



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews

Chapter 12

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Introduction

- In Chapter 12 St. Paul emphasizes the importance of obedience even under pressure
- He starts by appealing to us to imitate the Lord (1-4)
- Then he addresses the issue of discipline (5-11)
- In (12-17) he encourages them to be committed to their faith.
- Then he reminds them that they are pilgrims (18-24)
- St. Paul concludes this chapter by the last warning which is the danger of refusing God (25-29)

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- The Hebrews were facing pressure to deny Christ
- To remain faithful to Christ is like a race that they have to run with *endurance to the end*
- Chapter 11 illustrates many examples of faithful heroes who run the race before us

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- These are the *cloud of witnesses*
- Cloud: because they are in the *paradise of joy*
- Witnesses: because they witnessed to the Lord in *their lives*
- Also they witness us in *our struggles* everyday

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- They are not far from us but surrounding us, praying and interceding for us
- The cloud is great, so it is possible to run the race since:
 - ❖ Many heroes were able to run it
 - ❖ Also there are many who are supporting us

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- Also in order to run with endurance we need to lay aside:
 - ❖ Every and any weight (cares, pleasures, and riches)
 - ❖ Every sin which so easily catches us
- Sin is deceitful (3:13), its pleasure will pass away (11:25), and it captures us easily

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- Another great motive is looking unto the Lord Jesus
- The Lord Jesus is not only a hero of faith, but He is the author and the finisher of faith
- The Lord started the journey to the Kingdom of Heaven and finished it

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- The Lord endured because He focused on the joy of fulfilling His mission
- Thus he endured the cross and despised the shame
- If we have our eyes fixed on Him, we will be able to run the race with endurance and to finish our journey

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- Considering also His pains and sufferings and comparing the cost of our salvation (cross) with the price of our faithfulness will help us not to get weary or become discouraged
- Reflecting on the suffering of the Lord makes us understand His love and thus protects us from any temptation

Imitating the Lord (12:1-4)



- The cost of our *salvation* was shedding the Blood of the Lord
- But the price of our *faithfulness*, most of the time is not bloodshed
- In spite of this we complain all the time because we forgot the exhortation of *discipline*
- This implies that we should strive against sin to bloodshed



Discipline (12:5-11)

- The exhortation of discipline is found in Proverbs 3:11-12
- As a true father, God because of His love uses the persecution and the suffering to discipline us
- Discipline is essential in developing our faith



Discipline (12:5-11)

- Discipline is the sign of our *authentic relationship* with God and also when we accept it, God will deal with us as children
- We should accept discipline with *gratitude* (V. 9)



Discipline (12:5-11)

- God uses discipline to give us life and make us partakers of His holiness
- Discipline is painful, but it yields the *peaceable fruit* of righteousness
- In order for us to bear this fruit we need to be trained by it (how to accept it with gratitude)

The Call to Holiness (12:12-17)



- In order to endure the discipline and to run the race, we need to support one another (V. 12), which he quoted from Isaiah 35:3
- We should not offend one another or put obstacles before each other (V.13), which he took from Proverbs 4:26

The Call to Holiness (12:12-17)



- As Christians we should pursue peace and holiness with all people
- Both Holiness and peace are the fruits of discipline (V. 10, V. 11)
- We support one another because if my brother falls from the grace of God, I will be defiled too

The Call to Holiness (12:12-17)



- An example of falling short of the grace of God is Esau
- He married foreign wives
- He was a profane person
- He caused bitterness to his parents and brother
- He could not inherit the blessing because he rejected the repentance

Pilgrimage Of The New Covenant (12:18-24)



- Also we have to run the race with endurance to the end because of the excellence of the New Covenant
- The Old Covenant was made in Mount Sinai where there was terror and fear (Exodus 19: 12, 13)
- Even Moses was terrified (Deut 9:19)

Pilgrimage Of The New Covenant (12:18-24)



- But in the New Covenant we have come to:
 - ❖ The TRUE city of God (compare with the temple)
 - ❖ Innumerable company of angles (the law was given by angels)
 - ❖ The general assembly and church of the firstborn, and the spirits of just men (commemoration of the saints - Jacob)

Pilgrimage Of The New Covenant (12:18-24)



- ❖ God the judge of all who is not far from us now
- ❖ Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant and His Blood
- The blood of Abel spoke a word of hatred between brothers and condemnation before God
- The blood of Christ speaks a word of forgiveness, reconciliation, love, re-creation, life, grace...etc

Fifth Warning: Danger Of Refusing God (12:25-29)



- Danger of Neglect (2:1-4)
- Danger of Unbelief: (3:7-19)
- Danger of Not Maturing: (5:11-14)
- Danger of Shrinking Back (10:26-31)
- Danger of Refusing God (12: 25-29)
- God had spoken with terror from Mt. Sinai

Fifth Warning: Danger Of Refusing God (12:25-29)



- He is speaking with grace from the heavenly throne
- We often fail by contrasting the God of the Old Testament with the God of the New Testament: *God is a consuming fire* (V. 29)
- There is one God of both Testaments and both His *love* and *wrath* are consistent throughout both Testaments

Fifth Warning: Danger Of Refusing God (12:25-29)



- Exodus 19:18 states that the whole mountain quaked when the Lord descended on Mt. Sinai
- God has now promised that He would not only shake the earth, but also the heaven (Haggai 2:6. Isaiah 2:19, 21 and 13:13): the present heaven and earth

Fifth Warning: Danger Of Refusing God (12:25-29)



- The heavenly realities of the New Covenant that have been revealed by Christ are the things (kingdom) which cannot be shaken and which will stand solid
- We are receiving: to some degree we are experiencing the reality of it
- Our response: gratitude and acceptable worship with reverence and fear



Conclusion

- How does the believer run the race? What are the motives?
- How do you avoid becoming weary?
- What are the benefits of discipline to the Christian?
- What is the importance of fellowship?
- What is the godly fear? How does the godly fear of God fit with 1 John 4:18?