

Christian Perseverance | Hebrews 12:1-4 | 3/15/2020

- Introduction
 - Previously the Hebrew author has been discussing the importance of Faith and giving us examples from the heroes of faith from the OT.
 - He had established very clearly what faith is and why it is so important.
 - It was faith that brought righteousness upon the heroes of faith, and it was there faith that endured through hardships that lead them to glory.
 - **He now speaks to the Christian life and how that to live it out requires perseverance.**
 - Terms
 - Christian Perseverance
 - To live the Christian life that God has called us to regardless of any opposition or discouragement that we may face.
 - Endure
 - The action of going through a hardship or trial without giving up or giving in.
 - This is what Christ has called all Christians to.
 - Endurance
 - This is the fuel that allows us to endure.
 - The greater one's endurance then the greater one can endure affliction.
 - Must be exercised to grow.
 - Like a long distance runner.
 - **To live the Christian life is in fact a race, and not a short sprint but instead it is a race of endurance.**
 - A very long cross country run that begins the day we become saved and ends the day that we go on to glory.
 - **This race is not easy. To live the Christian life is difficult and full of its ups and downs.**
 - If one thinks that living the Christian life is extremely easy, and that it never has any hardships, then that person likely is not actually living the Christian life.
 - Some days are great we live out our Christian life in obedience to God and we are blessed and things are great.
 - Then there are days where we experience trials and tribulations, where we don't feel very blessed and in fact we may even wonder what we did wrong to deserve the problems we are facing.
 - 2 Timothy 3:12
 - "In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
 - This is of course times where our faith is tested, where those who have strong faith in God show it in their actions and how they handle those difficult situations in life.
 - **To be a Christian is to go against the world, we are persecuted and treated differently because of our beliefs.**
 - You cannot serve two masters, you will either serve the world or you will serve God.
 - **When you serve one it will always cause conflict with the other.**
 - So when we obey God we are certain to go against the world.
 - **To live the Christian life in the will of God requires perseverance.**
- *Read Hebrews 12:1-4*
- Enduring | Hebrews 12:1-2

- **Read Hebrews 12:1-2**
 - **We are to have endurance like those before**
 - The author speaks to this large cloud of witnesses that we have in the race that is the Christian life.
 - **However, these witnesses or spectators are not those that are living but in fact those who have come before us and have shown us how to have faith that does endure.**
 - The heroes of faith that were discussed in chapter 11 are those spectators (their past life of faith).
 - Each of these people of faith had shown strong faith in God and several of them had also shown great perseverance.
 - **Abraham stands out to me as one of the greatest.**
 - He had to persevere through so much. He showed great faith on numerous occasions even when God's promises seemed impossible.
 - Then of course we know of the great faith he showed God in his actions with the sacrifice of his son Isaac.
 - **Yet Abraham not only had faith and belief in his heart, but he proved it with his actions. He truly lived out his faith.**
 - **As Christians we are to be imitators of these great heroes.**
 - What better way for us to have faith like these people than to imitate them.
 - Hebrews 6:11-12
 - **"Now we want each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the final realization of your hope, so that you won't become lazy but will be imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance."**
 - **Notice that it took faith and perseverance, not indifference and laziness.**
 - **To have faith means we may also have to persevere until we see God's promises fulfilled.**
 - We are to imitate those who have inherited the promises through faith and perseverance.
 - **Who in Scripture do you look up to?**
- **Christian perseverance is a difficult path**
 - When you look at these people you will find one thing in common, that they have chosen a difficult path.
 - Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Joseph, Sarah
 - Hebrews 11:36-37
 - To live this Christian life is not easy, they gave up worldly desires and have made personal sacrifices in obedience to God.
 - **To live the Christian life is to live counter to society, to the world.**
 - More and more each day the world lives out a life that is contrary to Scripture and those that obey God are being looked upon as evil.
 - **What social issues come to mind that are contrary to God that require Christians to have to choose to counter society?**
 - Paul experienced a difficult path with his ministry
 - 2 Timothy 4:1-5
 - What does Paul tell us that we must have in verse 2?
 - **Always be ready even if it isn't convenient.**
 - Persist regardless if it is convenient or not.

