

Jesus Is Better
Hebrews 12:12-17

Intro

Transition

Sticky Statement: Run the race of faith pursuing peace, holiness, and repentance.

Passage

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.
Hebrews 12:12-13

The author continues the running the analogy here.

Last week he encouraged the believer to run with endurance.

Not giving up because of trails faced or discipline incurred.

Just as runners hands will drop and their knees get weak from exhaustion so does the believers spirit.

Enduring is never a comfortable task but it is a rewarding one.

If we endure for the sake of Christ we will grow.

By enduring rejection, mocking, and God's discipline our faith is strengthened.

The author gives us some things to help us endure the marathon.

In verse 13 the author turns his attention to the running path.

A runner wants their path as straight as possible and certainly does not want a lot of rocks and potholes on their path.

In races it is good if you can have someone check the route before hand to remove rock and fill in holes.

This helps to prevent injuries especially towards the end of the race when exhaustion has begun to set in.

For the believer this means to look ahead of you on the path and remove anything you see will cause you to stumble in your faith.

For someone that struggle with substance abuse this means avoiding places that they know those substances will be found or at least surrounding themselves with those that will encourage them to stay clean.

For those with uncontrolled anger it means avoiding situations where anger might erupt.

For those with addictions to things found on the internet it means safeguards on your browser.

It is admitting what sin your flesh struggles with, identifying areas of temptation, and removing those when possible.

When they can't be removed it is asking God for strength and finding those that can help keep you accountable to the straight path.

If we do this our souls are able to find healing, if we fail to do this the wounds of our soul will continue to be ripped open over and over again.

Pick up in verse 14:

14 Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.

15 Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many.

Hebrews 12:14-15

Notice it doesn't say anything about achieving peace with everyone.

It says pursue.

In other words it should be the desire of the believer to live at peace with those around us.

We are to strive for it not just hope that it happens.

This is the part I struggle with, when conflict arises we are to work to calmly find a peaceful solution not avoid it.

Within this verse is also the implication that not all will desire to have peace with us.

When it comes to God's word we cannot compromise and that will prevent some with being able to have peace with us.

The truth is they take issue with God not us.

When we strive for peace we earn the privilege to speak truth in love to those around us.

We are to pursue Holiness, that is to be holy is to be set apart.

In the case of the Christian **we are set apart from the world and purified for the purposes of God.**

In verse 14 it is the idea that as we run the race we are to pursue purity in God.

We are to lay aside every hinderance that weighs our spirit down in order to run the race well.

In order to enter the Heavenly Throne Room of God we must be made Holy.

This does not mean we are perfect.

It is not saying that we live a life without sin, this is not possible.

In order to see Christ face to face He must purify us.

He does this through His death on the cross and His resurrection.

Through His power over the race of our life Christ gives us strength to conquer our sin.

The pursuit of Holiness is a mark of the believer.

14 Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.

15 Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many.

Hebrews 12:14-15

We often think of the grace of God in terms of salvation, the initial rescue from our sins.

But we are in need of constant helpings of God's grace.

That is what verse 15 is addressing.

We have our first experience of God's grace but we continually experience greater depths of His grace as we grow in our relationship with Christ.

He then reminds us to pull our bitterness by the root, leaving nothing that would allow it to grow back.

Bitterness is the poison we take hoping it will harm the other person.

When we let bitterness creep in it doesn't just harm us but could infect the entire church.

Bitterness is contagious and leads to destruction.

When we refuse to forgive others it doesn't hurt them but us and can spread to others near us.

The author is straight to the point here remove bitterness no matter how painful.

Don't leave any trace, it all must go!

Run the race of faith pursuing peace, holiness, and repentance.

Verse 16:

16 And make sure that there isn't any immoral or irreverent person like Esau, who sold his birthright in exchange for a single meal. 17 For you know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, even though he sought it with tears, because he didn't find any opportunity for repentance.

Hebrews 12:16-17

Quick backstory on Esau.

Esau was the son of Isaac who was the son of Abraham.

His younger brother was Jacob, younger by only seconds as they were twins.

God would change Jacob's name to...Israel, His children would become the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Esau as the first born should have been the one that inherited everything from His father including the promise God gave to Abraham and then to Isaac.

But in Genesis 25 Esau comes in from the field and is exhausted.

Jacob is cooking up some Lentil stew.

Esau ask for some and Jacob offers to trade a bowl of stew for Esau's birthright.

Esau traded everything for a bowl of stew.

He gave up his future for satisfaction in the moment.

We are not to be consumed by sexual immorality or irreverence.

Both of these trade Holiness for immediate and temporary pleasure.

Verse 17 we learn that when the blessing of Isaac (the promise from God) was to be given out Jacob had already stolen that also.

When Esaus comes to his father to receive it, he learns it is too late and begs His father for it.

Verse 17 ends with "because he didn't find any opportunity for repentance."

Esaus had tears of regret not repentance.

I love the phrasing "didn't find any opportunity," Esaus never had the time to repent.

It's the idea of "I'll deal with that later;" "I'll have plenty of time for following God later;" "I'll enjoy my teens, my twenties, my thirties, my...then I'll turn to Jesus"

Some say, **"I'll dive into the pleasures of this world and when I'm old and tired of the party then I'll think about Jesus," but most never find the time.**

Esau had regrets but never repentance.

Paul writes this in 2 Corinthians 7:10

10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death.

2 Corinthians 7:10

Repentance turns from sin and moves forward towards Christ.

Living with regret holds one in the past rather than moving forward.

Application

Run the race of faith pursuing peace, holiness, and repentance.

Running the race of faith we can follow two examples.

Those that finished the race well or those that didn't finish the race at all.

We read in chapter 11 of those that ran the race well, looking to the arrival of the redeemer.

At the end of today's passage we see the example of one that didn't run at all.

He sought instant gratification rather than looking to the promise.

We are to run a race looking to the redeemer.

Challenge

Have you found time for repentance?

Commentaries Used in Preparation

Christ Center Exposition: Exalting Christ in Hebrews

The Gospel Coalition Commentary on Hebrew by Dennis Johnson