

Devotional

Peaceful Fruit of Righteousness

Hebrew 12:1-13

Round Top Church Christian Fellowship
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All Scripture from New American Standard Bible (NAS)

DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

Preemptive living

In the **first verse** of Hebrews twelve we see **three distinctive elements** that are **preemptive in living** the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Remember the word “disciple” is one who has discipline in life to follow the Lord. These passages bring to focus what God calls us to in living the Christian life. Again, the foundation is laid out in verse one being divided into three parts beginning with a Great Cloud of Witnesses.

Three distinctives leading to God’s peaceful fruit of Righteousness

1. Recognize and compare our lives to the Great Cloud of Witness.
2. Laying aside encumbrances and sin
3. Run with Endurance

(1) Great Cloud of Witnesses Watching. The Jewish audience the book of Hebrews is first written to are familiar with these historical Jewish leaders. In the previous chapter (11) they are listed and briefly commented on. **The historic witnesses are aimed at the audience as if they were watching them to see if they are living up to the purpose of God in their lives.**

Hebrews 12:1 part A

Therefore,

*since we have so great a **cloud of witnesses** surrounding us,*

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph,
Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtah, David, Samuel

and the prophets:

Major Prophets: Isaiah Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel

Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum,
Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

These historical witnesses represent that God chooses to work through man despite bad decisions on our part from time to time. Not every witness in the list always made decisions that appear to be godly (Example: Samson, Jephtah). However, they still served a purpose in God's plan. In the midst of the pagan world they lived in, they struggled to survive. They struggled to live the life God has called all of us to live. However, they endured through tough assignments mainly consisting of military battles and personal circumstances. The picture here in Hebrews is they are watching God's people to hold them accountable.

Our faith ancestors hold us accountable because we can look to their lives and compare our circumstances to theirs. They have set the example, be it a bad one or a good one.

(2) Laying Aside Encumbrances and Sin

Hebrews 12:1 part B

let us also lay aside

*every **encumbrance** [bulk, impediment]*

*and the **sin***

*which so easily **entangles** us,*

It is easy to live the Christian life if temptation was not part of the creation. Without life's tests in front of us on a daily basis we could be model heavenly citizens. Remove sin and death from the creation and this would be heaven. However, we are not there yet. God's great creative power is put forth in His love for us. We are created in the image of God to live our lives according to His will and plan for each of us (Eph. 2:10). Again, this is more easily accomplished in a sin free bubble. God exercised His *free will choice* in creating us and He has left us in a state of *free will choice* as demonstrated in Genesis 2:17 when he gave Adam a choice to eat or not to eat from the forbidden tree. To that point Adam had not picked up an encumbrance or sin. But he soon chose to do so.

The text here in Hebrews 12:1 distinguishes between an **encumbrance** and **sin**. The Greek word *ogkos or encumbrance* highlights the temporal weight we can carry and accumulate in our lives. When we were children we were often oblivious to the bulk or impediments to living a happy life. We were fed by our parents and sent off to play or sleep. Our thoughts were not weighted down with worry. It is understood that not all children are raised with this description.

The point being that now we wake up in the morning and the bulk of adult responsibilities can weigh us down and create impediments in how we function as fathers, mothers, neighbor, friend, boss and how we witness. From personal experience it is observed when we jettison baggage we do not need to carry, we are better off. This could be habits we have formed over the years or relationships or voluntary assignments.

Examining our lives for encumbrances is critical in laying aside things that are restricting us from carrying out the Lord's Will in our lives. It is easy to get entangled in encumbrances. Getting entangled in encumbrances can be just as restrictive as sin itself. Sin is more straightforward as being wrong in God's eyes. Encumbrances may not be obvious sinful conduct:

- A. Here in America we have a national weight problem; seems innocent enough to eat a few brownies and then a little ice cream on top. However, if we do not watch what we eat we can become ill and then we cannot carry out the ministry or the life the Lord has planned for us.
- B. Working too much in a capitalist society is another encumbrance we need to lay aside.
- C. However, the welfare state is upon us and the other end of the work spectrum is people's entitlement mentality has become an encumbrance to supporting themselves and being the productive person God has called them to be.

To sum up, we need to live balanced lives and consider what the Lord places before us in life and remove the obstacles preventing us from achieving His goals in our lives.

(3) run with endurance

Hebrews 12:1 part C

*and let us **run with endurance**
the **race that is set before us,***

How do we accomplish this? First God has to indwell you.

