

## STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-ONE - Hebrews 12:1-13

#### TEXT:

v. 1 Therefore, since we are having 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 be running with perseverance the race lying before us,

v. 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the originator and perfecter of faith, who for the joy lying before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

v. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, in order that you do not grow weary, giving out in your souls.

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

v. 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, stop regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor giving out when you are being rebuked (corrected) by Him;

v. 6 for those whom the Lord is loving, He is disciplining, and He is scourging every son whom He is receiving."

v. 7 It is for discipline that you are persevering; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom [his] father is not disciplining?

v. 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not real sons.

v. 9 Furthermore, we were having indeed fathers of our flesh (earthly fathers) to discipline us, and we were respecting them; shall we not much rather put ourselves in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?

v.10 For they were disciplining us for a short time as was seeming best to them, but He is [disciplining us] for our good, that we may share His holiness.

v.11 In fact, all discipline for the moment is not seeming to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it is yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

v.12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees which have become disabled,

v.13 and be making straight paths for your feet, in order that [the limb] which is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

## INTRODUCTION:

One day as I was cleaning, I began singing the gospel song "Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King."

My young son Cory in the next room began singing with me. But something wasn't quite right, so I listened to his version: "Soon, and very soon, we are going to Burger King."

--Fran Zok, Buffalo, N.Y.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

### Sing and Cringe

Our pastor's sermon ran overtime a couple of weeks ago. And though he tried to compensate, I still think it was a mistake when he closed the service by saying, "Because we're running late, let's sing just verse one of our closing hymn, *Take Time to be Holy*."

It prompted me to recall other occasions when I sang the closing hymn with something other than pious reflection.

Like the time the pastor was preaching on Faith in the Nuclear Age, and we closed with *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*.

Or the time we had a presentation from the local suicide prevention hotline, and a few minutes later we were singing, *Take My Life and Let It Be*.

Or the time a sermon on "The Dangers of Contemporary Music" was followed by the song leader directing us to sing *Rock of Ages*.

Or the time a presentation of the New Age Movement was followed by singing several hymns, including *Channels Only* and *Make Me a Channel of Blessing*.

Or the series on the Seven Deadly Sins, which, after the sermon on gluttony and weight control, saw the congregation heartily sing, *And Can It Be That I Should Gain? And How Great Thou Art*.

When it comes to planning church services, Yogi Berra was right. It ain't over till it's over.

--Eutychus in *Christianity Today*

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

It was testimony night in the church. A lady got up and said, "We are living in a wicked land where sin is on every hand. I have had a terrible fight with the old devil all week."

Where upon her husband, who was sitting glumly by her side said, "It's not all my fault either; she's tough to get along with."

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

### **Loosen Up!**

RING, RING, CLICK

The other party answers:

"Welcome to the Psychiatric Hotline.

If you're an obsessive/compulsive, please press 1 repeatedly.

If you are codependent, please ask someone to press 2 for you.

If you have multiple personalities, please press 3, 4, 5 and 6.

If you are a paranoid/delusional, we know who you are and what you want. Just stay on the line so we can trace the call.

If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a little voice will tell you which number to press.

If you are manic/depressive, it doesn't matter which number you press. No one will answer.

Thank you for calling the psychiatric hotline."

(Source unknown)

(All I Know About Animal Behavior I Learned in Loehmann's Dressing Room  
by Erma Bombeck)

*A Chesapeake Labrador dog named Curly traveled 650 miles from Billings, Montana, to Alexander, North Dakota, between December 1 and December 23. After arriving in Alexander, Curly slept for seventy-two hours, then decided to leave and went back to Billings.*

I was never caught up in the jogging/running movement that swept the country in the seventies and eighties. Face it, I call a cab to go to the mailbox.

It is not reasonable to run 26 miles and 385 yards to stand in line for a cot to pass out on. If I wanted bloody feet, I'd buy size 4 ½ heels.

I am married to a man who had a TV tuner transplant so he wouldn't have to look for it all the time. You cannot imagine my surprise when he decided to run marathons.

But what really threw me for a loop was that he saved himself for the races. He could run over twenty-six miles in three hours and thirty-three minutes. When I called to him, "Dinner!" it took him thirty-five minutes to cover a distance of eighteen feet. Go figure.

I don't know what men do to kill all that time. The call to come eat automatically triggered something in my grandfather that would send him to the bathroom, where he not only used the facilities, but afterward rearranged the medicine chest before appearing at the table. By that time the steam was off the potatoes and the smile was gone from Grandma's lips.

For the last two decades, people did dumb things in the name of recreation. They weren't games like tennis or Ping-Pong in which you kept score and someone won or lost. They were stupid things young people did that prompted younger brothers or sisters to ask before they embarked on their adventure, "Can I have your record albums if you don't come back?"

One of these sports was bungee jumping. A bungee cord was attached to a bridge or a tower and people simply put the loop around their waists and jumped off. If they didn't smash their brains out, they did it again. Sometimes they paid as much as \$80 for the thrill.

I remember the first time I saw a rock climber. He weighed about thirty-eight pounds and for no reason was scaling a mountain of rock that looked like a wall.

I have known fear before--like having my bowling ball bounce into the next lane, or knocking my tennis ball into the clubhouse dining room, or being the only person to ride a chairlift round trip at the ski slope because I couldn't ski off--but rock climbing! What would happen if you thought you were grabbing one of those little bolts and it turned out to be a snake's head? What if you got halfway up and your shoe came untied?

The incredible part of rock climbing is that it is a sport that isn't criticized for its danger, but is attracting the attention of environmentalists who say enthusiasts are causing damage to the planet.

How many people are we talking about here who go out on a Sunday and dig their fingernails into solid rock? Ten? Twenty? Thirty, tops?

Call me when there is rock gridlock.

I don't run and I don't climb rocks, but I did succumb to another dumb recreation that made its debut in the early nineties: stair climbing.

I told my husband I was joining a health spa and for three days a week I was going to go to a gym, turn on a machine, and climb stairs.

"Remember that two-story house we lived in Bellbrook? You use to stack laundry at the bottom of the stairs and make one trip a year."

"I don't remember that," I said.

"You said if God had meant for you to ascend to the second floor, He would have awarded you frequent-flyer mileage."

"I never said that."

"There were diapers in that pile the day the last kid graduated from high school."

"Are you finished?"

"No. Remember the trip we took to Ireland? You were going to kiss the Blarney Stone until you saw all those steps."

"When you're married to someone for forty-some years, who needs to kiss another stone?" I said.

I didn't care what he thought. I bought a cute little stair-climbing outfit and went to the gym for about three weeks before I decided my rear end still made flapping noises when I walked.

Children are born looking for something meaningless that causes their mothers to speed up the aging process.

One of the sports that sent me into premature menopause was skateboarding. It wasn't enough for my son to plant his feet firmly on this little piece of wood with rollers on it and sail through the mall scaring people half to death. He discovered an arena built like a teacup in which he skated around until his body was parallel to the other side, and he came as close to the top as he could before flying into the parking lot. When it began to snow, the skateboard was replaced by a snowboard.

Rollerblades became insurance companies' worst nightmare as thousands of kids tried to balance themselves on skates that went at out-of-control speeds.

No one knows for sure why Curly traveled thirteen hundred miles when he didn't know anyone to visit and there wasn't a sale. I'm guessing he did it for the same reason two men climb on a luge with no brakes, lie on their backs with their upper bodies protruding over the sleigh, and steer blindly down a tunnel of ice at speeds of seventy to ninety miles per hour. Because it's something to do.

pp. 89-92

(Humorous Cowboy Poetry: A Knee-Slappin' Gathering edited by staff members)

## **The Skunk and the Cowboys**

Phil Kennington

At the gatherin' in St. Anthony,  
     A place my heart belongs,  
 They're spinnin' ropes and tellin' jokes  
     And singin' cowboy songs.

Oh, there was lots of poetry,  
     Both humorous and sad.  
 But this year's theme was different,  
     Variation was the fad.

They even had a contest goin'  
     At the city square.  
 A skunk-corralled tent  
     And skunk scent filled the air.

The contest rules were simple 'cuz  
     A hundred dollars went  
 To the man who stayed the longest  
     With the skunk inside the tent.

When we sees that easy money there,  
     We slaps our knees with glee.  
 Then me and Bob and Charley,  
     We paid our entry fee.

Charley goes in first and  
     Twenty seconds goes by fast.  
 But when I hears him coughin',  
     Then I knows that he won't last.

He wuz wheezin' and a-gaspin'.  
     We could hear him cuss and swear.  
 Then both tent flaps flew open wide  
     And Charley dove for air.

He hit the ground a-rollin',  
     Ya could see him agonize.  
 There wuz tears as big as biscuits  
     Runnin' down from both his eyes.

Well, I'm up next, I figures  
     That it can't be bad as death.  
 I grit my teeth and shut my eyes  
     And try to hold my breath.

I can hear the judge a-countin'  
     As he gets to twenty-five  
 And I'm gettin' weak and dizzy but  
     At least I'm still alive.

Then I staggers t'wards the tent flaps.  
     This is more than I can bear.  
 I might just die a loser,  
     But I gotta have some air.

I sucks air in for all I'm worth.  
     I wheeze and cough and spit,  
 Then dives out like an arrow  
     Just beyond where Charley lit.

We shoulda knowed Bob had the edge.  
     He held an ace or two;  
 Didn't have a wife or mother  
     To tell him what to do.

He wuz sorta used to odors--  
     Not the kind from hollyhocks  
 But them ya find when ya ain't changed  
     Yer underwear and sox.

He weren't opposed to changin' clothes,  
     Although it made him stout.  
 But puttin' 'em on and takin' 'em off  
     He claims just wears 'em out.

Oh, sometimes Bob bathed in the spring--  
     He figured that would do.  
 But the last time he bathed in spring  
     Was the spring of sixty-two.

And so when Bob went in the tent  
     To try and win the prize,  
 And beat out me and Charley  
     It was really no surprise.

When the seconds ticked by quietly



The tent was calm and still,  
And it looks like me and Charley'd  
Lost that hundred-dollar bill.

Then both tent flaps flew open wide,  
And now things really stunk.  
And holdin' his nose with both paws  
Comes that wheezin', gaggin' skunk!  
pp. 100-2

The writer to the book of Hebrews finds that he is writing to a group of persecuted Christians. They are for the main part Jewish Christians who have experienced a great deal of hostility and suffering and personal loss as a result of their faith in Jesus Christ. They are in the position of considering the possibility of forsaking their new-found faith and returning to a more comfortable position in Judaism.

The apostle finds the saints to be:

DULL IN THEIR HEARING,  
COLD IN THEIR COMPLACENCY, and  
WILLFUL IN THEIR WANDERING.

The MAIN MESSAGE of the book of Hebrews is a challenge to ACCEPT THE CALL OF THE CROSS, to MANIFEST THE QUALITY OF PERSEVERANCE when it comes to the MATTER OF FAITH.

In our study we have just completed work on Hebrews 11, THE GREAT HALL OF FAITH.

The ARGUMENT OF THE AUTHOR is that others:

STAYED BY THE STUFF,  
HUNG IN THERE IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES,  
CONTINUED TO BELIEVE AND TRUST IN GOD, and  
WERE FAITHFUL TO FINISH.

A number of years ago, Pearl and I were circling the Parkland Hospital trying to find a place to park so that we could visit our daughter, Becky. As I came around one corner of the hospital I saw this vacant place and was just beginning to pull into it when I was greeted with an imposing sign which said, DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT PARKING HERE! I think that is the summary of the author's purpose. He wants these believers to press on to finish the course, to keep the faith, to enjoy their inheritance as a result of their perseverance.

(They Walked with God by James S. Bell, Jr.)

We ought in these days to have far more faith than Abel or Enoch or Abraham had. They lived away on the other side of the cross. We talk about the faith of Elijah and the patriarchs and prophets; but they lived in the dim light of the past, while we are in the full blaze of Calvary and the resurrection.

D. L. Moody

05/27

Hewitt comments on chapter 12 by titling this section:

**The hope of the future promotes endurance in the present**  
(xii. 1-29)

The readers, having such a great multitude of glorious examples of faith and a clear vision of Jesus, the divine originator of faith, are urged to endure the conflict (1-3). Their sufferings are to be regarded as a salutary chastisement on the part of God who is full of tender love and compassion towards them (4-13).

p. 188

Richards observes:

Launching out on a life of faith with God is much like marriage. It costs in commitment. It demands self-discipline and promises a divine discipline that will stretch each one of us beyond our natural human capacity. To live out our new identity as God's sons and Jesus' brothers, we must live by faith. But faith is not *ease*.

The life of faith is a life of discipline and commitment.  
p. 125-6

Isaiah 46:4

Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

Lane titles verses 1-13:

***The Display of the Necessary Endurance (12:1-13)***

p. 395

He also says:

The introduction of a new section is indicated by a shift in genre and mood. In 12:1 the writer turns from historical recital (11:1-40) to pastoral exhortation.

p. 403

The section falls naturally into three small units, 12:1-3, 4-11, 12-13. The central paragraph clarifies the meaning and purpose of disciplinary sufferings in the life of the people of God. It is framed by shorter paragraphs that develop a common metaphor, the running of a race to the appointed goal:

A Exhortation to run with endurance (12:1-3);

B The meaning of the suffering to be endured (12:4-11);

A Exhortation to renewed commitment to complete the race (12:12-13).

p. 405

The first unit is integrated thematically around the issue of sonship; the term "son" or "sons" occurs six times in vv 4-8. Genuine sonship is attested in the experience of disciplinary sufferings. By way of contrast, there is no reference to sonship in the second unit.

p. 405

A. T. Robertson says:

There should be no chapter division here, and 12:1-3 really is the climax in the whole argument about the better promises (10:19-12:3) with a passionate appeal for loyalty to Christ.

p. 432

Thomas observes:

THE CONSIDERATION of the worthies mentioned in the former chapter leads to exhortation to patient endurance, especially in the light of the greatest witness of all, Jesus Christ (v. 2). The characteristic thought of the entire chapter is Hope. The assurance of the future prospect is intended to lead to endurance in the present.  
p. 155

Barclay says:

THIS is one of the great, moving passages of the New Testament; and in it the writer to the Hebrews has given us a well-nigh perfect summary of the Christian life.  
p. 194

DeHaan says:

THE Bible presents the Christian life under a wide range of figures, all of them suggestive and descriptive of the believer's experience. He is compared to a child, a sheep, a house, a temple, a farm, a pilgrim, a soldier, a bride, members of the body, and many other things. One of the most colorful is that of an athlete, running in a race to obtain the prize or trophy. Such is the figure with which Hebrews twelve opens: . . .  
p. 162

Westcott titles chapter 12:

*The general application of the lessons of the past to the present season of trial* (c. xii.).

The consideration of the past victories of Faith suggests three main lines of thought which are pursued in this chapter.

- (1) 1-13. The virtue of discipline.
- (2) 14-17. The necessity of peace and purity.
- (3) 18-29. The character and obligations of the New Covenant.

- (1) 1-13. The virtue of discipline.

The teaching on the virtue of discipline falls into two parts, (a) The motive to endurance in suffering (1, 2); and (b) The measure and end of suffering (3-13).

p. 391

Draper says:

Living, conquering, perfect faith must have a purpose. It must have a goal, a direction. There is a focal point for faith. That's what Hebrews 12 is all about--the result of perfect faith. God wanted us to know that the faith demonstrated in the lives of these Old Testament saints was not perfect. Perfect faith waited for Jesus Christ, for he is the author and finisher of faith.

