

*The Letter to the*  
**Hebrews**



# Discouragement

- We live around discouraged people.
- There is lots of discouragement and despair even among God's people.
- Students, young singles, young couples, midlife, empty nesters.

# Discouragement

- Hebrews 12 is about people who are discouraged:
- Verse 1 - an encumbrance
- Verse 3 - not growing weary
- Verse 12 - hands that are weak, knees that are feeble

# Discouragement

- They once lived lives characterized by devotion and determination.
- Now they are down and discouraged.
- We are going to have feelings of discouragement. How can we prepare for those feelings and react accordingly?

# Seven Principles for Living a Godly Life

Hebrews 12:1-14

# Witnesses

- First: Look at the surrounding cloud of witnesses (12:1).
- Who are the witnesses? The faithful examples in Hebrews 11.
- Whole spectrum of humanity: Enoch, Joseph, David, and Rahab.

# Witnesses

- This does not necessarily teach that they are in the stands watching us on earth.
- The principle is that if they can make it, you can make it.
- They have completed the course, now it is your task to do the same.

# Witnesses

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”

2 Timothy 4:7

# Encumbrance

- Second: Lay aside every encumbrance and sin (12:1).
- Two kinds of impediments:
  - Weight - things that weigh you down
  - Sin - unrighteousness

# Encumbrance

- This passage is talking about besetting sin.
- What is that sin? Since this is in the context of faith (chapter 11), it is likely that the besetting sin is the sin of unbelief.
- God's strength is perfected in our weakness (speaking, writing).

# Endurance

- Third: Run the race with endurance (12:1).
- Run the race with “agona” - the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Basketball (Patrick Ewing, Sleepy Floyd)
- Endurance - some wanted to give up.  
They started a good race but didn't finish.

# Fix Your Eyes

- Fourth: Fix your eyes on Jesus (12:2-4).
- Two forms of sluggishness:
  - Growing weary - look at the obstacles
  - Losing heart - lost desire to finish the race

# Fix Your Eyes

- Example: Moses considered the agony of the race greater than the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:25).
- Surgeon - Look away from everything else (race course, weights, sin) and look to Jesus (author and perfecter of our faith).

# Fix Your Eyes

- C.S. Lewis - "Aim at heaven, and get earth thrown in. Aim at earth, you get neither."
- When I look at people I get depressed.  
When I look at the Lord, I get blessed.
- Speaking at the Dallas Press Club

# Discipline

- Fifth: Appreciate the value of discipline (12:5-11).
- Proverbs 3:11-12 - tells us that divine discipline is evidence of divine love.
- They should not grow faint (vs. 5) nor lose heart (vs. 3) but endure hardship as discipline.

# Discipline

“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond comparison.”

2 Corinthians 4:17

# Strengthen

- Sixth: Strengthen your weak areas (12:12-13).
- These are worn out runners: arms hang down, knees are weak.
- All of us have areas of strength and weakness.

# Strengthen

- Sound business practices (as well as ministry evaluation) suggest that you emphasize your strengths but also know your weaknesses.
- Discouragement comes from our spiritual weaknesses.

# Strengthen

- We need to renew our strength by applying spiritual truths to areas of weakness and temptation.
- We also have a responsibility to the congregation: a Christian's walk with the Lord can be "out of joint" and we should take steps to heal it (crutches).

# Sanctification

- Seventh: Pursue peace and sanctification (12:14).
- Pursue peace with each person - no strife within the church.
- Personal holiness must be sought vigorously because God is holy.

# Summary

- Three ways we get out of God's will:
  - Pleasure - Jesus endured the cross (12:1), and Moses chose ill treatment (11:25)
  - Pain - it can play too big a role with us
  - People - we worry what other people think, we should seek God's approval

# **A Call to Action**

**Hebrews 12:15-29**

# Be Alert (15-17)

- The author now focuses on the danger of a root of bitterness.
- Be on the alert in order to prevent two developments:
- First, be alert for someone who has stumbled in weakness. We are to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)

# Be Alert (15-17)

- Second, we must prevent the growth of a bitter root in us.
- Deuteronomy 29:18 - warns against any practice or attitude that might contaminate our minds and conscience.
- We should pull out that root (influence of the media, influence of a person).

# Be Alert (15-17)

- These verses (vs. 16-17) demonstrate the bad effect of bitter behavior we are warned to avoid.
- Esau showed contempt for his religious heritage by selling his birthright. He later had tears when he realized what he had done. We can have forgiveness.

# New Kingdom (18-29)

- We now live in a kingdom that cannot be shaken (18-29)
- The reference to a mountain reminds us of the giving of the Law at Sinai (Exodus 19).
- They were living in the city of the living God (Mount Zion, Jerusalem).

# New Kingdom (18-29)

- We are also reminded (vs. 25) not to refuse God. Don't turn your back, but pay special attention to Him.
- Shaking of the earth - full destruction - the end of the Old Covenant.
- We should be grateful (vs. 28) and offer worship to God.