God knows this is a fallen creation. He knows there are great challenges, great tests and temptations. This is why He came and lived as one of us in Jesus Christ. This is called the incarnation of God into man. God became man and lived with us. God demonstrated for all the world to see that this life can be overcome in the flesh with God living inside of us, God transforming our hearts **at our invitation/calling** (Romans 10:13 *Whoever will **call** upon the name of the Lord will be saved.*), **at our response** to His calling (**John 3:16** *whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*). This is called "**rebirth**" in **John 3**. We have real life (Holy Spirit filled life; **John 3:3-6**), exemplified in the apostles (Acts 2:4; Acts 4:8, 31; Acts 9:17; Acts 13:9, 52) set before us now and we have eternal life set before us for our future (John 6 the woman at the well

Jesus offers living water to, and **John14:6** *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.)*.

Therefore, with God in us we run with endurance in this fallen creation. We may have a lap or two where we stumble and the Great Cloud of Witnesses cry out to us to get up and keep going. We can develop spiritual sight problems from time to time, and become weak kneed, but through prayer and support of believing friends we can continue in God's race. God does not leave us alone. Even in our deepest pit we are not left alone as the Holocaust survivor Corrie Ten Boom witnesses to us as Christ is still with us.

Therefore, once we are indwelled by God's Spirit we are capable of enduring. This enables believers to focus on Jesus.

Who are the Great Cloud of Witnesses in your life that you feel accountable to?

DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

The Believers Focus/fixing

Hebrews 12: 2

fixing our eyes on **Jesus**,
the **author** and **perfecter** of **faith**,
who for the **joy set before** Him **endured the cross**,
despising the shame,
(*Matthew 26:67; Luke 22:63; Luke 23:11*)
and has sat down at the **right hand** of the throne of God.

What distracts you from focusing on Jesus?

[Direct Example we are to first consider]

The Great Cloud of Witnesses still remain, but our eyes are **first and foremost fixed upon Jesus**, because He, like us, lived on the earth, and not, like us, He lived a perfect life as an example to us. The one who lived a perfect life can perfect our faith (1 John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:21). The end result of perfection of faith is that joy overrides the sin of this world as Jesus demonstrates by going to the Cross. **Joy** (verse 12:2) is tied to endurance. **Joy** is the second fruit listed in Galatians 5:22. **Joy** is tied to the other fruits of the Spirit meaning that they can all work in concert to achieve God's goals in our lives even in the face of catastrophic threats to our temporal bodies. We see that our endurance is tied to these fruits of the Spirit. When we get off track we need to examine the workings of the fruits of the Spirit operating in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-23 ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Hebrews 12:3

For consider Him

*who has **endured** such hostility
by sinners against Himself,
so that **you will not grow weary and lose heart.***

Losing heart is one of the most serious conditions we can have. We lose heart because we come across circumstances in life we cannot control and they overwhelm us. At that point all we can do is look to the Lord.

First we should not take on responsibilities and circumstances that God does not assign us.

Second, we should identify what the Lord has placed in our lives, and knowing that He placed them there, gives us the heart to continue on.

It is acknowledged that difficult times will come even after God has placed goals in our life. Moses was handpicked by God and there were many obstacles in his life. The Egyptian rulers were to be expected to rebel. However, the rebellion of the people selecting the pagan golden calve to build in the Exodus was an internal challenge to God's plan. This must have weighed heavy on Moses' heart. Throughout the wilderness experience Moses was challenged not to lose heart as the people rebelled. One of the greatest challenges a Christian leader or pastor can face is when there is rebellion against God's Word. Seldom occurrences or missteps can be worked through. However, some people are so stubborn, as exemplified in the Exodus wilderness account. God waits for the offending people to die off. At the same time He waits for the people who have not lost heart to mature and carry on His will.

DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

Resisting

Hebrews 12: 4-6

⁴ You have *not yet resisted*
to the point of shedding blood
in your striving *against sin*;

⁵ *and* you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you *as sons*,

*"MY SON,
DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;*

*⁶ FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."*

Proverbs 3:11, 12, Job 5:17, Romans 3:19

In the ministry for Christ there are two kinds of disciplines learned in resisting sin:

1. **Verse four** teaches us, through not giving in (resisting) to the world due to persecution; we gain a stronger discipline in the Lord. We are called to resist the world that persecutes us with sinful attacks and offerings. Jesus on the Cross is our ultimate example. He stayed on message regardless of the temporal cost. Jesus shed blood as others martyred for their Gospel witness did also. All the 12 apostles except for Judas and John were martyred for witnessing the Gospel. John was exiled to Patmos Island and believed to have died of old age. Through these persecutions we build more discipline to stay the course and to stay on message. The fallen world controlled by Satan constantly attempts to get us off message. Satan is here as evidenced in Job 1:7 *And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."* And Satan constantly attempts to get us off message as seen when Satan comes to Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4). However, Jesus resisted Satan's sinful temporal offerings. Jesus points to the future beyond this life for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17).

This means that we are subject to being conditioned into shape by the fallen world. We persevere, we **resist**, and we push through for the Lord despite the world pressuring, humiliating, or attacking us. Paul is an example of a person who resisted the physical and spiritual pressures. He stayed on message because Christ was in him (Gal. 2:20).