Perfect faith rests in Jesus Christ. He is the source of perfect faith. He is the object of perfect faith. Perfect faith is not found anywhere else but in Jesus Christ. He is the center of it all. He is the purpose of it all. He is its goal.

p. 339

Delitzsch speaks of chapter 12:1-11 when he says:

*Exhortation and encouragement, in view of such a cloud of witnesses, and of the leadership and example of the Lord Jesus Himself, who in the way of suffering has attained to glory, not to grow faint in the conflict with sin, and not to be unmindful of that fatherly love from which the discipline of suffering comes, nor of those peaceable fruits of righteousness which they will gather who submit themselves to it.*

pp. 294-5

Wiersbe points out:

The Jewish believers who received this letter were getting weary and wanted to give up; but the writer encouraged them to keep moving forward in their Christian lives, like runners on a track (see Phil. 3:12-14). He pointed out three divine resources that encourage a Christian to keep going when the situation is difficult: . . .

p. 134

J. Vernon McGee gets us started by saying:

We are in the practical section of the Epistle to the Hebrews where we see that Christ brings better benefits and duties. Chapter 11 is the *faith chapter*; chapter 12 is the *hope chapter*; and chapter 13 is the *love chapter*.

p. 598

The author in essence is saying, You have seen it done through the examples of others in the past. Now, persevere and press on in your present circumstances knowing that there will be joy at the finish line.

Napoleon Hill in his book Think and Grow Rich says:

There are four simple steps which lead to the habit of persistence. They call for no great amount of intelligence, no particular amount of education, and but little time and effort. The necessary steps are:

1. A definite purpose backed by a burning desire for its fulfillment.
2. A definite plan expressed in continuous action.
3. A mind closed tightly against all negative and discouraging influences including negative suggestions from relatives, friends and acquaintances.
4. A friendly alliance with one or more persons who will encourage one to follow through with both plan and purpose.

Nechayev, a Marxist of the last century who died in prison for his role in the assassination of Czar Alexander II, said:

The revolutionary man is a consecrated man. He has neither his own interest or concerns or feelings, no attachments or property, not even a name, all for him is absorbed in the single exclusive interest, in the one thought, in the one passion, "revolution."

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither defeat nor victory.

Theodore Roosevelt  
April 10, 1899

(source unknown)



## You Must Not Quit

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,  
 When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,  
 When the funds are low and the debts are high  
 And you want to smile but you have to sigh,  
 When care is pressing you down a bit,  
 Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is strange with its twists and turns  
 As every one of us sometimes learns.  
 And many a failure turns about  
 When he might have won had he stuck it out.  
 Don't give up though the pace seems slow;  
 You may succeed with another blow!

Success is failure turned inside out,  
 The silver tint of the clouds of doubt;  
 And you never can tell just how close you are;  
 It may be near when it seems so far.  
 So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit;  
 When things seem worst, you must not quit.

We are not of those who draw back.

Hebrews 10:39

(From a Hallmark card)

v. 1 Therefore, since we are having 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 be running with perseverance the race lying before us,

The word "THEREFORE" could be translated "FOR THAT VERY REASON THEN."

It points us back to:

### Hebrews 10:35-39

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which is having a great reward. For you are having need of perseverance, in order that, having done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul is having no pleasure in him. But we are not of the shrinking back kind to destruction, but of those who are having faith to the preserving of the soul.

The apostle, having made the statements in chapter 10 about needing perseverance, follows that exposition by a lengthy proof of the effectiveness of persevering faith to enable its possessor to:

DO WHATEVER GOD COMMANDS HOWEVER DIFFICULT,  
ENDURE WHATEVER GOD APPOINTS, HOWEVER SEVERE, and  
OBTAIN WHAT HE PROMISES, HOWEVER SEEMINGLY  
UNATTAINABLE.

He does this with a host of illustrations in the GREAT HALL OF FAITH of Hebrews 11. He recounts the lives of a host of those who have been effective in their perseverance, who have been victorious in their faith. In recounting each of these he is issuing the challenge for present perseverance to these Christians who are facing a difficult time.

"THEREFORE" that is, because God has provided something better for us (11:40) and that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets all persevered through to a victorious faith.

"WE [also] ARE HAVING SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES SURROUNDING US."

These people made it so can we!

The apostle is including himself in this when he says, "LET US ALSO" and then he makes reference to this "GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES SURROUNDING US."

The word "SINCE" points to our:

OBLIGATION and RESPONSIBILITY.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The life of faith has been amply attested by this **great cloud of Old Testament witnesses**. (This does not mean that they watch believers today.) Hence believers ought to **run with perseverance . . . the race marked out** in their Christian lives, setting aside whatever **hinders and the sin that so easily entangles** ([that is] "ambushes or encircles").  
p. 809

We raise the question, What is it that ought to motivate us to continue to endure to the full realization of God's plan and purpose in our lives? It ought to be fact that there is a host of these aforementioned names of those who have been faithful. Those who have been successful in living the kind of life that expresses the victorious will of God and they "SURROUNDING US" with their witness ought to motivate us to pursue the path of present perseverance.

Looking at from the:

PAST,

PRESENT, and

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE.

Looking at it from the PAST--others did.

Looking at it from the PRESENT--we have an intense passion and desire to do well in accomplishing the will of God.

Looking to the FUTURE--we have a wonderful hope and we also need to have something to talk about with others who finished the course.

(Life is Tremendous! By Charles E. Jones)

Wouldn't it be great if life were a game? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the field of life had cheering sections on each side, and when we reached the impossible situation and didn't know how to go on and no one understood us and we're about ready to fold and say those terrible words, "I quit," wouldn't it be wonderful if the stands would come alive and they'd yell, "Charlie, boy, keep on going; we're with you!" I'd say, "Whooooo! That's all I needed." Boy, I'd go on down the field to another touchdown!

p. 54

(Let Me Illustrate: Stories, Anecdotes, Illustrations by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

The first time a recruit of the United States Marines walks out in his uniform, he pulls himself a little taller. From the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli the cloud of witnesses moves before him. The splendor of names fill his memory--Guadalcanal, Saipan, Okinawa; he knows he belongs to a proud first-rate outfit.

When God tells us we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1), we must not think that our departed loved ones are watching us--conscious of our secrets and our failures--for the next logical idea would be to pray to them. The cloud of witnesses is real, yet invisible. The Christian may be sneered at by little minds and sinful hearts, but he holds himself straight. Abel is whispering in his ear; Enoch is walking behind him; his Father Abraham is setting an example of faith; he knows he marches to join that host.

pp. 67-68

According to this passage, we are surrounded in the unseen stands of the coliseum with the host of those who bear testimony to us of a:

RACE WELL-RUN,

COURSE COMPLETED, and

VICTORY AT THE FINISH LINE.

This should be the great motivation to us that we too would be found faithful carrying to completion the will and purpose of God for our lives.

I will always remember a moment of inspiration when I was leading a Bible Lands tour. We were in the city of Athens and I had a chance to run some miles in the Olympic stadium there in Athens. As I looked up at those empty seats I could see in my mind's-eye so many of the saints who have run before who have now completed their race and are bearing witness to the fact that it is possible to complete and to finish the course set before us.

In both respects as CONQUERORS and SUFFERERS this vast host witnessed to the power and faithfulness of God and those who regard them can not but be strengthened by their testimony.

The consideration of these great achievers in chapter 11 leads to this exhortation to perseverance especially in light of the greatest witness of all, even Jesus Christ.

It is the Father's will that I finish in 3 AREAS. I finish with my:

1. WORK
2. WIFE
3. WITNESS

These "WITNESSES" by their victorious lives have borne personal testimony to the faith.

These "WITNESSES" are earlier contestants whose example we may well follow.

The word "CLOUD" here does not refer to just a single cloud, but a great mass of clouds and thus the picture is of a vast innumerable company of those who have gone before us and have been faithful in bearing witness to God's:

GOODNESS,

GRACE, and

ABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE IN THEIR LIVES.

Wiersbe says:

One of the best ways to develop endurance and encouragement is to get to know the godly men and women of the Old Testament who ran the race and won. If you are having problems with your family, read about Joseph. If you think your job is too big for you, study the life of Moses. If you are tempted to retaliate, see how David handled this problem.

p. 135

Draper says:

Nobody in the bible took out retirement insurance. They never expected to live until retirement. They expected they would burn out for God. God had started them in a race, and it never occurred to them that they might be able to rest. God speaks to our hearts and says, "My son, you are in my hands, I have a task for you. I have a race for you to run."  
p. 341

Westcott says:

The writer regards himself and his fellow Christians as placed in an arena and contending for a great prize. The image of the amphitheatre with the rising rows of spectators seems to suggest the thought of an encircling cloud. The witnesses of whom the cloud is composed are unquestionably the countless heroes of faith whose deeds have been summarised in c. xi. The testimony which they bear can only be the testimony which they bear to God, either by victorious achievements or by courageous sufferings, answering to that which He has wrought for and in them.  
p. 391

Hession says:

This verse grows directly out of the previous chapter giving the record of the men and women who endured by faith. This is shown not only by the first word *wherefore*, which obviously points us back to what has just gone before, but also by the clause "seeing we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses." This is not the picture of a stadium filled with spectators who are cheering and encouraging the runners on, as it is sometimes presented. It is rather a reference to that great company of men and women just mentioned, who were witnesses to the power of faith in their lives and to whom witness was borne by God. What an encouragement such a crowd of witnesses is to us, for we realize that we are not the only ones to have to endure what we are called upon to endure. Moreover, there is also a contemporary cloud of witnesses to encourage us. We do not have to look back only into history to find "the noble army of martyrs"; our own century is probably the age of martyrdom more than any previous one.  
pp. 188-9

Bruce, speaking of this crowd, says:

Not, probably, in the sense of spectators, watching their successors as they in their turn run the race for which they have entered; but rather in the sense that by their loyalty and endurance they have borne witness to the possibilities of the life of faith. It is not so much they who look at us as we who look to them--for encouragement. They have borne witness to the faithfulness of God; . . .

p. 323

I do not hold to the position that these who have run the race before us are conscious of what is going on in our lives down here on earth. I do not believe that the Greek text will sustain this argument, although there are those who feel that this is the case. I believe that the witness here is a witness to us by the biographies of their lives to motivate us to a continued path of endurance in the will of God.

They have already run the marathon of life and finished victoriously!

Their names are on the RING OF HONOR, THE HALL OF FAME. Their numbers and their jerseys are put aside to motivate the next generation and to remind them of what has been accomplished by these heroes of the past.

Owen says:

These witnesses testify to us that faith will carry believers safely through all that they may be called to do or suffer in the profession of the gospel; which even we, therefore, ought with all patience to abide in.

p. 243

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

The present competitors are the last to take part in a kind of gigantic relay race. They are being watched by huge multitudes who have already handed on the baton of faith and who are waiting as invisible spectators to encourage those who run last.

p. 212



It is kind of good for us to think in terms of a relay race and that we are running the anchor position. That we are those who certainly do not want to be characterized as dropping the baton.

Wiersbe says:

The people listed in chapter 11 are the "cloud" that witnesses to us, "God can be trusted! Put your faith in His Word and keep running the race!" When you read the Old Testament, your faith should grow, for the account shows what God did in and through people who dared to trust His promises (Rom. 15:4). When you read the Gospels, you see the greatest example of endurance in Jesus Christ.

*"You can judge the quality of their faith from the way they behave.  
Discipline is an index to doctrine."*

Tertullian

p. 821

G. Campbell Morgan says:

These people referred to as a cloud of witnesses are not described as watching us at all, but as speaking to us, witnessing to us.

p. 119

Pink says:

Here the apostle applies the various illustrations given in the preceding chapter, making use of them as a grand motive to perseverance in the Christian faith and state. "If all the saints of God lived, suffered, endured, and conquered by faith, shall not we also? If the saints who lived before the Incarnation, before the redemption was accomplished, before the High Priest entered the heavenly sanctuary, trusted in the midst of discouragements and trials, how much more ought we who know the name of Jesus, who have received the beginning, the installment of the great Messianic promise?" (A. Saphir).

pp. 397-8

Lenski says:

The first participle advances a motive: "having so great a cloud of witnesses all about us," namely all the believers mentioned in chapter 11. The figure of a cloud is not unusual to designate a great multitude, but *nephos* is a mass of cloud that covers the heavens and differs from *nephele*, a detached, single cloud.

p. 423

Hughes says:

The cloud of witnesses that fills the stadium are the great spiritual athletes of the past, Hall of Faith members--every one a Gold Medal winner. They are *not* live witnesses of the event, but "witnesses" by the fact that their past lives bear witness to monumental, persevering faith that, like Abel's faith, "still speaks, even though he is dead" (11:4).

Everywhere one looks in the vast arena, there is a kind face nodding encouragement, saying, "I did it, and so can you. You can do it. You have my life for it!" Moses strokes his long beard and smiles. Rahab winks and gives a royal wave.

Your heart is roundly pumping. You are afraid. And with all your being you want to do well.

p. 158

A. T. Robertson says:

The metaphor refers to the great amphitheatre with the arena for the runners and the tiers upon tiers of seats rising up like a cloud.

p. 432

Lane says:

In 12:1-3 the writer's intention is to apply to his audience the parenetic appeal implicit in the previous section. The theme of perseverance in faith is sustained. In 12:1, however, the emphasis is placed on "we ourselves," in contrast with "and all of these [attested witnesses]," in 11:39, which looks retrospectively at the preceding recital of those who were commended by God as faithful under the old covenant.

p. 407

Hewitt reminds us:

In the exhortation to run the race with patient endurance the author includes himself amongst the competitors. For their encouragement he points out that they are *compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses* who, by their victorious lives, have borne personal testimony to the faith.  
p. 189

Kistemaker says:

The author places himself on the same level as that of the readers. He is one with them, for he is a contestant, too. With his fellow contestants, he looks up at the stands and sees a multitude of spectators. The writer of Hebrews calls them "a great cloud of witnesses."  
p. 336

MacArthur says:

I do not believe that the **cloud of witnesses surrounding us** is standing in the galleries of heaven watching as we perform. The idea here is not that we should be faithful lest they be disappointed, or that we should try to impress them like a sports team trying to impress the fans in the bleachers. These are witnesses *to God*, not *of us*. They are examples, not onlookers. They have proved by their testimony, their witness, that the life of faith is the only life to live.  
p. 375

Stedman says:

It means that these people named in chapter 11 are saying something to us, they are testifying to us, they are witnesses in that sense. Their lives are saying that we ought to lay aside every weight, i.e., everything that hinders faith. You never say yes to Christ without saying no to something else! And the *sin which clings so closely*--what is that? That is unbelief. That is the failure to take revelation seriously. That is the sin which is mentioned all through Hebrews. And then what? *Run with patience, with perseverance, with persistence, keeping on no matter what happens.* How? By *looking unto Jesus*, that is the answer.

p. 207

Phillips says:

The picture set before us is that of a race. The names have been entered, but the course has not yet been run. This was exactly the position of many of the Hebrews to whom this letter was addressed. They had professed the faith but had not yet made any forward move. Indeed, some, seeing the formidable length of the course, the stiffness of the gradients, the hindrances strewn along the way, were about to withdraw. Their attention is therefore drawn to three things.

p. 190

"THEREFORE, SINCE WE ARE HAVING SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES SURROUNDING US."

