those who grow weary.

Isaiah 35:3-4

³ *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.*

⁴ *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.*

Let us notice the words of one of Job's companions when he spoke about Job.

Job 4:1-4

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

² *If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?*

³ *Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.*

⁴ *Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.*

Just as Job had strengthened the weak hands and the feeble knees so we are to do the very same thing. We are to be there to help one another when weariness or discouragement set in.

Notice Hebrews 12:13a

Here in this verse the writer is encouraging his readers who were in the race to "stay in their appointed lane".

Proverbs 4:25-27

²⁵ *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.*

²⁶ **Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.**

²⁷ **Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.**

This now brings us to where we are in our study tonight.

I. **The Application**

Part 2

Notice Hebrews 12:13

The second part of this verse is so very important. The writer is very concerned about that which was "lame". He was concerned that it might be "turned out of the way". The question here is, "What is the writer talking about?"

The word "*lame*" here refers to "spiritual limping". It is a reference to those who were the most affected by the persecution. The words "*turned out of the way*" means "to deflect, turn aside or out of the way".

Now let me pull this together to help us to see what the writer is concerned about here. There were Hebrew believers who received this letter who were tired and weary. There were some who were ready to quit and go back to Judaism. If some quit and "out of their appointed lane" then the affects it would have on others would be devastating. If one person would give up others would no doubt follow.

Wuest takes this thought even further:

"The exhortation is to the born-again Jews who had left the temple, to live such consistent saintly lives, and to cling so tenaciously to their new-found faith, that the unsaved Jews who had also left the temple and had outwardly embraced the NT truth, would be encouraged to go on to faith in Messiah as High Priest, instead of returning to the abrogated sacrifices of the Levitical system. These truly born-again Jews are warned that a limping Christian life would cause these unsaved Jews to be turned out of the way. These latter had made a start towards salvation by leaving the temple and making a profession of Messiah. But they needed the encouraging example and testimony of the saved Jews."

Application:

Let me now bring this into our lives. The way we live our lives not only affects us but it affects many around us. Our endurance and steadfastness speaks volumes to those in our family and those in the body of Christ.

When we step out of the appointed lane which God has willed for us to stay in it can cause others to do the same and it can cause someone who is moving out of sin toward Jesus Christ to turn back to a life of sin. Let me show you the words of Spurgeon on this thought:

"We are to make straight paths because of lame people. You cannot heal the man's bad foot, but you can pick all the stones out of the path that he has to pass over. You cannot give him a new leg, but you can make the road as smooth as possible. Let there be no unnecessary stumbling blocks to cause him pain. The Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, evidently cares for the lame ones. The charge he gives is a proof

of the concern He feels. He bids us to be considerate of them, because He Himself takes a warm interest in their welfare."

Notice Hebrews 12:14

Here in this verse we find a double command given by the writer. The first word of this verse is very important. It is the word "FOLLOW" and it means "TO PURSUE". The word is also in the present tense which means this is to be a continual action. This is not a onetime shot but what is commanded here is to be practiced 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Now let us look at the double command.

1. We are to pursue peace with ALL men.
2. We are to pursue holiness with God.

The thought which is in the mind of the writer here is that discouragement can give way to carelessness. In other words when we become discouraged we can become sloppy in our walk. There was also the danger of the desire of retaliation and vengeance in the lives of those who were being persecuted. That is why we find this double command here in our text.

1. **We are to pursue peace with ALL men.**

The word "ALL" helps us to know this command also applied to how the Hebrews acted toward those who were persecuting them. There are many verses in the Word of God that support the command which is given here in Hebrews 12:14.

2 Timothy 2:24-25

²⁴ *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; **but be gentle unto all men**, apt to teach, patient,*

²⁵ *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*

Galatians 6:9-10

⁹ *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

¹⁰ *As we have therefore opportunity, **let us do good unto all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Psalms 34:12-14

¹² *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?*

¹³ *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

¹⁴ *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

So it is very clear that we are to seek peace with ALL men but then we must bring in the second of the 2 commands.

2. **We are to pursue holiness with God.**

This command follows the first because there is always the danger of pursuing peace at the expense of TRUTH. I will share with you what Pastor Ritchie taught me many years ago:

"Unity at the expense of TRUTH is treason to Jesus Christ."

When we consider the setting for the Hebrews who received this letter we can clearly see the danger. Under the persecution there would be the temptation to compromise in order to pursue peace with the persecutors. That would however be completely unacceptable. They were to pursue peace with ALL men and they were at the same time to pursue holiness with God.

In Romans Paul gives us several verses which cover both of these commands and the danger of compromise.

Romans 12:17-19

¹⁷ *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

¹⁸ *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

¹⁹ *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Now I want to take some time to look at the command to pursue "HOLINESS". Let me first of all give you the definition of the word.

Holiness literally means **sanctification** or **consecration** and includes the ideas of consecration, purification, dedication and holiness. The dominant idea of sanctification is separation from the secular and sinful and setting apart for a sacred purpose. Holiness is the state of being set apart from sin and the world to God or the process of becoming more dedicated to God. Sanctification is "the process by which believers are set apart by God as a special people to grow spiritually in personal holiness and to develop Christ-like character."

There is with the believer a POSITIONAL sanctification. This took place the moment we were saved. We were set apart by the Holy Spirit as belonging to God.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

¹³ *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

1 Peter 1:2

² *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

These verses point to POSITIONAL sanctification. Now there is also a PRACTICAL sanctification which God is focused on in our lives in which we are becoming more like our Savior in our practice. In this process we have a responsibility to separate ourselves from that which contaminates us.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

³ *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*

⁴ *That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour:*

2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1

¹⁷ *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*

¹⁸ *And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

^{7:1} *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

God is presently sanctifying us each and every day and we must understand that it is our responsibility to sanctify/separate ourselves from that which defiles us. So getting back to the verse we are to pursue holiness with all we have each and every day.

Conclusion:

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Hebrews Study #120

Notice Hebrews 12:14 again.

Without holiness the writer tells his readers no man shall see the Lord. The writer is NOT saying that salvation comes by pursuing holiness for that would be WORKS salvation. I believe the writer has a concern for some of the Hebrews who would read this letter who were not saved. They may have professed salvation (like many today) but there was never a change within their lives so their profession was empty. This thought at the end of verse 14 was placed here by the Holy Spirit to get all who read this letter to examine their own lives. One of the marks of True salvation is holiness/sanctification/separation from that which defiles us.