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 NAS

²³ *Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.*

²⁴ *Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.*

²⁵ *Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.*

²⁶ *I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;*

²⁷ *I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*

²⁸ *Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.*

2. **Verses five and six** addresses the kind of discipline most people think of. The Lord lovingly corrects us when we stray. God wants us to resist sin and mature in His ways. When you sin, there are penalties that you receive on earth. If you break a state law or an organizational rule you may be sanctioned. If you jump off a cliff, gravity leads you to a painful landing. God has built in natural disciplines into the creation. The substance abuser can reap the physical and the governmental penalty for their choices. So, we are called to resist sin and have the discipline to do so in order for us to be spared. However, if we do sin, God reaches out to us as if a hot stove has been touched and we feel the burn of sin that harms us.

Can you think about a time in your life that you have resisted sin or persecution and the reasons why?

DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

Enduring Discipline

Hebrews 12: 7

*It is for discipline that you **endure**;
God deals with you as with sons;
for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

1 Corinthians 11:32 *But when we are judged,
we are disciplined by the Lord
in order that
we may not be condemned
along with the world.*

Revelation 3:19 *Those whom I love,
I reprove and discipline;
be zealous therefore, and repent.*

Deuteronomy 8:5 *"Thus you are to know in your heart
that the LORD your God was disciplining you
just as a man disciplines his son.*

Proverbs 3:11 *My son,
do not reject the discipline of the LORD, Or loathe His reproof,*

Hebrews 12: 8

*But if you are without discipline,
of which all have become partakers,
then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

In other words they are not true disciples but false ones.

Those of us who have gone through discipline training in our life have improved our performance, our **endurance**.

Endurance is not gained setting on the couch. If this were true then we would have to give out more gold medals around the country.

Endurance is gained through running and lifting through engaging the world with the Gospel of Christ. Through these life callings we gain endurance to stay the course to stay on message.

The context of this text is centered on being a disciple of the Lord; meaning a person who receives instruction, teaching, and encouragement. A disciple also receives corrective

instruction. This is accomplished to **build a person up**, not to tear down, but for the goal of endurance, the goal of **restoration**.

Galatians 6:1-2 *I Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, **you who are spiritual**, restore such a one in a **spirit of gentleness**; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*

² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-14

*¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and **build up one another**, just as you also are doing.*

¹² But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,

¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

*¹⁴ We urge you, brethren, **admonish the unruly**, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

Many of us have gone through military training or graduated from civil service academies. These were several months long and were voluntary. You could leave at any time. However, you endured for the greater good of the community mission or for a job and support for family over your pain and or at times being humiliated by a drill instructor and the physical requirements placed upon you.

Can you list the things in your life that you would endure discipline for?

DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

Temporal Examples of Discipline Leading to God's Holiness and Peaceful Righteousness

Hebrews 12:9

*Furthermore,
we had **earthly fathers to discipline us,**
and we respected them;
shall we not much rather be subject
to the Father of spirits,
and live?*

Hebrews 12:10

*For they **disciplined us for a short time**
as seemed best to them,
but He disciplines us for our good,
so that we may **share His holiness.***

Verse 10 leads into verse 11, from God's **holiness to yielding peaceful righteousness.** Yes, we for a moment, when receiving instruction from the Lord may ponder with great consternation the adjustment we are called to make in our lives. We must consider the Lord's ways are better for us than our own ways and the end result of the Lord's instruction is for our own good in this life. The end result is the **peaceful fruit of God's righteousness so we can be healed (verse 13)..**

Hebrews 12: 11

*All discipline for the moment seems
not to be joyful, but sorrowful;
yet to those who have been trained by it,
afterwards it yields
the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

Hebrews 12: 12

Therefore,
*strengthen the hands that are weak
and the knees that are feeble,*

Hebrews 12: 13

*and make straight paths for your feet,
so that the limb which is lame
may not be put out of joint,
but rather **be healed.***

We can all remember when our earthly fathers or childhood guardians disciplined us. Our fathers were not perfect and may not have always been even handed in corrective discipline, but as Scripture states they did what seemed best to them (verse 10).

Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

There is obviously a difference between discipline and abuse. We are called to be fathers by the Lord and He has a plan to administer His discipline through us as the child grows in order for the child to grow up and not be destructive, but a blessing to the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4

*And, fathers,
do not provoke your children to anger;
but bring them up in the discipline
and instruction of the Lord.*

Proverbs 29:17

*Correct your son,
and he will give you comfort;
He will also delight your soul.*

Whether you are a father/parent or grandfather/grandparent do you feel a sense of responsibility to raise your children up by the Word of God?

Are you preparing yourself for Godly fatherhood or assisting your adult child or friend in being the father God has called fathers to be?

What steps are you taking?