The writer, identifying with the readers, says, "LET US" do 2 THINGS:

1. "LET US ALSO LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US" and
2. "LET US BE RUNNING WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE LYING BEFORE US."

There are 2 THINGS that we are CHALLENGED to "LAY ASIDE":

1. "EVERY ENCUMBRANCE" and
2. "THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGELS US."

What does the apostle mean by "LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE"?

This is:

an IMPEDIMENT,

a WEIGHT, and

a HINDRANCE.

You can not win if you are weighted down.

One of the biggest problems that we have as Christians is the problem of HANGING ON TO THE HINDRANCES that keep us from being effective. Those who run for a prize actually litter the course with garments that have been flung away in their eager haste.

### 2 Kings 7:15

They followed them as far as the Jordan, and they found the whole road strewn with the clothing and equipment the Arameans had thrown away in their headlong flight. So the messengers returned and reported to the king.

MacArthur says:

An **encumbrance** (*onkos*) is simply a bulk or mass of something. It is not necessarily bad in itself. Often it is something perfectly innocent and harmless. But it weighs us down, diverts our attention, saps our energy, dampens our enthusiasm for the things of God. We cannot win when we are carrying excess weight. When we ask about a certain habit or condition, "What's wrong with that?" the answer often is, "Nothing in itself." The problem is not in what the weight is but in what it does. It keeps us from running well and therefore from winning.



Kistemaker says:

[The author] . . . looks at the clothes we wear and the physical condition we are in. When we run a race, we dress in suitable sportswear designed to provide minimum weight and maximum comfort. And to qualify as runners, we strive to lose extra body fat by strengthening our muscles. That which is bulky in our bodies must disappear, for it hinders us in the race that we run. p. 366

Barclay says:

If we would travel far, we must travel light. There is in life an essential duty of discarding things. There may be habits, there may be pleasures, there may be self-indulgences, there may be associations which hold us back and hold us down. They have to be shed as the athlete sheds his outer cloak as he goes to the starting-mark. Whatever holds us back must go; and often we will need the help of Christ to enable us to let it go. p. 196

I remember well running in the Houston Marathon back in the early 80's on a cold January morning. The course was literally strewn with the garments of runners who were competing in the race.

Morgan says:

It is well for us to remember that we cannot tabulate these weights for other people. Something that may hinder me in running may not hinder my brother; and something which hinders him, may not hinder me. I venture to name one weight only, and it is the weight of trying to find out what my brother's weight is! A censorious criticism of my brother may hinder me in my devotion to the race. Indeed, too often we are hindered by endeavouring to remove the mote from the eye of another, while a beam is in our own. pp. 123-4

Owen says:

To "lay aside" is the word wherewith our duty with respect unto all vicious habits of mind, especially such as are effectual hindrances in our Christian course, is described; no one thing is named, but every thing, of what kind soever it be, which would hinder us in our race. We cannot take up our cross to follow Christ unless we first deny ourselves. This laying aside includes a willingness, a readiness, a resolution, to part with any and every weight cheerfully, for the sake of Christ and the gospel, if called thereunto; also a daily mortification of our hearts and affections unto all things which would act as a weight or hindrance.

p. 244

F. B. Meyer says:

No man would think of maintaining a high speed encompassed with weights. The lads who run for a prize litter the course with garments flung away in their eager haste. There would be little difficulty in maintaining an intense and ardent spirit if we were more faithful in dealing with the habits and indulgences which cling around us and impede our steps. Thousands of Christians are like water-logged vessels. They cannot sink; but they are so saturated with inconsistencies, and worldliness, and permitted evil, that they can only be towed with difficulty into the celestial port.

p. 43

Is there anything in your life which dissipates your energy from holy things, which disinclines you to the practice of prayer and Bible study, which rises before you in your best moments, and produces in you a general sense of uneasiness and disturbance?--something which others account harmless, and permit, and in which you once saw no cause for anxiety; but which you now look on with a feeling of self-condemnation? It is likely enough a "weight."

It may be a friendship which is too engrossing; a habit which is sapping away your energy as the taproot the fruit-bearing powers of a tree; a pursuit, an amusement, a pastime a system of reading, a method of spending time, too fascinating, and too absorbing, and therefore, harmful to the soul.

pp. 43-44



Westcott says:

The duty of the convert would be to free himself from associations and engagements which, however innocent in themselves, hindered the freedom of his action.

p. 393

One of the things that happens in the normal process of training for a marathon is weight loss. You are burning body fat and slimming down so that you might run the race with perseverance to the finish line.

I saw this little gem on the wall at my son's gymnastics class. It really challenged me as a pastor.

"If you want to perform like a champion, you must practice like one!"

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

### SINGLEMINDED

"This one thing I do, not these many things I dabble with."

--D. L. Moody  
(quoted in *World*, Dec 25, 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

### WORK OUT!

"Whereas physical exercise has temporal and physical effects, exercise in godliness has eternal and spiritual effects. Perhaps we can combine the two: by doing more deep knee bends in prayer, by laying aside the heavy weights and sins that beset us, by lifting up the name of Christ, by laboring in the Word, by bearing one another's burdens, and by running the course that is before us. Let's work out our salvation!"

--Terry Hagedorn  
(in *Today's Christian Preacher*, 1995)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)



## DROPPING THE WEIGHTS

Alexander Maclaren, that great preacher and theologian of the 19th century, said, "If we would run well on the Christian pathway, we must run light! To do that, we must constantly look to Jesus and not allow even so-called 'good things' to hinder us as we go forward for God."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives by Richard A. Swenson, M.D.)

Obesity, or the "rounding of America," is such a ubiquitous problem that one-fourth to one-half of all adults are on a diet at any given time. The list of best sellers always has at least two or three dieting books. One in five Americans is obese (defined as 20 percent above ideal body weight)--but twice that number *think* they are. What can't be dieted off is surgically removed, at an estimated one hundred tons each year. Over the last two decades, the incidence of childhood obesity is up 54 percent in ages six through eleven and 39 percent in ages twelve through seventeen. "More die in the United States of too much food than of too little," observes John Kenneth Galbraith.<sup>15</sup>

15. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), page 103.

p. 126

(Men: A Woman's Guide to Understanding a Man by Chuck Snyder)

Probably the hardest thing I've had to battle on a continuing basis is the pounds that keep accumulating around my middle. I agree with the person who said, "A waist is a terrible thing to mind." I hate being overweight, but I guess I don't hate it enough to do much about it. I did try exercise, because I saw all the ads in the newspaper that showed thin, muscular men and women who were exercise club regulars. I had always taken the verses seriously that say, "Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit. Bodily exercise is all right, but spiritual exercise is much more important and is a tonic for all you do" (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

p. 177

(Worms In My Tea: And Other Mixed Blessings by Becky Freeman & Ruthie Arnold)

During the drive home, I mentally went through what I would report to Scott. By this point, he was like a frightened rabbit when it came to the topic of my weight. There is nothing inoffensive a man can say to his wife who wants to lose a few pounds. If he says, "I love you just the way you are, Sweetheart," she cries, "And just *what* did you mean by that? What's *wrong* with the way I am?" If he tells her to go on a diet and promises he will support her in it, she replies, "If it's that important to you, you don't love *me*. You only care about how I look." If he says, "Hang the diet. It'll just make you cranky," she will accuse, "I wish just this once you'd be *supportive*!"

p. 103

These WEIGHTS and HINDRANCES could be anything that keeps us from winning. It could be:

DRINKING,  
SMOKING,  
T.V.,  
CREDIT CARDS,  
BANANA CREAM PIE,  
GOLF,  
BRIDGE,  
INDEBTEDNESS,  
PRIDE,  
GOSSIP,  
BITTERNESS,  
RESENTMENT,  
CIRCUMSTANCES,  
MUSIC, or  
FINANCES.

It is in these questionable areas of conduct for the Christian that we get many differences of opinion but we need to be reminded of Romans 14:5 that in these areas each is to be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Paul says in:

Philippians 3:8

. . . I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, . . .

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

FAILURE TO PREPARE IS PREPARATION FOR FAILURE.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

"LET US ALSO LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US."

Galatians 5:7

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Genesis 4:6, 7

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

The QUESTION we have raised is:

### WHAT IS THE APOSTLE REFERRING TO HERE?

In the context of the writings which we are studying in the book of Hebrews it is the SIN OF UNBELIEF. This is the reason they are being challenged to continue in faith and not to depart from it.

For us "THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES" is not only the sin of unbelief but the activities of the sin nature within us which so quickly surface in moments of stress and the activities of life.

Westcott says:

. . . the fatal facility with which this fence of evil custom hems us in. The sin by which we are practically encircled answers to the cloud of witnesses with which God surrounds us for our encouragement.  
p. 394

### Psalm 22:12

Many bulls surround me;  
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

F. B. Meyer says:

Surely it is most natural to hold that *the* sin which so closely clings to us is nothing else than the sin of unbelief, which is the opposite pole to the faith so highly eulogized.

There is a kind of unbelief which should not meet with sympathy, but rebuke. It is sin which needs to be repented of as sin, to be resisted as sin, and to receive as sin the cleansing of Christ.

p. 44

Bruce says:

Our author is not referring so much to some specific sin, but to sin itself, as something which will inevitably encumber the runner's feet and trip him up before he has taken more than a step or two.

p. 336

Bruce translates the phrase "EASILY ENTANGLES" as:

... "easily distracting" in this context. Anything that distracts an athlete from the contest in which he is competing will quickly put him out of the running.

p. 336

Hughes says:

Perhaps you have seen it yourself while lying on the grass by a sundew plant when a fly lights on one of its leaves to taste one of the glands that grow there. Instantly, three crimson-tipped, finger-like hairs bend over and touch the fly's wings, holding it firm in a sticky grasp. The fly struggles mightily to get free, but the more it struggles, the more hopelessly it is coated with adhesive. Soon the fly relaxes, but to its fly-mind "things could be worse," because it extends its tongue and feasts on the sundew sweetness while it is held even more firmly by still more sticky tentacles. When the captive is entirely at the plant's mercy, the edges of the leaf fold inward, forming a closed fist. Two hours later the fly is an empty sucked skin, and the hungry fist unfolds its delectable mouth for another easy entanglement. Nature has given us a terrifying allegory.

p. 159

A. T. Robertson says:

... (the sin standing around us). Probably this is the true idea here, "the easily encompassing (or surrounding) sin."

p. 433

Lane says:

Christians are always capable of being subverted by "the deceitful attractiveness of sin" (3:13*b*). One has only to reflect upon everyday compromises of faith in an effort to avoid conflict or to conform to the norms of the society at large. The writer warns his audience to guard against sin in any form because it will distract them, causing them to look away when they should be fixing their gaze upon Jesus (12:2).  
p. 409

Parker says:

Let us lay aside this well-stood-arounded sin. Here Moses stands up and says, I forsook that; I had the temptation offered to me, but I said, No. So Moses is amongst those who laid aside every weight and the well-stood-arounded sin, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. The very sin has been complimented--"the pleasures of sin for a season." The pleasures perish in the use; when we are about to seize the prize we grasp a bubble. There are pleasures that taste well in the mouth, but when they mix with the life they give it torture, they inflict agony upon it. "The pleasures of sin for a season." Do not be led away by those foolish teachers who would ask you to have a short life and a merry one. That is impossible. There is no short life.  
p. 209

MacArthur says:

An even more significant hindrance to Christian living is sin. Obviously all sin is a hindrance to Christian living, and the reference here may be to sin in general. But use of the definite article (**the sin**) seems to indicate a particular sin. And if there is one particular sin that hinders the race of faith it is unbelief, doubting God. Doubting and living in faith contradict each other. Unbelief **entangles** the Christian's feet so that he cannot run. It wraps itself around us so that we trip and stumble every time we try to move for the Lord, if we try at all. It **easily entangles us**. When we allow sin in our lives, especially unbelief, it is quite easy for Satan to keep us from running.  
p. 377



2 Timothy 2:3, 4

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

(The Life of God in the Soul of Man by Rev. Henry Scougal)

But now, amongst those things which we discover to be sinful, there will be some unto which, through the disposition of our nature, or long custom, or the endearments of pleasure, we are so much wedded, that it will be like cutting off the right hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them. But must we therefore sit down and wait till all difficulties be over, and every temptation be gone? This were to imitate the fool in the poet, who stood the whole day at the river-side, till all the water should run by. We must not indulge our inclinations, as we do little children, till they grow weary of the thing they are unwilling to let go. We must not continue our sinful practices, in hopes that the Divine grace will one day overpower our spirits, and make us hate them for their own deformity.

pp. 98-99

(Faith Under Fire: Standing Strong When Satan Attacks by Steven J. Lawson)

In the royal city of London, a world-famous animal trainer gave a command performance featuring his wild jungle beasts. All kinds of animals were involved--lions, tigers, elephants, horses, and other circus animals.

One act in particular was always certain to bring the crowd to its feet. It involved a boa constrictor--thirty-five feet long! The trainer had raised this huge snake for twenty-five years, since it was only a few days old. He had cared for it, fed it, and worked with it daily.

In this act, the trainer would lie down on the ground with his pet boa. The snake would then begin to wrap its long, strong tail around his body. The massive reptile was easily strong enough to crush the man into pieces, but it would always release him--just as it had been trained to do.

But one day in London, as the trainer performed with this powerful snake, the act took an unexpected turn for the worse. As always, the boa curled around his master again and again--when suddenly the reptile's true nature seemed to return.

Before the watching eyes of the startled crowd, the boa kept squeezing and squeezing . . . and squeezing. Only this time, it didn't uncoil and loosen its grip. It just kept squeezing.

The trainer screamed for help, but it was too late. Before the horrified crowd, the boa squeezed the life's breath out of its trainer and crushed him to death.

The man's pet had become his cruel master.  
pp. 117-18

(The Christian in Complete Armour by William Gurnall)

Scripture says God knows every secret sin. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Psalm 90:8). God sees secret sins as plainly as we see things at high noon. And He not only knows them but sets them up as targets for His arrows of vengeance.

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). He sees when you close your closet door to pray in secret and reward your sincerity; but He also sees when the door is closed for you to sin in secret--and He will not fail to reward your hypocrisy.  
(December 26)

## Unchecked Decay

Recently a huge tree in Colorado fell to the ground with a resounding crash after having stood majestically on a hill for more than 400 years. A mere sapling when Columbus landed in San Salvador, over the centuries it had been struck by lightning 14 times, braved great windstorms, and even defied an earthquake. In the end, however, it was killed by some little beetles. Boring under the bark, they chewed away its mighty fibers until one day that lordly king of the forest came thundering down. So, too, apparently insignificant sins often make substantial inroads into our spiritual lives, and if left unchecked may cause our downfall. The idle word spoken, the prayer time omitted, and the occasional fleshly pleasure indulged--these things "spoil" the vineyard much more than we realize. If Satan gets an entering wedge on inconsistency, the leverage he then exerts is greatly increased.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

It's hard to admit a mistake. But I'm not the only one with this problem.

Once when Fredrick II, an eighteenth-century king of Prussia, went on an inspection tour of a Berlin prison, he was greeted with the cries of prisoners, who fell on their knees and protested their unjust imprisonment. While listening to these pleas of innocence, Fredrick's eye was caught by a solitary figure in the corner, a prisoner seemingly unconcerned with all the commotion.

