

Strength for the Journey: Imitating Christ (Heb. 12)

By Bob Young

Introduction

Most of us have a big problem with perseverance. How do we keep on keeping on? How do we find new zeal? How do we keep going: preach, teach, missions, BS teachers, prison, Home Bible studies....

How does God's love continually flow through me and my resources?

Gal. 5:19-21-23, and the like....such things... Is my life filled with "like things" or "such things"?

Heb 12:1-2 describes "balcony people"

1 Tim. 3:13, Timothy the Christian, Paul's convert, a disciple. How does one serve well? God? Others? Self?

Heb. 12:1-2, HS filled men in NT were chosen as servants

- *How are my life and my resources a blessing to others?*
- *How does the love of God flow through me and my resources?*
- *The love of God cannot flow through me and my resources until I have strength for the journey.*
- *Where is your strength for the journey?*

How does one communicate the message of Hebrews in our kind of world?

I share five ideas drawn from Hebrews 12.

(Set Heb 12 in overall outline of Hebrews, Heb 13 as concluding exhortations with a series of imperatives)

-1- Practice the presence of Jesus (fix our eyes on Jesus) Looking to Jesus. FOCUS.

WHO: Jesus and the "cloud of witnesses"

Ps. 139, is Jesus Christ present when you pray? How well do we "engage" God?

Learn from the examples of those who went before us, throw aside the hindrances, run the race with patience, look to Jesus constantly, and follow his example.

-2- Practice spiritual discipline; cultivate the soul life (vv. 4-11). Learn the lessons of discipline. TRAINING.

WHO: You and God

How is this possible? Prayer, repentance, meditation, solitude, journaling, self-denial, Bible reading, daily walk.

Spend half of your devotional time reviewing: past is video, present is snapshot, future is portrait.

Here are specifics from the text: Do not make light of the task, do not lose heart, persevere, and learn holiness.

-3 Practice self-examination. Examine yourself, be honest with yourself (vv. 11-13). SELF-EVALUATION.

WHO: You by yourself

Prov. 28:13, need accurate view of reality, learn to do away with rationalization, minimization, hiding, denying.

Is this regularly going on anywhere else in the life of the church?

Trust his goodness to reveal self

This allows us to encourage others, through our vulnerability, through our honesty.

The section finishes with these imperatives: strengthen the feeble places, strengthen the weak places, don't make life harder than it is; don't put stumbling blocks in your way or the way of others.

-4- Practice spiritual exercise. Commit yourself to being stretched (vv. 14-17). EXERCISE.

WHO: You and others

Five imperatives

- Live in peace with all
- Be holy
- Don't miss grace of God
- Avoid bitterness
- No sexual immorality or godlessness

There is no accountability without intimacy; there is no accountability in isolation

There is accountability in fellowship; there is accountability in presence

Do what God wants, do not be selfish.

Summary: peace, holiness, grace, no bitterness, no immorality, no godlessness. That is, live faithfully, love all generously, support others compassionately, speak truthfully, pray daily, and leave everything else to God!

-5- Worship God (comparison of Sinai and Zion). WORSHIP.

WHO: You and God

Not the God of trembling and distance

The God of faith and righteousness

Do not refuse God, but reject the things that can be "shaken"

Cling to the unchanging, unshaken.

Be grateful.

Summary: See God, honor Jesus, and gratefully worship.

CONCLUSION

Heb. 12: here is power for transformation, in the faith of God

-1- FOCUS. Practice the presence of Jesus: throw aside the hindrances, run the race with patience, look to Jesus constantly, and follow his example.

-2- TRAINING. Stay in training—cultivate the soul life: do not make light of the task, do not lose heart, persevere, and learn holiness.

-3- EVALUATION. Examine yourself: strengthen the feeble places, strengthen the weak places, don't make life harder than it is, do not put stumbling blocks in your way or the way of others.

-4- EXERCISE. Stretch yourself: peace, holiness, grace, no bitterness, no immorality, no godlessness. That is, live faithfully, love all generously, support others compassionately, speak truthfully, pray daily, and leave everything else to God!

-5- WORSHIP. See God, honor Jesus, and gratefully worship.

Do not quit. That is the message of Hebrews; we take it to the world most effectively when we live it out in our daily lives.