

"The Chastening of God"

Hebrews 12:5-24

Part 8

Introduction: Before we get to where we stopped last week in our study of the book of Hebrews I want to refresh your mind on some thoughts which we have considered earlier in our study. In Hebrews 4 we had looked at how the writer presented Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest and how Jesus is able to identify with us as we journey through this life. The writer also spoke of the resources which are available to us for this journey.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

¹⁵ *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

¹⁶ *Let us therefore come boldly unto the **throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and find **grace** to help in time of need.*

I want to focus upon verse 16 for a moment. Jesus has made a way for us to come into the presence of God through His shed blood on upon the cross. His sacrifice has done what the blood of bulls and goats could never do in the Old Testament and that was to TAKE AWAY OUR SIN. So, because we are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ we are now sinless in our POSITION and therefore we can come BOLDLY/CONFIDENTLY unto the THRONE OF GRACE and there we can obtain mercy and GRACE in times of need.

Mercy is what we need when we fail in our walk and GRACE is what we need to ENDURE the path which God has ordained for us to walk. Grace is unmerited favor and because Jesus knows from experience how difficult this life can be at times He therefore also understands how much grace we need to endure what we are facing in this life.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

⁷ *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

⁸ *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

⁹ And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee**: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

So as we face the chastening's of God we can be sure that God's grace will be there to sustain us in the midst of any storm which we will face. I need to also add that God's grace is inexhaustible. In other words we will never use it all up and it will never run out.

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

² *By whom also we have access by faith into **this grace wherein we stand**, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Here in verse 2 Paul tells us we are STANDING in God's grace which tells us that we are surrounded by GRACE. In Romans 8 Paul describes grace by telling us that God will freely give us all things to meet our needs in whatever we face.

Romans 8:31-32

³¹ *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

³² *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, **how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?***

Now here is the point which we need to grasp; because we are saved we have access to sufficient grace to get us through whatever it is that we face. Now this does not mean that someone in the body of Christ will not struggle with the chastening of God because we know that we all struggle at times when facing the storms. This is why the writer of Hebrews exhorted his readers to strengthen the hands which hang down and to strengthen the knees which are feeble.

Before we get to our text tonight there is yet something else that we must not lose sight of. You may be one of the people who are strong in the faith and when the storms of life come upon you then you access the grace of God and you stand fast. Sometimes, those who are able to do this lack patience with those who struggle in the midst of the storms. There is a danger of strong separating from the weak and moving on ahead while letting the weak to take care of each other. I want to show you something which happened in the Old Testament to Israel and then make an application.

Exodus 17:1-8

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.

² *Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?*

³ *And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?*

⁴ *And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.*

⁵ *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.*

⁶ *Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.*

⁷ *And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?*

⁸ *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*

Israel was not long out of Egypt when they were tested with the lack of water. God however provided water when Moses struck the Rock with his rod. This was a beautiful picture the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Rock and the striking of the Rock was a picture of the violent death which our Savior died on the cross.

Now right after this we read that Amalek attacked Israel. Amalek is a picture of the flesh or the old nature in the believer. This is the first battle Israel encountered after they departed Egypt and so this is a picture of the first battle the believer encounters after salvation and it is with the flesh. But there is more to this encounter with Amalek.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

¹⁷ *Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;*

¹⁸ *How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.*

¹⁹ *Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess*

it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

Amalek attacked those who were weak and feeble. When I read this I see a separation which occurred within the nation of Israel. The strong were marching forward and the weak were lagging behind. If the strong had dropped back to assist the weak Amalek would have had no success.

This is exactly why we need to be careful in our walk and we must be sure we are sensitive to the struggles of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:25-26

²⁵ *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

²⁶ *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

I. The Application

Part 3

A. The Concern

We have now come to verse 15 but we need to read the previous verses in order to grasp the context and the concern which the writer expresses here.

Notice Hebrews 12:12-14

In these verses the writer is concerned about the lame and the weak. He is concerned if some turn back that those who are struggling will just give up. He is also concerned for those who are stepping away from Judaism and are being drawn to Jesus Christ who are not saved, that they might turn right back to Judaism and so they would be influenced by those who would quit.

Notice Hebrews 12:15

The first words "Looking diligently" have the idea of being on full alert. This word is only used in one other place in the Bible. It is used in 1 Peter when Peter was addressing the responsibility of the elders within the church.

1 Peter 5:1-2

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

² *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the **oversight** thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

The word is translated "oversight" here and it helps us to understand what the writer of Hebrews is saying. Peter applies it to the elders of the church and how they are to watch over and to care for the flock. The writer of Hebrews takes this same thought only he applies it to THE BODY OF CHRIST. It is not just the Pastor's responsibility of tending to the sheep that are weak and weary but it is the responsibility of the body of Christ. It is pictured in the raising of Lazarus.

John 11:43-44

⁴³ *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

⁴⁴ *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. **Jesus saith unto them**, Loose him, and let him go.*

It is the responsibility of the church to help each other get free from the grave clothes. Getting back to the thought then we are to keep a close watch upon ourselves and upon others in the midst of trials, storms and battles.

Notice Hebrews 12:15 again.

The writer will now point out 2 dangers which can happen when the chastening of God is met with the wrong mindset. Let me remind you and myself that we are to submit to the chastening of God when it comes into our lives and submission then leads to the abundant life in Jesus Christ (12:9).

Now let us consider the 2 dangers.

1. Lest any man fail of the grace of God.

To understand these words we must look at some word definitions but before we do let me point out something very important which the writer is NOT saying. This phrase does NOT mean that we can lose our salvation. That is impossible! Our salvation depends upon the faithfulness of God and NOT upon your faithfulness of mine. Now let us look at a few definitions here.

The word "fail" here is defined by Vines this way: "*To be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end*".

Now the GOAL in the Christian race is the CROWN awarded at the finish line.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Let me show you what Paul said at the end of his life.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

⁶ *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

⁷ *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

⁸ *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

The writer of Hebrews was very concerned that some of the Hebrews may not finish the COURSE which God had given them to run and so they would miss out on rewards. But there is more here. He says the danger is also to "fail of the grace of God". This goes back to the beginning of our study tonight. We have access to the throne of grace, we are standing in God's grace, and God's grace is inexhaustible. The bottom line is we are given the grace to run the race and God's grace is sufficient and if we quit then we are guilty of not applying the grace of God in our lives. There is enough grace given to us for the COURSE which God has appointed to us and therefore we have no excuse to quit. I also believe in the writer's mind is the TRUTH that we are all accountable for the grace which has been entrusted to us. There is coming a day of reckoning and on that day we will answer for what God has entrusted to us and GRACE will be something which we answer for.

2. Any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.

This is another danger when the chastening of God comes into our lives. It can cause bitterness and resentment. When bitterness is permitted in the life of the believer the Holy Spirit is then grieved.

Ephesians 4:29-32

²⁹ *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

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³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Conclusion:

Notice Hebrews 12:15 again.

When a root of bitterness gets embedded within a believer the writer tells us MANY are defiled. We are members of the body of Christ and when one member is effected with bitterness is will inevitably poison others who are in contact with them.