"Why are you here?" Frederick asked him.

"Armed robbery, Your Majesty."

"Were you guilty?" the king asked.

"Oh yes, indeed, Your Majesty. I entirely deserve my punishment."

At that Frederick summoned the jailer. "Release this guilty man at once," he said. "I will not have him kept in this prison where he will corrupt all the fine innocent people who occupy it."

--Lloyd H. Steffen, *The Christian Century*, April 29, 1987

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

Many years ago I decided to do that very thing. I was fed up with empty words and pharisaical phrases. In my search for new meaning, I came across this brief description of prayer, which I set on my desk and carried in the front of my Bible for years. I cannot locate the book from which it was taken, but I do know the author, a seventeenth-century Roman Catholic Frenchman named Francois Fenelon. Although written centuries ago, it has an undeniable ring of relevance:

Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you to conquer them, talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself and to others.

If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, troubles, there will be no lack of what to say. You will never exhaust the subject. It is continually being renewed. People who have no secrets from each other never want for subjects of conversation. They do not weigh their words, for there is nothing to be held back, neither do they seek for something to say. They talk out of the abundance of the heart, without consideration they say just what they think. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with God.

--*Strengthening Your Grip*, Charles Swindoll

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

"THEREFORE, SINCE WE ARE HAVING SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES SURROUNDING US:"

1. "LET US ALSO LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US."

We have been considering the TRAINING for the race, the things that have to be taken care of before we can be involved in a prize winning performance.

We come now to the SECOND COMMAND in the verse:

2. "LET US BE RUNNING WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE LYING BEFORE US."

The FIRST COMMAND was:

1. "LET US ALSO LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US"

and now the 2ND COMMAND is:

2. "LET US BE RUNNING WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE LYING BEFORE US."

Speaking of Moses back in chapter 11:27 we read:

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered, as seeing Him who is invisible.

Philippians 3:13, 14

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The FUTURE PROSPECT should lead to a PRESENT PERSEVERANCE.

Griffith Thomas says:

This combination of special effort with determined endurance is very striking. It is a reminder of the three aspects of life set forth by the prophet (Isa. 40:31), mounting up, running, and walking. It is not difficult to put forth special exertion; the real test of life is the steady, normal progress of the soul--"not paroxysms of effort but steady endurance."

p. 156

Barclay has this to say about the word "PERSEVERANCE":

That word does not mean the patience which sits down and accepts things; it does not mean the weary patience which sits with bowed head and folded hands and mind resigned and lets the tide of things flow over it and past it. It means the patience which masters things. This means which we possess is no romantic thing; it is not something which lends us wings to fly over the difficulties and the hard places. It is that determination, unhasting and unrelenting, unhurrying and yet undelaying, which goes steadily on, and which refuses to be deflected. Obstacles will not daunt it; delays will not depress it; discouragements will not take its hope away. It will halt neither for discouragement from within nor for opposition from without. It is the steadfast endurance which will carry on until in the end it gets there.  
pp. 196-7

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

In this race the competitors are not being asked to put on a final spurt to the finishing-post, but doggedly to go on going on in the long-distance race of life.  
p. 214

I have a couple of pictures in my office from my marathoning days.

One of them says:

WE DRENCH OURSELVES WITH THE GRACE OF EXHAUSTION  
AND THE ECSTASY OF KNOWING WE ARE WORTHY TO RECEIVE  
IT.

The other says:

THE RUNNER WHO PUTS THE LAST OUNCE OF EFFORT INTO  
THE RACE FEELS THE GLORIOUS SATISFACTION OF HAVING  
EVERYTHING TO THE MOMENT.

Macaulay says:

That patience, endurance, and stamina are required is emphasized by the word used here for "race." It is the origin of our word "agony." Primarily signifying a gathering for contests, it then was used of the contests themselves, and, since these were of the severest sort, the word took on the connotation of struggle, exertion, anguish. In this last sense we took it over into our language. The running, then, is not the slow double that we used to do round the parade ground in training days, but it is total effort.  
p. 211

Pink says:

Believers are likened to shining lights, branches of the vine, soldiers, strangers and pilgrims: the last-mentioned more closely resembling the figure employed in our text, but with this difference: travellers may rest for awhile, and refresh themselves, but the racer must *continue* running or he ceases to be a "racer."  
p. 398

The "race" is that life of faith and obedience, that pursuit of personal holiness, to which the Christian is called by God. Turning from sin and the world in penitence and trust to Christ is not the finishing-post, but only the starting-point. The Christian race begins at the new birth, and ends not till we are summoned to leave this world.  
p. 399

Hession says:

Paul at the close of his life did not say, "I have finished ahead of all the other Christians," but simply, "I have finished my course." Not everyone who starts on a cross-country race stays the course, but Paul had done so, and that was enough for him to receive the Master's "Well done" --when all too many others had dropped out and finally turned back. It was that possibility of dropping out that leads the apostle to emphasize our theme word: "Let us run with *endurance* the race set before us."  
p. 190

On the NEGATIVE side of things, we are to:

"LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US."

On the POSITIVE side, we are commanded:

"LET US BE RUNNING WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE LYING BEFORE US."

We can say it is: PERSEVERING THE AGONY.

Amos 6:1

Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, . . .

(Only Angels Can Wing It: The Rest of Us Have to Practice by Liz Curtis Higgs)

Annie Chapman, in *Smart Women Keep It Simple*, reminds us that in the Greek games, "The winner of the race was the one who came in first--with his torch still lit."<sup>7</sup>

7. Annie Chapman with Maureen Rank, *Smart Women Keep It Simple* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1992), 167. p. 118

(Storms of Perfection: In Their Own Words by Andy Andrews)

Even as I write this, it is far easier to recall my successes than the failures I've experienced. We all tend to forget the tough times. Children especially, I believe, sometimes see success as a "lucky lottery ticket" that one chances upon. And that is why I think it important to note, that in my case, I was thirty-one years old. Thirty-one years of hearing "no." Thirty-one long years before the acceptance began. And that even in my darkest moments, I knew instinctively that my unyielding drive was my most valuable asset. Perseverance, my dear, will always be just as important--important as talent.

Never stop believing! Never give up! Never quit! Never.

Joan Rivers



(Entertainer)

(2nd Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul, A: 101 More Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit by Jack Canfield & Mark Victor Hansen)

*The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome. The hilltop hour would not be half so wonderful if there were no dark valleys to traverse.*

Helen Keller

p. 249

(Prayer, Praise & Promises: A Daily Walk Through the Psalms by Warren W. Wiersbe)

You may look ahead and say, "I'll never make it." But you will. He gives you the strength to keep going as you make your pilgrimage.



*You, too, look in three directions in your pilgrimage. It is often a difficult journey, but God will give you the strength to continue and progress. In your heart you have a road map to Zion. Follow it, and one day you will meet the living God face to face.*

Day 211

"THE RACE LYING BEFORE US" is God's will and purpose which He has appointed as the course for our lives.

"THE RACE [of His will is] LYING BEFORE US" and the CHALLENGE is to experience the joy of the fulfillment of this will in our lifetime.

The big problem that a lot of us have is the problem of deciding whether or not this is something that we really want and whether we might be missing something if we committed ourselves wholeheartedly to the race. We are a lot like the little girl who acknowledged a gift she had received at Christmas from her aunt. "Thank you for your present. I have always wanted a pin cushion but not very much."

Many Christians act this way about the will of the Lord. They are so filled with their own desires that they do not want what He sends. The whole Word teaches us that He reserves His best gifts for those who delight to do His will.

The Christian life is truly a race. It is going somewhere and it is our responsibility to lead, follow, or get out of the way.

This "RACE":

BEGINS when we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and we are born again into His family.

It ENDS when we are called into His presence.

The man who goes down swinging is very admirable; but the man to watch out for is the one who gets up swinging.

--D. O. Flynn

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

v. 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the originator and perfecter of faith, who for the joy lying before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

"Lay[ing] aside" is the KEY to TRAINING FOR THE RACE.

"Run[ning] with perseverance" is the actual CONTEST.

"FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS" is the GOAL.

"FIXING" has the idea of FOCUSED ATTENTION.

JESUS IS THE SOURCE AND GOAL OF FAITH.

Whereas, we have the:

HUMAN MODELS BEHIND us and

DIVINE MODEL in FRONT of us.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Their supreme Model for this continued to be **Jesus**, however admirable any Old Testament figure might be. He is both **the Author and Perfecter of our faith**.

p. 809

A farmer was once asked how he won a plowing contest and he said:

"I FIXED MY EYES ON A TREE AT THE END OF THE ROW."

It all BEGINS with Jesus and it ENDS with Him as well. The writer says He is "THE ORIGINATOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH." He is the source and goal of faith.

It is He that is the:

ALPHA and OMEGA,

BEGINNING and the END,

SOURCE FOR THE FAITH by the fact that He came and gave His life and He is faith's goal, for soon we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

He is the:

GREAT LEADER,

FILE LEADER,

AUTHOR,

PIONEER, and

ONE WHO BLAZES THE TRAIL.

He is also the:

FINISHER,

PERFECT REALIZER OF FAITH, and

CONSUMATOR.

The One who fittingly cried upon the cross of Calvary, "Tetelestai," "it is finished," the cry of the Olympic runner when the tape has been broken in victory.

It is the Lord Jesus who endured, Who (hung in there) and Who accomplished the works which the Father had given Him to do.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The word "author" . . . was used in 2:10 and suggests that Jesus "pioneered" the path of faith Christians should follow. He also "perfected" the way of faith since He reached its end successfully.



Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the originator of their salvation through sufferings.

Pink says:

The more we are "looking unto Jesus" the easier will it be to "lay aside every weight." It is at this point so many fail. If the Christian denies self of different things *without an adequate motive (for Christ's sake)*, he will still secretly hanker after the things relinquished, or ere long return to them, or become proud of his little sacrifices and become self-righteous. The most effective way of getting a child to drop any dirty or injurious object, is to proffer him something better. The best way to make a tired horse move more quickly, is not to use the whip, but to turn his head toward home! So, if our hearts be occupied with the sacrificial love of Christ for us, we shall be "constrained" thereby to drop all that which displeases Him; and the more we dwell upon the Joy set before us, the more strength shall we have to run "with patience the race that is set before us."

p. 414

Macaulay says:

Only in Jesus has faith had its full expression and its full fruition. He is "the file-leader and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:2, author's trans.). At every step of our pilgrim journey, on every lap of our great race, He is the one who goes before, mapping out the way, all the way to the consummation at the throne of God.

pp. 214-15

Barclay says of Jesus:

He is at once the goal of our journey, and the companion of our way. He is at once the one whom we go to meet, and the one with whom we travel. The wonder of the Christian life is that we press on surrounded by the saints, oblivious to everything but the glory of the goal, and for ever in the company of Him who has already made the journey and who reached the goal, and who waits to welcome us when we reach the end.  
p. 197

Thomas says speaking of the word "leader":

It means the one who stands at the head of the long procession of those that believe. The word "finisher" means the one who has manifested faith in its complete form (10:14; 11:40). Christ showed in His life the perfect realization of faith.  
p. 157

Lane says:

The members of the house church are in the final and decisive stages of the race. Jesus is positioned at the finish line; like a runner, the Christian must intently focus on the goal of Jesus.  
p. 410

Lane, speaking on the 2 WORDS "ORIGINATOR" and "PERFECTER OF FAITH," says further:

. . . suggest that Jesus is the initiator and head of the rank and file in the order of faith, just as he is the one who brought faith to its ultimate expression. He was the first who expressed unqualified obedience to the will of God in a fallen world consigned to death, and so displayed the goal of faith as well as its paramount power (5:8; 10:5-10). The predicates express the conviction that from first to last Jesus exercised faith in an essential sense and brought it to its triumphant completion.  
p. 411



Hughes says:

Those who look away from Christ--the end-goal of our race--will never finish well. And this was exactly what was happening to some treading the stormy waters mounting around the early church. They had begun to take their eyes off Christ and to fix them instead on the hardships challenging them.  
p. 168

Westcott says:

To Him our eyes are to be turned while we look away from every rival attraction.  
p. 395

Owen says:

It is a mighty encouragement unto constancy and perseverance in believing that He in whom we believe is "the Author and Finisher of our faith;" He both begins it and carries it on unto perfection.  
p. 245

G. Campbell Morgan says:

Glancing back over chapter eleven, we read names: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and others, and at last JESUS. He is in the same line, in the same succession, the same humanity, and the same race. By a transcending act of literary inspiration, he says in effect, The Son of God Who is supreme and final, lived His life on the same level, and by the same principle that men are ever called to live.  
p. 128

He says further:

In those verses we have a vision of our Lord in the realm and region of His human life limned for us in a few brief sentences, every one of them flaming with glory, radiant with light. We may first summarize by saying the writer presents to us the picture of an ideal life. He was the Author and Vindicator of faith; then shows Him as mastered by a passion for the victory of God, "the joy that was set before Him," but further reveals His procedure upon the pathway. "He endured the Cross, despising the shame"; and finally He is presented in His absolute victory, He "sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

pp. 130-31

Morgan says further:

Now a file leader is one who goes first in the procession, the one who takes preëminence. The survey of the past began with Abel, and here reaches Jesus. The writer, however, declares that whereas historically at this point He was the last as to His relation to faith, He takes precedence over all that have gone before. He is the supreme Illustration in human life of what faith means, and of what faith does.

p. 132

Kistemaker says:

"Fix our eyes on Jesus." Immediately the refrain of the invitational hymn composed by Helen H. Lemmel comes to mind:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in his wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of his glory and grace.

pp. 367-8

Phillips says:

The word "looking is *aphorao*; it occurs only here and means "looking away from all else, looking at that which fills the heart." We are going to run, not because of the prize at the end and not because so many an illustrious saint has run the course in the past and has been gloriously crowned, but because the vision of Jesus thrills the soul.  
p. 191

Stedman says:

The secret of persistence is in this phrase, *looking unto Jesus*. The word means "looking away unto Jesus." Look at these men and women of faith, yes, but then look away unto Jesus. Why? Well, because He is the author and finisher of our faith. He can begin it and He can end it, complete it. He is the pioneer, He has gone on ahead. He is also the perfecter of faith. He Himself ran the race. He laid aside every weight, every tie of family and friends. Every restraining hand He brushed aside that He might resolutely walk with God. He set His face against the popular sin of unbelief and walked on in patient perseverance, trusting the Father to work everything out for Him. He set the example.  
p. 208

Hewitt says:

Having brought to their remembrance the many examples of patient endurance through vision of the unseen, the author now urges them to look away from external Judaism, to *Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*.  
p. 190

Lenski says:

We may see many things to dishearten us to continue the running, even to halt us entirely, but by ever keeping our eyes upon the originator and completer of the faith our speed will increase rather than lessen, our stamina will grow rather than fade out.  
p. 426

Lenski says further:

From start to finish we need the divine Christ as the One who can fill us with faith, keep us in faith, and finally crown our faith.  
p. 428

Richards says:

A discouraging picture? It's not meant to be. It is meant to be a realistic picture of what faith's commitment costs. But it's not a discouraging picture. Why? Because of our eyes fixed on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. If our eyes were fixed on *ourselves*, it would be discouraging. We have no inner resources to enable us to live this kind of life. But Jesus is the source of our faith-life. *We depend on Him*. And Jesus is the goal toward whom faith moves us. As we run, we become more and more like Him.

Because of Jesus, our race is one of growing joy.  
pp. 127-8

Lange quotes Rieger who says:

Faith does not sleep, but watches and runs; yet neither does it hasten; but it waits in patience, and thus the prescribed conflict is accomplished, extremes on both sides avoided, and the way of truth preserved.--Faith looks to Jesus Christ, and is thus drawn into his footsteps.  
p. 199

Wuest says:

Having presented a catalog of Old Testament witnesses to the efficacy of faith, the writer now speaks of Messiah, the Jehoshua of the Old Testament, the Jesus of the New, God Himself incarnate in human flesh. He uses Him as the supreme example to which his readers should look as they run life's race.  
p. 214

Morgan says:

He is the File-Leader and the One Whose revelation of it in its working is the final vindication of the principle in all human life. These are the technicalities to which I referred.

p. 171

We are not to do so, keeping our eye upon Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham! What then are we to do? "Looking unto Jesus." We are to see the witnesses, we are to listen to them. We are to listen to the testimony of their lives which gives force and fertility to faith, but we are to look to Him.

pp. 172-3

Morgan, commenting further on the word "LOOKING," says:

The root idea of the word is one that expresses the fact that there is a vision which will surprise, a vision which will capture, a vision that will master; and it emphasizes what I am trying to say here. We are not to fix our eyes upon the saints of the past either in the old economy or the new. We are to look off from them, "looking off unto Jesus."

That word is enough to hold us for a long time. I am not going to stay, but there have been times when I have wished that the lives of the saints had never been written. They are often very discouraging. They are not helpful always. They have their values. I have read with great delight the story of Madame Guyon and others of the mystic saints; but they are very disappointing and discouraging. Look off, quit looking at these saints of the past. Quit looking at the saints of the Christian era. Quit looking at the saints that you know. Look off; there is one point where the vision may be perfectly satisfied, "Looking off unto Jesus."

pp. 173-4

Morgan says still further:

"Looking off." That is where I finish. "Looking off." God turn our eyes away from beholding man and men, the highest and the noblest and the best. If we look there we shall sooner or later be disappointed. If we look at ourselves we shall be worse than disappointed. "Looking off," see the witnesses. Yes, they are there, they are talking to us, they are speaking to us. See them, and then stop looking at them. "Looking off unto Jesus." pp. 178-9

"FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE ORIGINATOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY LYING BEFORE HIM."

What is this "JOY LYING BEFORE HIM"? It is the anticipation of what is ahead although things are rough right now.

It might be the:

GORY now, but it is going to be the GLORY later.

SACRIFICE now, but SATISFACTION at a future time.

CROSS now, but the CROWN is coming.

What is "THE JOY LYING BEFORE HIM"? It is the joy that is set before us.

It is the THREE "F's":

1. FAITHFULNESS,
2. FINISHING, and
3. FRUITFULNESS.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

He kept His eye on **the joy set before Him**, the "joy" alluded to in 1:9 wherein He obtained an eternal throne. The Believers' share in that joy must also be kept in view. After enduring . . . **the cross and scorning its shame**, Jesus assumed that triumphant position **at the right hand of the throne of God . . .** which presages His and the believers' final victory (cf. 1:13-14).  
p. 810

Morgan raises the QUESTION:

What, then, was His joy? In answer to that we are reminded of the prophetic word:

*"I delight to do Thy will, O My God."*

His personal joy was ever that of doing that will. All His ethical ideals were interpretations of that will. The passion of His heart was to bring men into submission to that will. His prayers sought it, as did that which He taught us to pray:

*"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done."*

Through all the mists and the gloom that lay along the valleys, through the unfathomable darkness of His Cross, He ever saw the dawning of the day when God's will should be done on earth as in heaven. That was the joy set before Him.  
pp. 134-5

Bruce says:

It is not difficult to trace an affinity between the joy of which our author speaks here and the joy to which Jesus himself makes repeated reference in the upper room discourses of the Fourth Gospel. He tells his disciples there of his desire that his joy may be in them, so that their joy may be complete (John 15:11; cf. 16:20, 21, 22, 24); and in his high-priestly prayer he asks the Father "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). So here, "the joy set before him" is not something for himself alone, but something to be shared with those for whom he died as sacrifice and lives as high priest.  
p. 339

We read in the rest of the verse that He did 3 THINGS in view of "THE JOY LYING BEFORE HIM." He has:

1. "ENDURED THE CROSS,"
2. "DESPISING THE SHAME," and
3. "SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD."

The 3 VERBS SUMMARIZE the work of the Incarnation. He:

1. "ENDURED,"
2. "IS DESPISING," and
3. "SAT DOWN."



Because of "THE JOY LYING BEFORE HIM" there are 3 THINGS that are considered about Him as our Model:

1. "[He] ENDURED THE CROSS."

This is something that He would have from a human point of view like to have avoided.

Matthew 26:39

"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

"[He] ENDURED THE CROSS."

He bore the cross until the cross bore Him and He poured out His life as a sacrifice for sin upon it.

2. "[He is] DESPISING THE SHAME."

It was not an easy thing to be made an open spectacle before mankind. To die in the public eye, Jesus, "DESPISING THE SHAME" however, continued through to victory.

3. "AND HAS SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD."

Jesus never stopped running until He could sit down. He finished a course that was set before Him. He hung in there, He stayed with it until He completed the race.

Psalms 16:11

You have made known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

It does not represent the repose of an athlete after running his race so much as Jesus' permanent glorification in heaven after his humiliating and truly

human death on earth. This is the abiding theme and the theological presupposition of the whole Epistle.  
p. 215

Lane says:

The exemplary fidelity of Jesus and its consequence is stressed to encourage the community, undergoing its own ordeal, in a resolve to persevere in faithfulness. The session at the right hand is the guarantee of the absoluteness of Christ's exaltation and the utter security of those who have placed their hope in him . . .  
p. 415

### The Will that Wins

The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.

--Vincent T. Lombardi

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

(Chicken Soup for the Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit by Jack Canfield & Mark Victor Hansen)

Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.

*Henry Ford*

p. 225

(2nd Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul, A: 101 More Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit by Jack Canfield & Mark Victor Hansen)

“Think you can, think you can’t--either way you’re right!”

“If you can see the obstacles, you’ve taken your eyes off the goal.”

p. 192

(The Message: Psalms by Eugene H. Peterson)

Psalm 141

But Yahweh, dear Lord,  
 I only have eyes for you.  
 Since I've run for dear life to you,  
 take good care of me.

p. 190

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ and He shows me His plan  
 for me,

The plan of my life as it might have been, had He had His way,  
 And I see how I blocked Him here and checked Him there,

And I would not yield my will,  
 Will there be grief in my Saviour's eyes,  
 Grief though He loves me still,

He would have me rich,  
 But I stand there poor, stripped of all but His grace,  
 While memory runs like a hunted thing,

Down the paths that I can not retrace,  
 Then my desolate heart will well nigh break with the tears I can not  
 shed,

I shall cover my face with my empty hands and bow my uncrowned head  
 Lord of the years that are left of me,

I give them to thy Hand,  
 Take me and break me,  
 Mold me to the pattern that thou hast planned.

v. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, in order that you do not grow weary, giving out in your souls.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary sets apart verses 3-11 with the title:

#### THE REMINDER THAT THINGS ARE NOT AS BAD AS THEY SEEM

Nothing is more natural for a person than to overestimate the severity of his trials. The writer did not want his audience to do that.

If they would **consider** the **opposition from sinful men** which Jesus confronted and **endured**, . . . they would be encouraged. After all, unlike Him, they had **not yet resisted . . . to the point of** bloodshed.  
p. 810

Lane says:

The writer was concerned pastorally that the men and women he addressed might "become weary and lose heart" prior to completing their course. Jesus had not allowed the hostile opposition of sinful men to wear him down but had triumphed over it. The tendency of the community, however, was to become fatigued. Their courage and readiness to identify themselves with Jesus faltered. Seeking to avoid suffering, they could fall. Consideration of the disposition and attainment of Jesus points out the element of struggle and the endurance required. What is called for is stamina and the determination to "go the distance" in order to attain the goal.  
p. 417

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

Both the Greek verbs used here are employed by Aristotle to describe the physical collapse of a runner after he has finished his race (*Rhet.* 3. 9. 2). The best way to avoid spiritual catastrophe in mid-career is to fix attention on the example of Jesus under test.  
p. 217

Bruce says:

Christ has thus become his people's supreme inspirer of faith. When they become weary on the way, and grow faint at heart because there seems no end to the trials they have to endure, let them consider him. He suffered uncomplainingly the hostility and malevolence of sinful people; the recipients of this epistle had not been called upon to endure anything like their Master's sufferings.

p. 340

In verse 2 the writer says to be:

"fixing our eyes on Jesus [as the One who] endured the cross."

In verse 3 the writer says:

"FOR CONSIDER HIM WHO HAS ENDURED SUCH HOSTILITY BY SINNERS AGAINST HIMSELF."

Stedman says:

The author of this letter has reviewed the exciting facts about Christian faith, and now in this twelfth chapter he comes to the practical exhortations that follow the presentation he has made. What he has to say is, "Never give up. You have started right," he says, "now hang on, never give up." It is all summarized in one verse.

p. 211

Owen says:

It is faith that stirs up and engageth spiritual courage, resolution, patience, perseverance, prayer,--all preserving graces and duties. Here lies the beginning of all spiritual declension, in the want of a due exercise of faith in all these graces and duties. The great means of our preservation from this evil frame of growing weary and fainting is the diligent consideration of the Person of Christ and His sufferings. He endured "*such contradiction of sinners against Himself*;" it was "*such*" contradiction; so bitter, so severe, so cruel; whatever the malicious wits of men or suggestions of Satan could invent, that was venomous and evil.

p. 247

Westcott says:

The example of the triumph of Christ through suffering leads to a further consideration of the work of suffering for the Christian. Suffering is essentially a divine discipline. Under this aspect the author shews that the contemplation of Christ's victory through suffering brings sovereign support in affliction.

p. 396

Two thoughts are suggested by the consideration of Christ's sufferings (3). The sufferings of the Hebrews were relatively slight (4); and all sufferings which come from God are the wise discipline of a Father (5, 6).

p. 396

Thomas says:

THE THOUGHT of spiritual athletics is here continued with special reference to our Lord's endurance. Believers are further incited to continue, notwithstanding all the hardships. "Who dares turn back in the face of this magnificent throng?"

p. 158

"Consider him." The word means to compare, to weigh in the balance. It is only found here in the New Testament, and is literally identical with our word "analogy." It seems to suggest that the experience of the suffering believers to whom the Epistle was written was "analogous" to our Lord's experiences.

pp. 158-9

A. T. Robertson says of this word "CONSIDER":

[It is a ] First aorist middle imperative . . . [it is an] old word to reckon up, to compare, to weigh, only here in the N.T.

p. 434

Draper says:

As a result, the writer of Hebrews declares, "Consider Jesus. You do not have it as bad as he did." Jesus Christ becomes the pattern we are to follow. We have not yet given up our lives, but he poured out his blood in his suffering. Yet it was through his suffering that the greatest blessing mankind has ever known came.  
p. 343

Delitzsch translates the phrase:

... "weigh well the sufferings which your Lord endured;" but as the importance of the sufferings is here so greatly enhanced by the dignity of the Sufferer, he says, "Consider *Him*" ...  
p. 308

These Hebrew Christians must look up to the divine example of all patience in order not to faint or waver in their course, for the hardest trials have not yet befallen them: ...  
p. 309

Pink says:

To strengthen the hearts of those tried Hebrews, the apostle bade them consider the case of Christ Himself: *He* encountered far worse sufferings than we do, yet He patiently "endured" them (v. 3). Then they were reminded that their case was by no means desperate and extreme--they had not yet been called to suffer a death of martyrdom. Finally, their very difficulties were the loving chastisement of their Father, designed for their profit (vv. 5-11). By what a variety of means does the blessed Spirit strengthen, stablish, and comfort tried believers!  
p. 11



. . . draw[ing] an analogy between *His* sufferings and *yours*, and what proportion is there between them! Weigh well *who* He was, the place He took, the infinite perfection of His character and deeds; and then the base ingratitude, the gross injustice, the cruel persecution He met with. Calculate and estimate the constancy of the opposition He encountered, the type of men who maligned Him, the variety and intensity of His sore trials, and the spirit of meekness and patience with which He bore them. And what are *our* trifling trials when compared with *His* agonies, or even to our *deserts*! O my soul blush with shame because of thy murmurings.  
p. 12

The PURPOSE BEHIND THE ADMONITION for them to consider the curriculum that Christ faced in His sacrifice is seen in the last phrase:

"IN ORDER THAT YOU DO NOT GROW WEARY, GIVING OUT IN YOUR SOULS."

#### Galatians 6:9

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

#### Jeremiah 12:5

If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?

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

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

By "sin" the author probably primarily meant that of "sinful men" who opposed them, but doubtless also had their own sin in mind, which they had to resist in order to maintain a steadfast Christian profession.  
p. 810

You are looking away to Him who gives strength to resist and to conquer. Do not relax before the tape, stay on your feet until you get to the end. Bear with it because others have, and Jesus did, and recognize the whole purpose for what the Lord is doing in your life.

**YOUR CHRISTIAN PROFESSION HAS NOT YET COST YOU YOUR LIFE!**

2 Corinthians 4:17, 18

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The REASON the apostle wants us to consider the example of Jesus Christ our Savior in the matter of endurance is so that:

**WE MAY NOT GROW TIRED BY RELAXING IN OUR SOULS.**

To realize the fact that OUR RESPONSIBILITY is to:

We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work (John 9:4).

Stedman says:

To these harassed, persecuted Christians, tempted (as we often are) with discouragement, the writer says, "Do not look at the dark side, look at the bright side; there is something good about discipline. First of all, it could be worse!" That is always encouraging, is it not?  
p. 213

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

So far in this chapter the imagery of the race-course has been employed. The metaphor of the stadium is still retained, but here the ring has been substituted for the track. Boxing formed part of Greek games as well as running; and in those days the pugilists' leather gloves were spiked with metal so that boxing was an even more dangerous and bloody sport than it is now. Our author reminds his readers that they have not as yet met with serious opposition.  
p. 217

Lane says:

The image in v 4, however, is decidedly more combative. It is no longer the footrace that is in view but the boxing arena, involving bloodshed and even death (for a similar shift in metaphor, see 1 Cor 9:24, 26). The sudden change in metaphor together with the shift in focus from Christ to the community signals the introduction of a new paragraph (12:4-11), in which the writer will clarify the meaning and purpose of disciplinary sufferings in the life of the new people of God.  
p. 417

Hewitt says:

Verses 4-13 cover the subject of God's chastisement. The readers are reminded that though they have suffered severely, they have not been required to seal their faith by martyrdom (4). The chastisement of God is a sign of sonship, and there is always a divine purpose behind it (5-13).  
p. 192

Phillips says:

This section shows the need for chastening as a spiritual discipline in life, for, if the race is to be won and our hope to be realized, God has to bring pressure upon us in certain areas of our lives to help us get rid of weights and sins.  
p. 192

Kistemaker says:

The metaphor in this verse--"resisted to the point of shedding your blood"--comes from the sports arena. The author goes from one sport to the other, from the imagery of the race to that of boxing. In boxing, blood flows from the faces of the contestants when they withstand vicious blows. At times serious injuries result in death.  
p. 372

Hession says:

O God, forgive us for feeling hurt and resentful over issues which are mere trifles compared with all our Father went through for us. O God, have mercy on us for we have "become wearied and faint in our minds" and have wanted to turn back, when the great Captain of our salvation went on and on and on!  
p. 193

Like the ENERGIZER BUNNY:

HE JUST KEPT GOING, AND GOING, AND GOING.

