

The Hebrews Initiative:
Where Do You Find Strength to Fuel Your Faith?
Hebrews 12:1-13

November 15, 2015

Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: We are in a series that we are calling the Hebrews Initiative. We are coming to a close in the next couple of weeks. It has been an important journey. Originally written to a group of fairly new believers in Jesus who were experiencing difficulty in a difficult world, this anonymous writer is calling them to a life of endurance. He has used language like “not shrinking back from faith” and “hold fast to the confession” to encourage them to persevere in their Christian calling and walk with Jesus. He would say, “This is not the time to back up; instead, this is the time to press forward.”

His call to endurance hinges upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. The writer’s description of what Christ has done for us has been steeped in the rich heritage of the Old Testament or Old Covenant. He has compared Jesus to the angels, Moses, Joshua, the law, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices that the priests of the Old Testament system made, and now the covenant.

When we come to chapter 11, many would say that this is where his message reaches its crescendo. Indeed this chapter has inspired many through the ages. Last week, we asked the question “Where will we find faith?” If faith is the key to endurance, where do we find that kind of faith? We said that we find that faith in our history, our heroes, and in Him (Jesus Christ).

But still, when we come to Hebrews 12, we discover, I think, that faith must be fueled. Faith must be developed.

So, building on the question of last week, now I want to consider, “Where do we find the strength to fuel our faith?”

Text: Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, ²keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne.

³For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you won’t grow weary and lose heart. ⁴In struggling against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons:

My son, do not take the Lord’s discipline lightly
or faint when you are reproved by Him,
⁶for the Lord disciplines the one He loves
and punishes every son He receives.

⁷Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we had natural fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn’t we

submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but He does it for our benefit, so that we can share His holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

¹² Therefore strengthen your tired hands and weakened knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed instead.

Introduction: The Book of Hebrews, written by an author unknown to us, was written to encourage Christians to persevere in their faith in the midst of persecution. Even though the recipients of the letter were victims of persecution, the call of the author is for them to persevere in their faith. Nothing, even persecution, should detract them from following Christ. Salvation through Christ is and was so superior to every aspect of their former way of life, that they would be fools not to persevere in their commitment to Christ.

The purpose of the book comes full circle in the last two chapters. The writer is calling them to “not shrink back from their faith,” but rather plunge full steam ahead. We would do well to do the same. Our obstacles are not the same as that of the original recipients. We are not persecuted as they were persecuted. However, there are times when we ask the same questions that the Hebrews raised. Primarily, we raise this question: Is it really worth it to live for Christ? The answer from the book of Hebrews is an unequivocal “YES!”

The best way to begin to attack this text for our understanding and application is to consider the final phrase first. Here it is: “So that you won’t grow weary and lose heart.” Some days are like that aren’t they? In this world so filled with pain, misery, and difficulty, you might just want to say “Forget it.” I’m done with the church. I’m done with Jesus. Too many problems. Too many heartaches. Too much bad news. Too many people complaining about stuff that really isn’t important. The boss is not happy. The wife is not happy. And, I’m not happy. You are weary and are on the verge of losing heart.

What do you do? You have faith! But where do you find faith? Where do I find the fuel to that faith?

Keep Looking Back—

You will find saints who encourage your faith.

Again, this is the message and point of Hebrews 11, but the author summarized that in 12:1 with the phrase, “we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us.” By the way, whose faith are you encouraging? When people look back will they remember your faith?

Keep Looking Within—

You will find sin which entangles your faith.

Sin entangles faith. It is hard to be living in victory and be living in sin. The athletic imagery began with the witnesses as in a stadium, now that imagery advances to setting aside the weights.

Keep Looking Forward—

You will find the setting which calls for endurance in your faith.

We are in a marathon, not a sprint.

Keep Looking Up—

You will find the Savior who exemplifies and empowers your faith.

Here is the signature phrase of Bro. Perry. Indeed, we must keep looking up.

Keep Looking Beyond—

You will find that suffering expands your faith.

See the purpose of our suffering, even of our discipline. In the next book, James, we get an excellent commentary on this idea in James 1:2-4.

As we close, look at verse 12 and 13 in Hebrews 12.

It is as though sometimes we need to hear some rather pointed words: Pick yourself up, turn yourself around, and let's look our enemy in the face and say, "By faith, I am going to endure whatever comes my way."