

PEACE AND HOLINESS: THE PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (HEBREWS 12)

The book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews, those of the Jewish faith who had then believed on Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God. We'll be looking at **Hebrews 12** yet I'll try and add some context to that, from the book of Hebrews, and also as it is not just in one passage of Scripture or one chapter of the Bible or even in just the New Testament that we can get the context to the Word of God. We are given Genesis (the beginning) to the Revelation (of Jesus Christ) for context, for a better understanding of God's redemptive plan for mankind, so that we may be His people, children of God, and ultimately to be "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him**, that we may also be glorified together" (**Romans 8:17**). Also as the Apostle Paul told Timothy (and us) "if we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (**2 Timothy 2:12**), from the present to an endless future, for all of eternity. That suffering and enduring is not speaking of the sin and its consequences that we bring on ourselves. It is speaking of how, in the words of the Apostle Peter, we are being called out of the darkness (of living in and according to sins against God) and into His marvelous light (living in and according to His Righteousness and Holiness). "...the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (**2 Timothy 2:19**) Jesus said as much, after He had said "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (**John 3:3**) and "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (**John 3:5-6**), He then explains "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, **that they have been done in God.**"

That ties in then with what Jesus told His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you **forever.**" (**John 14:15-16**) Once again, while Jesus may have been speaking about that promise of the pouring out of God's Spirit that would come on the day of Pentecost, He is also speaking of the need for having a heart of repentance and a willingness towards obedience. The Apostle Peter had said to the Jerusalem council, who had told Peter and the apostles to stop preaching in Jesus' name, in his defense of preaching Jesus as being the Christ, he said, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and

Savior, to give **repentance** to Israel and **forgiveness of sins**. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who **obey Him.**" (**Acts 5:29-32**) God has poured out His Spirit and is calling and leading us to repentance and to receive the forgiveness of sins, which means we are to have a repentant heart, a willingness to no longer practice the sinning against God and to then live in and according to His Righteousness and Holiness. After Jesus spoke of the promise of the Holy Spirit, to those who love Him and keep His commandments, Jesus continued, "**He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.**" Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.**" (**John 14:21-24**)

Keeping His commandments, His Word. As we've gone through this past year looking at the teachings of Jesus, His parables in Matthew, Mark and Luke, the "Sermon on the Mount" (**Matthew 5-7; Luke 6:20-49**), His "Olivet Discourse" (**Matthew 24-25**, briefly in **Mark 13:1-2, Luke 21:5-6**), Jesus' teachings, that is, His commandments, His Word to us, is summed up for us in what Jesus said is the Great Commandment of God's and the second that is like it. To love God with all of one's heart, soul, strength, and mind and then to also love your neighbor as yourself. (**Mark 12:30-31**) Jesus went further than that in explaining, to who really is our neighbor, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." (**Matthew 5:44-45**) Why? We respond to God's love by loving Him and then also others. **John 3:16-17**, Jesus said, "**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.**" Our response to God then is according to the love of God, and from the love of God. The fruit of the Spirit of Christ, of God, (**Galatians 5:22-23**). Where we are going in this message, as was the author of Hebrews, is first and foremost that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and then in Christ Jesus we are to pursue peace and holiness-in Christ and with others.

The writer(s) of Hebrews begins the letter by saying, "God, 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 [He is then the One who we are listening to and Who we follow], whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the

worlds [ages: aeons]; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person [exact representation: charakter], 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." (**Hebrews 1:1-4**) The author of Hebrews later speaks of the law of God being "the shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things" (**Hebrews 10:1**) to come, as Jesus was much better than a cow or a goat or a lamb, and it is only in His Righteousness that we are justified by God, in Christ. He is, in the words of John the Baptist when he saw just coming toward him, said to his disciples, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**) He was/is the perfect sacrifice and the sacrifices at the temple were just an image and example of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, with the shedding of His blood and His death, what Christ Jesus has done for us, was and is for the remission of our sins, making us right with God, our Creator. It is then that we live by faith **in Christ Jesus** that He is our (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) Wisdom from God. He is our Righteousness and our Sanctification and our Redemption. As the Apostle James tells us "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (**James 1:21-22**) As I've said before, the Word of God always complements the Word of God, makes up a whole, or brings to perfection¹, and there is absolutely nothing more important for you to have than the WORD OF GOD! The "Word of God" has a two-fold meaning for us. The Word is the inspired by God and written Word of what God our Creator wants us to know about Himself and His plan and purpose for His creation and in how we then respond to Him accordingly. They are "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (**2 Timothy 3:15-16**) And then, in the words of the Apostle John, "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**). So as for us, those who confess to believe on know Christ Jesus, for us to operate outside of the Word of God is dangerous territory. We belong to the Word of God! Our faith is IN Christ Jesus and His Word!

Hebrews 11 gives us a sampling overview of some of the people of the Old Covenant, in the Old Testament of how they lived by faith in God. We call **Hebrews 11** the "Hall of Faith", a play on the "Hall of Fame" that our culture has in different sports. For us, we have not only those examples of those who have lived according to their faith in

¹ <https://www.wordnik.com/words/complement>

God in the Old AND New Testaments (with the apostles and the many who then believed on Jesus as being the Christ), but we even have almost 2000 years of testimonies of persons who have lived their lives in their faith that was/is in Christ Jesus. Some of those people may be friends or family members that have gone on to be with the Lord. We can see and know that those who did love God and lived their lives by faith in Christ, though they were not perfect in ALL that they said and did, they strove to be like Christ, living in and according to His Righteousness and Holiness. We are believing on Jesus as being our righteousness, making us morally right with God and that in Him we are set apart in His holiness.

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Hebrews 12 (The Race of Faith)

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. [Yet not only is Christ Jesus intended to be our Savior, He said "**I AM the Bread of Life**" (John 6:35), "**I AM the Light of the world**" (John 8:12), "**I AM the Door of the sheep**" (John 10:7), "**I AM the Good Shepherd**" (John 10:7), "**I AM the Resurrection and the Life**" (John 11:25), "**I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life**" (John 14:6), and then "**I AM the True Vine**" (John 15:1), of whom we are to stay connected to, to abide in Him, as Jesus then said, "**for without Me you can do nothing.**" (John 15:5)]

The Discipline 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 yet if you have, as Jesus said to His disciples, "**Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.'** If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20)] 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." [scourges: mastigo-o, to flog (literally or figuratively)] **If** you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? [disciplines: paideuo (pahee-dyoo-o)] But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are **illegitimate and not sons**. [if we do not receive and heed to His discipline: we are not His sons. That is repentance (metanoeo), the recognizing a need for change and then heeding to that need for change, which is through Christ Jesus! As He intends to make us to be like Christ Jesus, in His Righteousness and Holiness] 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.

Renew Your Spiritual Vitality

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. [That is similar to the man that Jesus healed, "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." (John 5:14)] **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. [Praise God! "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2) "[For] God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 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." (Ephesians 2:4-10)] NOW!

The Glorious Company

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of **just men made perfect**, to **Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Hear the Heavenly Voice

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. [RIGHT NOW!] For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose

voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which **we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear**. For our God is a consuming fire. [Where He is leading us ultimately, as children of God: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (**1 John 4:18**)] If we are putting our trust in Christ Jesus to be our Righteousness and Holiness and we are doing our best to be obedient and cling to Him for He is our life, if God be for us who can be against us-though God shakes all of heaven and earth we will remain-in Christ Jesus!