(Final Call by Steven J. Lawson)

Let's face it, we don't handle prosperity well. Only in crassly materialistic America can you turn on the radio and hear prosperity preachers pampering the unbridled lusts of carnal people, saying, "God will make you rich. God will make you wealthy if you just have faith and trust God."

The greatest blessing that could ever happen to the cause of Christ might be for the American church to be persecuted. Someone has said, "The problem with Christians these days is no one wants to kill them anymore." Such persecution would melt us down to the bare essentials of what it means to be a genuine follower of Christ.

p. 105

v. 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, stop regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor giving out when you are being rebuked (corrected) by Him;

In verse 3 we saw the PURPOSE:

"For consider [Christ] . . . in order that you do not grow weary, giving out in your souls."

Here we see:

"GIVING OUT WHEN YOU ARE BEING REBUKED."

Proverbs 12:1

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.

DISCIPLINE IS DESIGNED TO BRING THE SPIRIT OF BROKENNESS.

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart,  
O God, you will not despise.

Proverbs 13:18

He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever  
heeds correction is honored.

Proverbs 13:24

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to  
discipline him.

Verses 5 and 6 are a QUOTATION of:

Proverbs 3:11, 12

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his  
rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son  
he delights in.

"MY SON, STOP REGARDING LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE  
LORD."

In other words, the CHALLENGE here is from a:

POSITIVE POINT OF VIEW to be TAKING IT SERIOUSLY.

The SUFFERING and CIRCUMSTANCES in our lives are designed as a:

CURRICULUM TO MAKE US MORE CHRISTLIKE.

We ought to take these things very seriously.



Isaiah 43:1, 2

... "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Whereas, in verse 4 he says:

"you have not resisted to the point of shedding blood."

Now in verse 5 he says:

"YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THE EXHORTATION."

This "EXHORTATION" is made to us as sons. We are in relationship in God's family. We are His sons and daughters.

To fail to discipline would be to show a lack of love and responsibility. A very important part of the Christian life is to recognize that the Lord is dealing with us as sons and daughters and that He is teaching and training us through the various experiences and stresses He allows to come into our lives.

There are 2 THINGS that He says in verse 5:

1. "STOP REGARDING LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,"  
and
2. "NOR GIVING OUT WHEN YOU ARE BEING REBUKED  
(CORRECTED) BY HIM."

In other words:

1. DO NOT PASS IT OFF
2. DO NOT GET DISCOURAGED.



I believe it is necessary for us to recognize the fact that there is a  
DIFFERENCE between DISCIPLINE and PUNISHMENT.

PUNISHMENT is:

BY THE JUDGE,  
UPON ENEMIES, and  
OUT OF ANGER.

Whereas, DISCIPLINE is:

PARENTAL,  
FROM A FATHER,  
UPON CHILDREN, and  
AN ACT OF LOVE.

#### Psalm 34:19

A righteous man may have many troubles,  
but the Lord delivers him from them all;

#### 2 Corinthians 12:7

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this  
reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in  
the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting  
myself!

"MY SON, STOP REGARDING LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE  
LORD."

Rather, what is God trying to:

TEACH ME?

MAKE OF ME?

DO WITH ME THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE?

A FATHER'S HAND WILL NEVER CAUSE HIS CHILD A NEEDLESS  
TEAR.

God can not punish you for your sins, that has already been placed on Jesus Christ. CHASTISEMENT and CORRECTION are evidences of sonship. We need to look beyond the rod to the all-wise hand that wields it.

HE IS OUR FATHER AND OUR TEACHER.

In John 15 the Lord Jesus says that He prunes the vine (that is the branch) that it might bring forth more. The:

PRUNING,

PURGING, and

PURIFYING PROCESS

is all involved in our sonship and in our development toward Christ-likeness.

It is important for us to recognize that the Lord will allow anything in our lives to bring about the image of Christ in us.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The readers also seemed to **have forgotten** the **encouragement** found in Proverbs 3:11-12, which presents divine **discipline** as an evidence of divine love. Thus they should not **lose heart** (cf. Heb. 12:3) but should **endure hardship . . . as discipline** and regard it as an evidence of sonship, that is, that they are being trained for the glory of the many sons (cf. 2:10 and comments there). All God's children are subject to His discipline, and in the phrase **everyone undergoes discipline** the writer for the last time used the Greek [word] *metochoi* ("companions, sharers"), also used in 1:9; 3:1, 14; 6:4. (Lit., the Gr. reads, ". . . discipline, of which all have become sharers.")  
p. 810

Hession says:

As I have said, we are still on the theme of endurance and Paul tells his readers that they have not only to endure the hurtful opposition of men as they run the race set before them, but the loving chastening of the Lord. The latter is just as much part of the trials of the cross-country race as the former. Indeed, very often they are one and the same. On the one hand, the difficulties and sufferings come from man; on the other hand, they could not be happening unless God permitted them and therefore they come from Him. And coming from Him, they are to be regarded as part of the chastening and the discipline which the heavenly Father gives His children.  
p. 195

Lane says:

In vv 5-11 the writer seeks to justify the experience of hostility and abuse that the community has encountered because they identified themselves with Christ. . . . The consideration of these harsh experiences as exposure to the *paideia*, "instructive discipline," "correction," of God, which attests a filial relationship with the Father, brings a fresh perspective on these aspects of Christian experience. The sufferings of the community were actually disciplinary in character and expressed the love that God has for his children. As proof of sonship they reflected God's grace and forgiveness.  
p. 419

Delitzsch says:

The main purpose which the sacred writer has here in view is to reconcile the minds of his readers to the sufferings entailed by their Christian profession, that is, the cross in the proper sense of the word. But all sufferings imposed by God upon His children, whether for discipline, trial of faith, or witness for the truth, have this one feature in common, that they are all proofs of divine love, not signs of anger. Thought passes easily, therefore, from one kind to another. The Christian in every trial sees a proof of the Father's loving care for his good. He must not murmur or withdraw himself from it.  
pp. 312-13

Thomas says:

AT THIS POINT there seems to arise the question why it was not possible to have fellowship with Christ without all this endurance. The answer here given is that the fact of suffering, however mysterious, is inevitably associated with the education of faith.

p. 160

Westcott says:

Sufferings are tempered by the providence of God, and they are a sign of sonship.

p. 399

Do not make it of little account; do not neglect to consider its real scope and end.

p. 399

Owen says:

Fainting consists of despondency in our own minds; heartless complaints to the discouragement of others; omission of our necessary duty; and in judging amiss of God's dealings with us, either as to the greatness of our trials or their length, or His design in them.

p. 249

Bruce says:

Let them recall the words of wisdom in Prov. 3:11f., and they would be able to view their troubles in their proper perspective. These words remind those who would be truly wise that when hardship is their lot they should accept it as God's method of training and disciplining them, and as a token that they are really his beloved sons and daughters.

p. 342

Macaulay says:

Discipline is a divine principle. Always the preparation of a chosen vessel involves discipline. It was so even in the case of our divine and sinless Saviour. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10, ASV); and again, "though he was a son, yet learned [he] obedience by the things which he suffered" (5:8, ASV). If it were so of the perfect Son, how much more shall we expect a heap of discipline in the process of "bringing many sons unto glory," transforming sinners into saints who bear the very image of the Son of God!  
pp. 216-17

Barclay says:

HERE the writer to the Hebrews sets out still another reason why men should cheerfully bear trouble and affliction when it comes to them. He has urged them to bear it because the great saints of the past have borne it. He has urged them to bear it because anything we have to bear is a little thing compared with that which Jesus Christ had to bear. Now, he says that we must bear hardship and affliction because they are sent to us as a discipline from God and no life can have any value apart from discipline.  
pp. 199-200

Wiersbe says:

"Chastening" refers to child training, helping the child prepare for adulthood. It does not necessarily mean punishment for disobedience, although that sometimes might be included. The successful runner must exercise discipline and submit to training. Never fear the chastening hand of the Lord; it is controlled by a loving heart. God's goal is your maturity.  
p. 821

MacArthur says:

The key word of 12:4-11 is **discipline**, used both as a noun and a verb. It is from the Greek *paideia*, which, in turn, comes from *pais* ("child") and denotes the training of a child. The word is a broad term, signifying whatever parents and teachers do to train, correct, cultivate, and educate children in order to help them develop and mature as they ought. It is used nine times in these eight verses.

The figure changes from that of a race to that of a family. Christian living involves running, working, fighting, and enduring. It also involves relationships, especially our relationship to God and to other believers. The emphasis of this passage is on the heavenly Father's use of discipline in the lives of His children.

p. 385

MacArthur says further:

If we do not understand our problems as being discipline that the Lord sends for our good, we cannot profit from them as He intends. Our reactions cannot be right if our view of what is happening is not right. The spiritual weakness mentioned in this verse is not that of taking our problems lightly but of taking the Lord's discipline through them lightly. It is usually because we take our problems too seriously that we take the Lord's discipline too lightly. Our focus is on the experience rather than on our heavenly Father and on what He wants to do for us through the experience.

p. 390

Wiersbe says:

Because they forgot the Word, they lost their encouragement and were ready to give up!

p. 138

English says:

We are not to despise, or make light of, the chastening of the Lord, remembering that whom He loves He chastens. Chastening, it is evident, is not judgment from God; it is His discipline, directed to His own children because He loves them. We must bear in mind that nothing touches the Christian apart from the permissive will of the Father in heaven. Therefore we must not look upon our trials as by chance, or as unnecessary.  
p. 453

Death and sorrow will be the companions of our journey; hardship our garment; constancy and valor our only shield. We must be united, we must be undaunted, we must be inflexible.

--Sir Winston Churchill, 1940

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

## LEARNING FROM PAIN

"I truly believe that the lot of those that suffer is more enviable than the people who seem to be set apart, untouched, like a piece of fine china in a locked cabinet. Without dark clouds in our lives we would never know the joy of sunshine. We can become callous and unteachable if we do not learn from pain."

--Billy Graham  
(in *Today's Better Life*,  
Spring 1992)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)



## WHY?

I promised a doll to my dear baby girl;  
 I had pictured a figure most fair,  
 With exquisite features and teeth of pure pearl,  
 Moving eyes, walking limbs, and real hair!

We entered a shop, and the sweet little maid  
 Clasped a cheap, tawdry doll to her breast;  
 To make the exchange I was really afraid,  
 Though I wanted to give her the best.

I took it away, and the tears filled her eyes,  
 But I gave her the one I had planned;  
 The dear little face glowed in joyous surprise  
 That a treasure existed so grand.

O Savior, I too am a child in Thy sight,  
 And I choose the first things that I see;  
 I struggle to keep them, I do not know quite  
 Why the Father should take them from me.

But when I look back through the wisdom of years,  
 When my faith is age-old and sublime,  
 I know I shall see through a rainbow of tears  
 That my Father planned best all the time!"

--Anonymous

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God's Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

Saint John of the Cross wrote:

God perceives the imperfections within us, and because of his love for us, urges us to grow up. His love is not content to leave us in our weakness, and for this reason he takes us into a dark night. He weans us from all the pleasures by giving us dry times and inward darkness. In doing so he is able to take away all these vices and create virtues within us. Through the dark night pride becomes humility, greed becomes simplicity, wrath becomes contentment, luxury becomes peace, gluttony becomes moderation, envy becomes joy, and sloth becomes strength. No soul will ever grow deep in the spiritual life unless God works passively in that soul by means of the Dark Night.

pp. 88-89

(The Complete Book of Zingers by Croft M. Pentz)

The trouble with some people is they don't admit their faults. I would, if I had any.

p. 155

(The Pleasures of God by John Piper)

The definition of faith behind this usage is given in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." In other words, faith is the satisfied assurance that God will work things out in the future far better than I could work them out by relying on myself or by departing from the path of obedience--even if obedience means suffering now. Being satisfied with all that God is for me in Christ--past, present and future--is the power to resist the alluring temptations of disobedience.

pp. 255-6

(Storms of Perfection: In Their Own Words by Andy Andrews)

“Difficulties are God’s  
errands; and when we  
are sent upon them, we  
should esteem it as a  
proof of God’s  
confidence.”

--Beecher

p. 55

(A Dangerous Grace by Charles Colson with Nancy R. Pearcey)

It’s a travesty that in this so-called Christian nation we consistently ignore the most basic of Christ’s teaching: sin comes from within the individual (Mark 7:20). Crime is the result of morally responsible people making wrong moral decisions, for which they must be held accountable.

As C. S. Lewis said, “To be punished, however severely, because we have deserved it, because we ‘ought to have known better,’ is to be treated as a human person made in God’s image.” In the biblical sense, punishment is very often redemptive--to the offender, the victim, and society at large.

p. 224

Eugene H. Peterson in The Message: Proverbs translates these two verses as follows:

Proverb 3

But don’t, dear friend, resent God’s discipline;  
don’t sulk under his loving correction.  
It’s the child he loves that God corrects;  
a father’s delight is behind all this.

p. 15

Peterson translates Proverbs 10 in the following way:

Proverb 10

The road to life is a disciplined life;  
 ignore correction and you're lost for good.  
 p. 35

### To My Grown-Up Sons

My hands were busy through the day  
 I didn't have much time to play  
 The little games you asked me to  
 I didn't have much time for you.

I'd wash your clothes, I'd sew and cook  
 But when you'd bring your picture book  
 And ask me please to share your fun  
 I'd say, "A little later, son."

I'd tuck you in all safe at night  
 And hear your prayers, turn out the light  
 Then tiptoe softly to the door  
 I wish I'd stayed a minute more.

For life is short, the years rush past  
 A little boy grows up so fast  
 No longer is he at your side  
 His precious secrets to confide.

The picture books are put away  
 There are no more games to play  
 No goodnight kiss, no prayers to hear--  
 That all belongs to yesteryear.

My hands once busy now lie still  
 The days are long and hard to fill  
 I wish I might go back and do  
 The little things you asked me to.

--Anonymous

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

(Walking With Saints by Calvin Miller)

I do not pray that you may be delivered from your sufferings, but I ask God earnestly to give you strength and patience to bear them so long as He pleases to afflict you. Fortify yourself with Him who fastens you to the cross: He will deliver you in His own time.

p. 54

Proverbs 15:10

Stern discipline awaits him who leaves the path; he who hates correction will die.

Proverbs 15:32

He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding.

v. 6 for those whom the Lord is loving, He is disciplining, and He is scourging every son whom He is receiving."

Here we have the REASON for the 2 PREVIOUS EXHORTATIONS of not:

"regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord" and

"giving out when you are being rebuked (corrected) by Him."

1. "WHOM THE LORD IS LOVING, HE IS DISCIPLINING"

THE SUFFERING IMPOSED IS BY THE WISDOM OF A DIVINE LOVE.

The Christian in every trial should see a proof of the Father's loving care and concern for his highest good.

Job 5:17

Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

Job 6:24

Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong.

Psalms 119:17

Do good to your servant, and I will live;  
I will obey your word.

Proverbs 10:17

He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.

Psalms 94:12

Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord,

the man you teach from your law;

Psalm 119:67, 68

Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
 but now I obey your word.  
 You are good, and what you do is good;  
 teach me your decrees.

