

ENDURANCE TO GLORY

Hebrews 12:1-17

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

We are indeed surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses", from those we read about in God's Word, including the short, non-exhaustive summary of the men and women of faith in **Hebrews 11**, and of the multitude of biographies and autobiographies that are in print or in digital format, that we can read. Then also we have among ourselves, members of our family perhaps, our friends, all of those who come

every Sunday, to unite in the fellowship of the gospel (the good news) of Christ Jesus and to be one in the presence of the Lord. That is ultimately where we are headed in our faith in Christ Jesus, to be as Jesus prayed to the Heavenly Father, before He was to be crucified on a cross for our sins, praying, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world [that can have a double meaning: we were born unto this world for God's purpose and pleasure and also we are sent out by Christ for God's plan and purpose and unto His glory]. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone [the disciples], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [as they were preaching and teaching THE WORD]; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:17-21) Yet within that great cloud of witnesses, there is but One who is, and has proven to be, perfect in all His Ways (2 Samuel 22:31) and His Works (Deuteronomy 32:4). Nevertheless, as the Apostle Paul told his spiritual son Timothy, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy 2:3) That's what this Scripture is reminding us in Hebrews 12. We are being led through this life, to endure the toil and snares, all the while being led unto God's glory.

God's Perfection has been demonstrated to the world through Christ Jesus. The writer(s) of Hebrews begins in the first chapter telling us, "God [which is the Greek word "Theos", meaning the Supreme Deity or Divinity], who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds [aions]; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image [that is the Greek word "charakter"] of His person [who HE IS], and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Therefore, we too, will obtain the most excellent way, in Christ Jesus as we are led to God's glory!

That beginning in Hebrews is very similar to how the gospel of John starts, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God [Theos]. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1:1-5) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Isn't it awesome how the Word of God becomes for us like an intertwined fabric that all unifies toward that express image, that we know as being our Lord and Savior,

Christ Jesus (**Hebrews 1:1-4**). We are being led by God's glory unto His glory! From Glory to Glory!

Yet God has not set us up to fail or to fall, as the enemy of our souls wants us to think. The mission of Christ was to die on a cross for our sins but to also demonstrate God's way for us. Jesus tells us, "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**) The Apostle Paul elaborates a bit for us saying, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [the New Covenant in Christ] has made me free from the law of sin and death [the Old Covenant-law of Moses]. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh [for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God-**Romans 3:23**] , God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (**Romans 8:2-4**) what that simply means to us is that no one has or can live perfectly according to the laws of God based upon who HE IS, that is, Perfect. Yet we demonstrate our faith in His promises, forgiveness of sins and life eternal, by believing on and receiving Christ, and then not living according to the sins of the flesh, that is contrary to the will and nature of God. But we are to be led by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul then gave for us a summation, so to speak, of what that entails, in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, to which we receive from God, through Christ, Wisdom from God, which we can find in God's Word, Righteousness in Christ, as we are made right before God to have a personal relationship with Him as His children, Sanctification, as we are set apart to live in God's holiness, and then Redemption through Christ Jesus, to where we are children of God and will be joint-heirs with Christ (**Romans 8:17**), as He will inherit all things, and we will have eternal life in God's glory and kingdom.

That is promised to us, in the words of Christ Jesus Himself, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3:16-17**) Those two phrases, "should not perish" and "might be saved" is determined by our living according to the faith that has been given to us by God, as God has given to each of us a measure of faith (**Romans 12:3**), if we will receive it. That is where **Hebrews 11** comes in, giving many examples of those who lived by faith in God's promises. As we know, from the Scriptures, that doesn't just mean that we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead on the third day, although, that is very much true. We are believing on Christ Jesus that He took upon Himself our sin and our punishment for that sin, so that we can be reconciled to God, and then be a child of the Most High God, God Almighty, Creator of all things. That means we

are then wanting God's Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption and that we are letting Him be the Lord of our lives as He is the One and only True God (**John 17:3**). The Apostle Paul also gave us the process, summed up nicely in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." If we are His workmanship, we can be absolutely positive that God intends to work in you/us His Perfection, as He is perfect in all of His Ways and Works!

The end goal is of what Jesus said was the great commandment of God's and the second that is like unto it, as this is how Jesus operated, to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and the also to love others as ourselves. (**Mark 12:30-31**) As was talked about last week, the loving of yourself is not of the kind to which there is any pride for our own accomplishments. And frankly, many if not all of us don't want to be known for some of our dubious accomplishments. We can though appreciate and love and rejoice in what God has and is doing in us and through us. The more you know God and spend time with Him in prayer and in His Word, and in the fellowship with other believers, the more He becomes us! That is what we are loving! Just as the Apostle Paul said, after mentioning the Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption that we receive and have in Christ Jesus, he concludes in the next verse, that if anyone glories let them glory in the Lord! (**1 Corinthians 1:31**)

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin [maybe some of you have but not nearly what Jesus went through, right?]. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." We must be careful to not get caught up in our own sufferings to think that we are going through stuff that no one else experiences or that God doesn't care or understand our situation. Praise the Lord, we will most likely never have to experience what Christ went through, or what the prophets, or the apostles had to go through. We are being told through God's Word that we are His workmanship and that we can trust Him as He is perfect in all of His Ways and Works. The key phrase for us is in the second verse of Hebrews 12, is where we are reminded to keep "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Good times or bad, sorrow or joy, pain or in good health, grief or contentment. We will all experience a bit of all of that. That's what it is like, living in a sin-infested world with other people, some who are doing their best to follow Christ, some who err in their

understanding of God's Word and just live how they want at times, and then there are also godless people that want nothing to do with Christ Jesus or His Salvation or His Righteousness

Yet not only do we live in a "fallen world", we are also God's workmanship, to which He is from time to time, correcting us and working in us His perfection, which many times leads to what I call "growing pains". The carnal mind and the sinful flesh is always willing and ready for a child of God to resurrect them from the dead. Speaking of that, the Apostle Paul says "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (**Romans 6:11**) That is what it means to be living in the faith that we have in Christ Jesus. We are to live according to God's will and ways, based on His "express image" or "charakter", not according to ours.

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."

Peace and holiness. That may sound impossible, because it is on our own, but with God (in Christ) all things are possible! We are His workmanship! We are putting our hope and trust in Christ Jesus, from the beginning of faith in Christ to when He takes us home to His Glory. I find myself praying constantly to God, to which I am ensuring that no root of bitterness takes ahold of me, and yes, then praying for others as well. Yeah, at times it can be very grievous and painful in our lives. It can be very, very sad watching people self-destruct. We can be reminded, and pass this Word along to others, as the Apostle John stated, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) Once again repentance is the Greek word "metanoeo" which is 1. recognizing a need for change and 2. then heeding to that need for change. That also means that we need to be praying for one another for that needed change. To love God means that we do keep His commandments and that we don't want anything to get in the way of our fellowship with God or with others-you know, loving God with all that is in us and loving others as God loves them. The end goal then is to be with God in His full glory and in the fellowship and oneness of all of the host of heaven, praising God our Heavenly Father and His Son, the Lamb of God. To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen.