

The Struggle Against Sin

Introduction and Review

- Last week we received the encouragement to persevere in our Christian lives from Heb. 12:1-2
- We were encouraged to receive the testimonies of the witnesses from the OT, remove the hindrances from our lives & run the specific race that God has chosen for us with endurance (v. 1).
- We were also encouraged to avoid distractions in life by looking to Jesus as our example: Who He is & What He did (v. 2).

I. Do Not Grow Weary (v. 3-4)

A. Consider Jesus (v. 3)

Jesus endured hostility (ἀντιλογία) - opposition to authority. This hostility was premeditated words & actions intended to display people's opposition to Him – rejection, slander, mocking, hatred, lying, betrayal, arrest, physical brutality, etc. The hostility was intense & unrelenting to the end of His life. Yet He did not give up & quit, but endured... Believers are to carefully meditate on this & follow the example of Jesus for your own encouragement.

B. Resist sin (v. 4)

We've already learned that the inward conflict with sin can distract & hinder the believer in the Christian race of life (v. 1). But here the author is addressing the external conflict with sin, hostile people & circumstances. This is described as a "struggle against sin". "struggle" (ἀνταγωνίζομαι) means to engage in an intense struggle against someone or something. The believer must not compromise in the intense struggle against hostile people & circumstances, even when physical harm & death are probable – "the point of shedding blood". – We must not compromise when people hate us as Christians; betray, lie, slander; experience a loss of income, possessions, health, etc.

When facing intense trials in life believers are told not to meditate & focus on our problems (leads to worry, fear, etc.), but to focus on the much more severe trials of Jesus & the way He handled them!

II. Do Not Forget (v. 5-11)

A. The exhortation of God's loving discipline(v. 5-6)

Forgetfulness causes a lot of misery in a Christian's life – trials in life can cause it. "discipline" (παιδεία) means the act of providing guidance for responsible living. Proverbs 3:11-12 is quoted & applied to Christians. Christians should never belittle or treat the Lord's discipline as insignificant – "regard lightly". Christians should not be weary or tired of the Lord's discipline either – we never outgrow our need for discipline from the Lord.

B. The value of God's loving discipline (v. 6-11)

The Lord's discipline is reserved for His children – those who love the Father thru the Son by the power of the HS. This discipline proves that the Lord loves you & has received you as His child (v. 6-7). If anyone does not receive this discipline, they are not God's children (v. 8). This is one of the reasons unsaved & ungodly people seem to be happy & prosperous in their ungodly lifestyles – God does not trouble them until the Day of Judgment (Rom. 2:5). Because we respect our earthly fathers for their imperfect discipline, we should much more so submit ourselves to the perfect loving discipline of our Heavenly Father (v. 9-10). ALL discipline is painful & unpleasant and ALL Christians experience the pain – unavoidable. Discipline is intended to correct a problem (s) & by nature involves pain – like corrective medical treatments, surgery, etc. The pain reflects the serious nature of sin & is a discouragement from sinning again. The end result of painful discipline is peace & righteousness. A right relationship & fellowship with God produce genuine peace in the lives of ALL Christians who willingly submit to God's loving discipline – "trained by it".

Examples of those who benefited from the pain: Psalmist (**Ps. 119:67, 71**), the Apostle Peter, etc. even Jesus (Heb. 5:8).

CONCLUSION

So then my brothers & sisters let's consider what we have learned today. ALL Christians have to struggle against sin. ALL Christians will experience God's discipline [*remember that discipline is the act of providing guidance for responsible living*]. ALL discipline is painful & unpleasant. ALL discipline results in a peaceful relationship & fellowship with God for those who willingly submit to it. Can you recognize your own struggle against sin? Are you experiencing the pain & unpleasant nature of God's discipline in your own life? Are you willingly submitting to the painful & unpleasant discipline from your trials, hostile people & circumstances? Are you getting tired of the struggle & the discipline? Only you know the answers to these important questions & this text today was written to encourage us to see that these experiences prove that God loves us: the struggle against sin, the painful discipline & the end result of a peaceful relationship with God. God is at work in all these things for our good; conforming us into the image of Christ; increasing our faith, love & hope in Christ; building godly character in us; enabling us to bear the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, etc. He is filling our hearts with thanksgiving & praise for His goodness & glory...

If you are not a Christian, then you have not experienced the love of God yet; that love that floods your heart & opens heaven wide for you to see God's goodness. But you can experience it today, right now. Jesus offers His love to you; to forgive your sin; to save you from destruction; to make you His child, heaven your home... But you must believe...

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