Psalm 119:71

It was good for me to be afflicted  
 so that I might learn your decrees.

Revelation 3:19

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent."

Speaking thus far, the writer has reminded him to:

"stop regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord,"

"nor giving out [losing heart] when you are being rebuked (corrected) by Him."

That it is:

"THOSE WHOM THE LORD IS LOVING, HE IS DISCIPLINING, AND HE IS SCOURGING EVERY SON WHOM HE IS RECEIVING [favorably]."

It is interesting to note that there is "DISCIPLINE WITHOUT EXCEPTION. Every son can expect disciplining from the hand of the Lord.

The Lord is not expecting a hypocritical shout from us:

"ALLELUIA, IT HURTS!"

He is looking for a:

BROKENNESS and OBEDIENCE



that will eventually yield the **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**.

Thus far the writer has CHALLENGED us by the:

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST,

so we will:

NOT GROW TIRED BY RELAXING IN OUR SOULS.

He has shared with us the EDUCATIONAL PROCESS in that:

CHASTISEMENT IS NECESSARY TO RID US OF HAMPERING SIN  
AND TO PRODUCE THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

As the Lord looks and finds something to rebuke, He then uses the rod on every one of us.

If we really believe this it would not be comfort that we are always desiring but rather the rod to produce:

GROWTH,

CHARACTER, and

PROGRESS.

Obviously the readers of this epistle were growing weary of God's chastening hand and were thinking of getting away from it.

Wiersbe says:

Whatever the experience, we can be sure that His chastening hand is controlled by His loving heart. The Father does not want us to be pampered babies; He wants us to become mature adult sons and daughters who can be trusted with the responsibilities of life.

p. 139

MacArthur says:

God's discipline can sometimes be severe. When our disobedience is great or our apathy is great, His punishment will be great.  
p. 394

Lane says:

The essentially negative theme of painful suffering is subsumed in the positive notions of love and sonship (Vanhoye, *AsSeign* 52 [1974] 63). The positive character of divine discipline affirmed in Prov 3:12 demonstrates that corrective suffering is motivated by God's love and grace.

The citation of Prov 3:11-12 in vv 5b-6 summons the members of the community to persevere in faith in view of the encouragement extended to them through the testimony of Scripture. They are to recognize in the hardships and abuse they experience an intervention of the fatherly love of God for his children.  
p. 421

Pink says:

Discouraged reader, look over the things which so much distress you, and behold the Father's smiling face; look above the frowning clouds of His providence, and see the sunshine of His never changing love.  
p. 40

He says further:

The one whom God scourges is not rejected, but "received"--received up into glory, welcomed in His House above. First the cross, then the crown, is God's unchanging order. This was vividly illustrated in the history of the children of Israel: God "chose them in the furnace of affliction," and many and bitter were their trials ere they reached the promised land. So it is with us. First the wilderness, then Canaan; first the scourging, and then the "receiving." May we keep ourselves more and more in the love of God.  
p. 43

Richards says:

It's easy to think when something goes wrong that God is punishing us.  
What is actually happening is that God is *loving* us.  
p. 129

F. B. Meyer says:

It is because our Father loves us that He chastens us. He would not take so much trouble over us if we were not dear to his heart. It is because we are sons that He sets Himself to scourge us. But oh, how much He suffers as He wields that scourge of small cords! Yet, hail each blow; for each sting and smart cries to thee that thou art being received into the inner circle of love.  
p. 45

(Christian Disciplines by Oswald Chambers)

Oswald Chambers said that “the reason we are all being disciplined is so that we will know that God is real.”  
p. 7

(The Message: Proverbs by Eugene H. Peterson)

Proverb 29

For people who hate discipline  
and only get more stubborn,  
There'll come a day when life tumbles in and they  
break,  
but by then it'll be too late to help them.  
pp. 96-97

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God's Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

Following Jesus means a commitment to unending availability--to be ready, to be willing to go wherever we're sent--to be expendable, if need be. In the words of a slogan I once saw on the side of a moving van: "Any load, any distance, any place, any time."

p. 104

Charles Spurgeon looked back upon dark hours in his own life and said:  
I bear willing witness that I owe more to the fire, and the hammer, and the file, than to anything else in my Lord's workshop. I sometimes question whether I have ever learned anything except through the rod. When my schoolroom is darkened, I see most.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

## MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS

"It is a fact of Christian experience that life is a series of troughs and peaks. In His efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, God relies on the troughs more than the peaks. And some of His special favorites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else."

--Peter Marshall  
(quoted in *A Better Tomorrow*,  
Fall 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

v. 7 It is for discipline that you are persevering; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom [his] father is not disciplining?

Here again we have the word "PERSEVERING" that occurred back in verse 1:

"let us be running with perseverance the race lying before us."

Now:

"IT IS FOR DISCIPLINE THAT YOU ARE PERSEVERING."

The REASON being:

"GOD IS DEALING WITH YOU AS WITH SONS."

The REASON:

"FOR WHAT SON IS THERE WHOM [HIS] FATHER IS NOT DISCIPLINING?"

GOOD QUESTION!

We shall cease from:

SELF-PITY,

RESENTMENT, and

REBELLIOUS COMPLAINT.

If we remember that there is no discipline of God:

1. which does not take its source in love, and
2. which is not aimed at our good.

It is our RESPONSIBILITY to have a:

WILLING ACCEPTANCE of our entire relationship with Him as our Heavenly Father.

Part of this involves the USE OF THE ROD.

We can be challenged to ENDURE ANYTHING when we recognize that in back of that which has been permitted in our lives is a:

LOVING FATHER WHO IS DISCIPLINING AND PRUNING US FOR  
A GREATER AND MORE EFFECTIVE FRUITFULNESS.

It certainly does away with the question: "WHY ME?" and all of the BITTERNESS and RESENTMENT that can arise when we fail to comprehend what the Lord is trying to do in our lives.

We see PAUL and SILAS singing in the Philippian jail in Acts 16.

JESUS, on the night before He was to be nailed to the cross, sang a hymn with the rest of the disciples because He knew His life was in the hands of His Father.

"GOD IS DEALING WITH YOU AS WITH SONS," and in this:

He is disciplining us in love, for the PURPOSE OF ACCOMPLISHING  
CHRIST-LIKENESS.

The POINTED QUESTION at the CONCLUSION OF VERSE 7 sort of summarizes everything that the apostle has had to say about the DISCIPLINING PROCESS:

"FOR WHAT SON IS THERE WHOM [HIS] FATHER IS NOT  
DISCIPLINING?"



Pink says:

As the bee sucks honey out of the bitter herb, so faith may extract much good from afflictions. Faith can turn water into wine, and make bread out of stones. Unbelief gives up in the hour of trial and sinks in despair; but faith keeps the head above water and hopefully looks for deliverance. Human reason may not be able to understand the mysterious ways of God, but faith knows that the sorest disappointments and the heaviest losses are among the "all things" which work together for our good. Carnal friends may tell us that it is useless to strive any longer; but faith says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).  
p. 49

Macaulay quotes a little poetic piece:

Ill that He blesses is our good,  
And unblest good is ill;  
And all is right that seems most wrong  
If it be His sweet will.

p. 220

Westcott says:

The divine purpose is unquestionable, but at the same time the efficacy of the discipline depends on the spirit with which it is received. Patient endurance alone converts suffering into a beneficent lesson.  
p. 400

Hession says:

God's chastenings, then, are designed to restore us to fuller submission to Himself. Sometimes they are closely associated with sin or rebellion on our part and it is quite clear wherein God wants us to return. In other situations, it is not obvious at all. In those cases we must remember that none of us knows how much was lost in the Fall and that God is on a recovery operation with all of us, an operation which is not the work of a day or a year.  
pp. 195-6

Montefiore in Black's commentary says:

The unpleasantness of physical discipline can, if properly accepted, provide an opportunity for moral and spiritual growth. Such discipline is a sign that God is educating his children as a father educates his sons.

p. 219

(Prayer, Praise & Promises: A Daily Walk Through the Psalms by Warren W. Wiersbe)

*Do you find yourself in a storm today? Ask God for the strength and courage to weather it and for the wisdom to understand it, not waste it.*

(Day 275)

(The Christian in Complete Armour by William Gurnall)

Afflictions are a spade which God uses to dig into His people's heart to find the gold of faith. Not that He does not seek out the other graces also, but faith is the most precious of them all. Even when God delays and seems to withdraw His hand before coming with the mercy He promises, it is so that He can explore our faith.

(October 4)

(The Finishing Touch: Becoming God's Masterpiece: A Daily Devotional by Charles R. Swindoll)

## STANDING FIRM

I heard a statistic the other day that blew my mind. Anna Sklar, the author of a book called *Runaway Wives*, was a guest on a local talk show. In the course of the discussion, she cited this incredible statistic. Ten years ago, for every wife or mother who walked away from her home and responsibilities, six hundred husbands and fathers did so. Today--only ten years later--for each man who walks away, two women do.

Pause and let that sink in.

Understand, I'm not advocating either, nor am I taking sides. I'm just amazed at the unbelievably rapid rise in the number of women who choose escape as the favorite method of coping.

Once upon a time, when the going got tough, the tough got going.

No longer! Contrary to our great American heritage, many of today's citizens would rather switch than fight . . . or, more honestly, quit than stick. That which was once not even an option is now standard operating procedure. Now, it's "if you start to sink, *jump*, don't bail" . . . or "if it's hard, *quit*, don't bother."

Let's press this philosophy to its ultimate conclusion. How many skyscrapers would sit unfinished? How many patients would die on the operating table? How many churches would be closed? How many athletic records would have been set? How many academic degrees and honors would have been earned? How many cars repaired? Children raised? Books written? Crops grown? Symphonies composed? Teeth straightened?

Every achievement worth remembering is stained with the blood of diligence and scarred by the wounds of disappointment. To quit, to run, to escape, to hide--none of these options solve anything. They only postpone the acceptance of, and reckoning with, reality.

Churchill put it well: "Wars are not won by evacuations."

No, battles are won in the trenches . . . in the grit and grime of courageous determination . . . in the arena of life, day in and day out, amidst the smell of sweat and the cry of anguish.

Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize  
And sailed through bloody seas?

The apostle Paul, the man who bore on his body "the brand-marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17), was a living example of his own counsel:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain

in the Lord. . . . Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong (1 Cor. 15:58; 16:13).

Giving thought to giving up?

Considering the possibility of quitting?

Looking for an easy way out?

Entertaining the idea of running away . . . stopping before it's finished  
. . . escaping from reality?

Don't! The Lord never promised you a Disneyland . . . nor a rose garden. In fact, the only time He ever used the word "easy" was when He referred to a yoke.

**A Finishing Touch:** Every journey is accomplished one step at a time.  
Don't stop now.

**A Daily Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15 and 16  
pp. 474-5

## JUST WAIT

A young mother, paying a visit to her doctor, was making no attempt to restrain her five-year-old son who was ransacking an adjoining treatment room.

Finally an extra loud clatter of bottles did prompt her to say, "I hope you don't mind Johnny being in your examination room, Doctor."

"Not at all," said the doctor calmly. "He'll quiet down in a moment when he gets to the poison cabinet."

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(The Living Body: The Church Christ Is Building by Dr. Richard Halverson)

As Mary Michael O'Shaughnessy likes to say, "Often breakdowns lead to breakthroughs."  
p. 22

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God's Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

Our best choice is to be still and submit to God's discipline. We are never so safe as when we yield our wills.  
p. 91

v. 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not real sons.

The word "BUT" forms the CONTRAST:

"IF YOU ARE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE" there is a PROBLEM!

Because:

"ALL HAVE BECOME PARTAKERS [of this]."

The CONSEQUENCES, "YOU ARE":

POSITIVELY--"ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN" and

NEGATIVELY--"NOT REAL SONS."

By CONTRAST in verse 8 the apostle says that as a Christian:

"IF YOU ARE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, OF WHICH ALL [and that is, there are no exceptions] HAVE BEEN MADE PARTAKERS, THEN YOU ARE ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND NOT REAL SONS."

The writer is saying here that those who escape the rod need to ASK themselves again:

Am I truly born again?

Have I been born by the spirit of God into His family, and have become His son?

Because to become His son places us in the position of experiencing, without exception, the disciplining hand of our Heavenly Father, exercised in love for our good.

### 2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

. . . **illegitimate children**, he was probably thinking of Christians whose disloyalty to the faith resulted in their loss of inheritance (i.e., reward) which is acquired by the many sons and daughters. (In the Roman world, an "illegitimate child" had no inheritance rights.) What such Christians undergo, the author had shown, is severe judgment. On the other hand, believers who undergo God's "discipline" are being prepared by this educational process (. . . [this] "child training"; . . .) for millennial reward. p. 810

MacArthur says:

When the Lord disciplines us, we should say, "Thank you, Lord. You have just proved again that You love me and that I am Your child." p. 395

Kistemaker says:

Careful training within a family setting has always been an accepted norm, and people are expected to receive training as part of their development in social graces. Not to accept discipline is a mark of rebellion against authority. The readers of the epistle, however, had shown disregard for this norm and had slighted God who disciplined them. They had to be told to observe the norm, accept discipline, and behave like sons. Should they continue to neglect God's teaching, they would be regarded as illegitimate children.

p.377

v. 9 Furthermore, we were having indeed fathers of our flesh (earthly fathers) to discipline us, and we were respecting them; shall we not much rather put ourselves in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?

Here the author makes a STATEMENT and then he raises a SECOND QUESTION:

"SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER PUT OURSELVES IN SUBJECTION TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE?"

The FIRST QUESTION was:

"for what son is there whom [his] father is not disciplining?"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Drawing on the analogy of the discipline of earthly **fathers**, the author encouraged a submissive spirit to the discipline of **the Father of our spirits** which is life-preserving . . . as well as productive of an experience of **His holiness**, which involves a rich **harvest of righteousness and peace**. But Christians must let this discipline have its full effect and be **trained by it**.  
p. 810

The apostle now uses as EARTHLY ILLUSTRATION:

SONS CAN EXPECT DISCIPLINE.

The illustration that he uses, the illustration of our fathers in the flesh and our parent-child relationship, how they used to discipline us; and as a result of that discipline, we respected them.

In light of this fact:

"SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER PUT OURSELVES IN  
SUBJECTION TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE?"

This process involves:

SUBMITTING OURSELVES TO THE ROD as the Lord raises it in our  
lives to the accomplishment of some purpose.

It can prove to be a happy time in the midst of trouble if we know that a Heavenly Father has seen it necessary to use the chastening process to educate us properly. It was Jesus who said:

"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will be your be done" (Luke 22:42).

Here is the BIG QUESTION:

"SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER PUT OURSELVES IN  
SUBJECTION TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE?"

He knows what is NECESSARY.

He knows what is BEST.

And when HE BRINGS THE ROD OF REPROOF, could we not rather respond to it then to resent it?



Lane says:

Vv 9-11 constitute a new unit. Vv 4-8 were integrated thematically around the issue of sonship. The point was made that genuine sonship is attested in the experience of disciplinary sufferings. There is no reference to sonship in vv 9-11. In this unit, balanced clauses develop the parallel and contrast between paternal and divine discipline in terms of its character, intention, and results.

p. 423

(Worms In My Tea: And Other Mixed Blessings by Becky Freeman & Ruthie Arnold)

That afternoon after school, I lay across my bed in what had become my usual state of exhaustion, and I felt Gabe snuggle next to me. I dreamily observed he looked awfully cute in the new school clothes I had bought him with my first paycheck.