- When you look at what they are wearing they are well not wearing much, they do not run in long baggy panty, heavy boots and large coats.
- They take all of those off because it will drag them down in the race.
- **We as Christians also must lay aside everything that can drag us down.**
 - The Christian also must lay aside anything that may cause them harm when running the race of being a Christian.
 - **When running the race of being a Christian there are things that we choose to hold onto, that hold us back.**
 - This is sin and anything else that might not even be considered sin or evil, but that can still weigh you down.
 - **For the Hebrews in the original audience it was the rituals and processes of the old covenant from the Levitical priesthood.**
 - For one they were no longer necessary, but in addition the Jews were strapping themselves into things that God had told them to move on from.
 - For us this could be any number of things:
 - From sinful desires of the flesh
 - Ungodly lifestyles
 - Or perhaps even friends that pressure us into choices that contradict our Christian character.
 - Even a hobby.
 - **We must identify anything that we choose to have in our life that holds us back from running the race of the Christian life.**
- **We must exercise self-control**
 - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
 - **Living the Christian life requires self-control. We must keep our desires in check.**
 - Just because we are Christians doesn't mean that our unholy desires will go away, it just means we have a way now to turn away from them.
 - **We must be willing to set aside our selfish interest for the bigger picture.**
 - We all know what is most important which is to live a holy life in obedience to God, which is to walk in the light.
 - Doing this will ALWAYS mean that our selfish desires will have to be put aside.
- **What would you consider to be "baggage" that would weigh you down in your Christian life? What prevents us from running the best Christian race that God has given us the ability to run?**
 - **Past social life?**
 - **Friends?**
 - **Old habits?**
 - **These things drag us down and they will not help us in our Christian walk, therefore they must be removed.**
- **We must look forward and keep our eyes on Jesus**
 - While our examples from our heroes of faith certainly encourage us and we are to use them as an example to imitate.
 - We must be certain that **we do not overlook the most important** factor that will guide us into a life of faithful perseverance.
 - That is to **keep our eyes on Jesus Christ.**

- Jesus is our perfecter, He is the one that we must always focus on.
 - Hebrews 10:14
 - “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified”
 - It is His example that gives us the most perfect example of how to live a life out in faith.
 - It is by keeping our eyes on Christ that gives us the ability to carry on.
- The things of this world are filth compared to Christ
 - Philippians 3:7-8
 - “But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ”
- **Jesus’s secret of endurance...to always look forward**
 - **Read Hebrews 12:2-4**
 - Not only are we to keep our eyes upon Jesus, but he gives us the greatest secret to perseverance.
 - **This secret is simply to look forward, to look at the goal that is at the end of the race.**
 - **This is exactly what Jesus did.**
 - Jesus Christ endured the cross, he endured excruciating pain and suffering, he endured separation from the Father when the sins of the world were put upon Him.
 - **He did this because He saw the end goal, He saw the prize that was to be for His sufferings.**
 - Jesus saw that by His sacrifice that there would be forgiveness of sins for the world.
 - That man could once again have a right relationship with God.
 - That God could live inside the hearts of His creation in way that was not possible before because of sin.
 - **This prize allowed Jesus to persevere through His trials for us.**
 - **Moses persevered by looking forward**
 - Hebrews 11:24-26
 - Moses persevered because he kept his eyes on the reward.
 - **Paul persevered by looking forward**
 - Philippians 3:12-14
 - “Not that I have already reached the goal or am already fully mature, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead**, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus.”
 - Paul kept his eyes on Jesus Christ and the prize that was promised by God as his reward for his faith and perseverance.
 - **This is how Paul was able to suffer so much was because the goal, the prize was worth more than anything in the world.**
 - **We can persevere by looking forward**

- We as Christians must follow their example. We must keep our eyes fixed on the prize so that we can make it through life striving to be on obedience to God.
 - The reward of God keeps us focused so we can endure
 - God makes it clear that He will reward those who are obedient.
 - It brings favor with God
 - 1 Peter 2:20b
 - "...but when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God."
 - By looking to this prize helps us endure, because we have this goal to focus on and to look forward to.
 - Think of what the prize of a degree does.
 - **We do not need the praise of men. We only need the praise of God.**
 - **How can looking forward help you persevere with what you face daily in your Christian life?**
- Enduring for others as Christ endured for us | Hebrews 12:3-4
 - **Read Hebrews 12:3-4**
 - Jesus Christ's endured for the sake of others.
 - Our call to endure is not always about "us", as Christ endured not for His own glory, but for the benefit of the world.
 - Jesus Christ endured hostility from those He was trying to save.
 - Jesus Christ was going to sacrifice Himself on the cross for the sins of the very people who were torturing Him, who crucified Him.
 - Jesus could have removed Himself, but He did not because He loved us so much that He was willing to endure the suffering for our sake.
 - Christians will endure for the sake of others.
 - As Christ endured for us, we to will have to endure for others.
 - The Christian walk and the fruit that we are to produce are rarely for ourselves, but they are instead to benefit others.
 - Just as Christ suffered for our sake he left an example for us.
 - 1 Peter 2:21
 - "For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps."
 - Paul endured and suffered for the cause of Jesus, which was not for himself but to bring the Gospel to the world.
 - Galatians 6:17
 - "From now on, let no one cause me trouble, because I bear on my body scars for the cause of Jesus."
 - Paul bore physical scars because of His work for Jesus.
 - Likewise Christians that are walking in the light and being obedient to God will also suffer for others.
 - Hebrews 10:33
 - "Sometimes you were publicly exposed to taunts and afflictions, and at other times you were companions of those who were treated that way."
- But through all of this the key to Christian perseverance is to keep our eyes on Jesus, and to look forward.