“Momma?” he asked, “Would it be okay if I just lay here by you and pretend you can hear me?”

*Oh, God!* I cried out silently as I encircled my lonely little boy with all the strength I had left, *What am I doing?!*

pp. 135-6

v.10 For they were disciplining us for a short time as was seeming best to them, but He is [disciplining us] for our good, that we may share His holiness.

Here is the REASON why we need to "put ourselves in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live." Our earthly fathers used to discipline:

"US FOR A SHORT TIME AS WAS SEEMING BEST TO THEM."

Our earthly fathers are FALLIBLE.

THEY ARE GOING TO MAKE MISTAKES.

There are going to be times when we are DISCIPLINED WRONGLY.

I can remember one such occasion in youth. I must say that my mother had a strap by the stove with a little sign over it that said:

"I NEED THEE EVERY HOUR."

The number of times that I was exercised by discipline were numerous, and as a result, it would be easy to assume that it was time for another when really I was disciplined unjustly.

This is possible with our earthly parents, but not with our HEAVENLY FATHER who is:

INFALLIBLE, and

WHO KNOWS ALL THINGS.

HE DISCIPLINES US FOR OUR PROFIT, THAT WE MAY SHARE HIS HOLINESS.

When the discipline we are experiencing is for our profit and producing holiness, we can get pretty excited about some of the things that the Lord deems necessary to the ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS TWO-FOLD OBJECTIVE.

Kistemaker says:

God has a definite purpose in mind for disciplining us. He wants us to "share in his holiness." Whereas human fathers train their children to conduct themselves appropriately, God disciplines us for holiness. That is, he wants us to become like him, perfect and holy (Matt. 5:48; Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16). God prepares us for life eternal. Therefore, we cheerfully accept God's discipline, for we know that the adversities we experience are for our spiritual welfare. As Paul says to the Corinthian believers, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (II Cor. 4:17).  
p. 378

Lane says:

These verses, which elaborate the benefits that accrue to those who are nurtured through divine discipline, bring the central paragraph (vv 4-11) to a conclusion.  
p. 424

Pink says:

"This will set my heart at rest,  
What my God appoints is best."  
p. 58

F. B. Meyer says:

How full of meaning is "the afterward." Who shall estimate the hundredfold of blessing from each moment of pain? The Psalms are crystallized tears. The Epistles were in many cases written in prison. The greatest teachers of mankind have learned their most helpful lessons in sorrow's school. The noblest characters have been forged in a furnace. Acts which will live forever, masterpieces of art and music and literature, have originated in ages of storm, and tempest, and heartrending agony. And so also is it with our earthly discipline. The ripest results are sorrowborne.  
p. 45

Bruce says:

If our heavenly Father also imposes discipline on us, shall we not accept it willingly from him? Our earthly fathers may sometimes have been mistaken in their estimate of the discipline we needed; our heavenly Father, in the perfection of his wisdom and love, can be relied upon never to impose any discipline on us which is not for our good. The supreme good he has in view for his children is this, that they should share his holiness.  
p. 344

(Our God Is Awesome by Tony Evans)

I've often said what holiness is to God, clean is to my wife. She is a cleaning fanatic. Some people get high on drugs. Lois gets high on Lysol. One day when she had to go somewhere, being the wonderful husband that I am, I offered to oversee the cleaning. Not to clean, you understand, but to oversee the cleaning.

So I called the kids together and gave them their assignments. I supervised, and in my eyes we did a very good job--an excellent job, if I say so myself. When Lois came home, I expected a big hug and a medal for being such a supportive husband. But she came in and said, "I thought you were going to clean up for me."

I got a little frustrated. Now I'm a preacher so I don't get mad, but I got a little frustrated. She took me to some forsaken corner of the house and showed me a piece of lint. I'm talking about something an ant wouldn't have seen. "When I mean clean, I mean this too," she informed me.

The problem was that we were operating on two different standards. My standard was to hit the center and all is well. Lois' standard included the crevices and the corners. When God deals with us, He's dealing from a standard of absolute perfection. So even though we may look relatively clean, even though we may not have committed any crimes, we still fall short of the standard of a perfect God.

p. 357

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

William Longstaff, though financially independent, (son of a wealthy English ship owner) was a humble and devout Christian layman and a close friend and supporter of the Moody-Sankey evangelistic team that stirred England with great revival campaigns during the late 19th century. After hearing a sermon on 1 Peter 1:16--"Be ye holy, for I am holy"--with reference to the book of Leviticus from which it was originally taken, young William began to make the achievement of holiness his life's goal. Although this was his only hymn, these words have since been an invaluable influence for sincere believers everywhere who truly desire to live a genuine Christian life:

Take time to be holy. Speak oft with thy Lord; abide in Him always and feed on His Word. Make friends of God's children. Help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy. The world rushes on; spend much time in secret with Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be; thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy. Let Him be thy guide, and run not before Him, whatever betide. In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord, and, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy. Be calm in thy soul--Each thought and each motive beneath His control. Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love, thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

p. 245

(The Pleasures of God by John Piper)

And when we eat this food and drink this water we are satisfied with Jesus. That is the meaning of faith. We rest in him. Here is the secret of the power of faith to break the enslaving force of sinful attractions. If the heart is satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus, the power of sin to lure us away from the wisdom of Christ is broken. And we will love holiness because it is an expression of the personality of the One who bring us so much satisfaction.

p. 255

(Holiness by J. C. Ryle)

What could an unsanctified man do in heaven, if by any chance he got there? Let that question be fairly looked in the face, and fairly answered. No man can possibly be happy in a place where he is not in his element, and where all around him is not congenial to his tastes, habits and character. When an eagle is happy in an iron cage, when a sheep is happy in the water, when an owl is happy in the blaze of noonday sun, when a fish is happy on the dry land--then, and not till then, will I admit that the unsanctified man could be happy in heaven.

p. 23

The CONTRAST between the DISCIPLINING OF OUR PARENTS is that:

"THEY WERE DISCIPLINING US FOR A SHORT TIME [and they were doing it] AS WAS SEEMING BEST TO THEM."

"BUT," [in CONTRAST, God] HE IS [DISCIPLINING US] FOR OUR GOOD, THAT WE MAY SHARE HIS HOLINESS."

v.11 In fact, all discipline for the moment is not seeming to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it is yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Proverbs 29:19

A servant cannot be corrected by mere words; though he understands, he will not respond.

GOD'S DISCIPLINE HAS ETERNITY IN VIEW.

All of the discipline from His hand:

"IS NOT SEEMING TO BE JOYFUL, BUT SORROWFUL" while we are going through it.

"YET TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT" it is going to eventually be "YIELDING THE PEACEFUL FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS."

We have a NEGATIVE and a POSITIVE STATEMENT in verse 11:

"ALL DISCIPLINE FOR THE MOMENT IS [NEGATIVELY] NOT SEEMING TO BE JOYFUL, BUT [in contrast, POSITIVELY] SORROWFUL."

"THE PEACEFUL FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS" is that righteousness which is produced out of the right relationship with our Heavenly Father. It is the fruit that is born in:

1. John 15 through the relationship of the VINE TO THE BRANCH.
2. Galatians 5:22, 23

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



Lamentations 3:33

For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

Psalm 103:13

As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

Isaiah 32:17

The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

Bruce says:

The person who accepts discipline at the hand of God as something designed by his heavenly Father for his good will cease to feel resentful and rebellious; he has "calmed and quieted" his soul, which thus provides fertile soil for the cultivation of a righteous life, responsive to the will of God.  
p. 346

F. B. Meyer asks:

Where, think you, does the Husbandman of souls most often see the fruit He loves so well? Not within the halls of successful ambition or satiated luxury, but in cottages of poverty, and rooms dedicated to ceaseless pain. Genial almost to a miracle is the soil of sorrow. Necessary beyond all count is the pruning knife of pain.

Count if you will the precious kinds of fruit. There is *patience* which endures the Father's will; and *trust* that sees the Father's hand behind the rough disguise; and *peace* that lies still, content with the Father's plan; and *righteousness* that conforms itself to the Father's requirements; and *love* that clings more closely than ever to the Father's heart; and *gentleness* which deals leniently with others, because of what we have learned of ourselves.  
pp. 45-46

Pink observes:

It is called the "*peaceable* fruit" because it issues in the taming of our wild spirits, the quieting of our restless hearts, the more firm anchoring of our souls. But this only comes when we truly realize that it is the Father's *love* which has afflicted us. May the Spirit of God grant us all "exercised" hearts, so that we shall daily search ourselves, examine our ways, and be stripped of all that is displeasing to Him.

p. 79

Kistemaker says:

The message of Hebrews is the same. The suffering you encounter is painful, says the writer, but when the period of distress has ended, you will be able to see results: "a harvest of righteousness and peace." Your reward will be a right relationship with God and man in which peace reigns supreme. You are the peacemakers. Says James, "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (3:18).

p. 379

Hession says:

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour:  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

p. 196

Thomas says:

This is suggested by the phrase, "they which are exercised," and everything depends on the attitude which we take towards suffering. We are not to forget, not to despise, not to faint (v. 5), but we are to endure (v. 7), and to be in subjection (v. 9). When this attitude is realized, then we understand the direct and blessed connection between "discipleship" and "discipline."

p. 161

DeHaan says:

THE important key word in this verse is *afterward*. It points to the future, after we have finished the race, and looking back, find the answer to all God's mysterious dealings in sending upon us the trials, testings, tribulations and chastenings which today seem so unexplainable and meaningless. Then we shall fully comprehend the wisdom of God in dealing with us so severely, and rejoice in the great fact of Romans 8:28, "that all things work together for good." All our questions will be answered and the reason for all our trials be made plain.

p. 176

Stedman says:

One definition of a Christian is: one who is completely fearless, continually cheerful, and constantly in trouble. This is exactly what this passage describes.

p. 215

Wiersbe in his little book Run With the Winners says:

Athletes must discipline themselves if they ever hope to be winners. They must obey the training rules and submit to the plans of their coaches and trainers. But the results are worth it! "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 12:11).

Afterwards!

That means *faith*--waiting for God to accomplish His purposes!

p. 156

(The Finishing Touch: Becoming God's Masterpiece: A Daily Devotional by Charles R. Swindoll)

"The plowed life is the life that has . . . thrown down the protecting fences and sent the plow of confession into the soul. . . . Such a life has put away defense and has forsaken the safety of death for the peril of life. Discontent, yearning, contrition, courageous obedience to the will of God: these have bruised and broken the soil till it is ready again for the seed. And as always fruit follows the plow."

--A. W. Tozer, *Paths to Power*

p. 565

v.12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees which have become disabled,

In light of the fact that we are called upon to endure by considering the Lord Jesus who endured, and that what we are going through right now is part of the educational process, the disciplining of us as his children.

There are a NUMBER OF THINGS THAT WE NEED TO DO, TWO of which are here in verse 12:

1. "STRENGTHEN THE HANDS THAT ARE WEAK" and
  2. "THE KNEES WHICH HAVE BECOME DISABLED" (or weak).
- 
1. "THE HANDS THAT ARE WEAK" is a picture of the FIGHTER IN THE RING, who in his exhaustion begins to drop his hands and is getting ready to surrender to the opponent.
  2. "THE KNEES WHICH HAVE BECOME DISABLED" is the problem of the RUNNER WHO IS RUNNING IN THE RACE.

It is PETER who says in:

1 Peter 1:6

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary calls this section:

#### THE CALL TO RENEWED SPIRITUAL VITALITY (12:12-17)

The author sensed the tendency to spiritual weakness in his readers, and in light of the truths he had expounded he encouraged them to renew their strength. If they would do this and would pursue the **level paths** which real righteousness entails, the weakest among them (**the lame**) would not be further **disabled, but rather healed**. Their own strength would benefit weaker Christians.

p. 810

Pink says:

This, it seems to us, is the figure carried forward in our text; "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby. *Wherefore* lift up the hands which hang down." The Christian who gives way before trial, who sinks under affliction, who sulks or repines beneath persecution, will bring forth none of the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." If he "faints" under chastisement, if his hands become idle and his legs no longer capable of supporting him, a profitable use cannot be made of the tribulation through which he is called upon to pass. Then let him pull himself together, gird up the loins of his mind and "*endure* hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"

(2 Tim. 2:3). Let his attitude be, Now is the time of my training, so I will seek to play the man; I will seek grace from God to muster all my faith and courage and valiantly wrestle with whatever opposes and oppresses me.

p. 83

Bruce says:

Reverting to his athletic figure of speech, our author bids his readers brace their flagging limbs and press on to the goal. Some of their number were feeling especially discouraged and disinclined to make the necessary effort; the others should do everything possible to help them.  
p. 347

Lane says:

A transition from the central paragraph (vv 4-11) to the concluding exhortation of the section (vv 12-13) is signaled by the explanatory particle "therefore." The thought of training through disciplinary sufferings in v 11 suggested the metaphor of an athletic contest requiring flexed arms and strong knees.  
p. 426

MacArthur says:

The writer of Hebrews got his metaphor from Isaiah. The faithful in Israel had been through a lot. They had many evil kings, some false prophets, generally disobedient and stubborn fellow Israelites, powerful enemies who threatened them, and seemingly no prospect of ever living in their own land in peace. They were discouraged and despondent, ready to give up. So the prophet reminds them of the coming kingdom, when "the wilderness and the desert will be glad" and "they will see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God" (Isa. 35:1-2). Then he counsels them to counsel each other: "Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but He will save you'" (v. 3-4). In other words, "Don't give up now. A better day is coming. Look to that and you will have the encouragement and strength you need. Victory is ahead!"  
p. 402

Westcott says:

*Wherefore* since discipline is necessary, painful, and salutary, provide, as you can, that it may be effectual. Strengthen where it is possible those who are called to endure it; and remove from their way stumbling-blocks which can be removed.

The Apostle urges those who were themselves in danger to help others in like peril. Such efforts are the surest support of the tempted.  
p. 404

Wiersbe in Be Confident says:

Verses 12 and 13 sound like a coach's orders to his team! Lift up your hands! Strengthen those knees! (Isa. 35:3) Get those lazy feet on the track! (Prov. 4:26) On your mark, get set, GO!

The example of God's Son, and the assurance of God's love, certainly should encourage us to endure in the difficult Christian race.  
p. 141

### 1 Timothy 4:8

for bodily discipline is only little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

v.13 and be making straight paths for your feet, in order that [the limb] which is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

We have a NEGATIVE and a POSITIVE here.

"BE MAKING STRAIGHT PATHS FOR YOUR FEET."

The PURPOSE is:

"IN ORDER THAT [THE LIMB] WHICH IS LAME MAY  
[NEGATIVELY] NOT BE DISLOCATED,  
BUT [POSITIVELY] RATHER BE HEALED."

Psalm 37:23, 24

If the Lord delights in a man's way,  
he makes his steps firm;  
though he stumble, he will not fall,  
for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

The SECRET TO THE FULFILLMENT OF THIS COMMAND is:

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

When you and I rebel we are like sheep that go astray, and through the afflicting and disciplining process, we are brought back to that path. Now to avoid further acts of discipline, he is saying:

"BE MAKING STRAIGHT PATHS FOR YOUR FEET."

The PURPOSE being:

"IN ORDER THAT [THE LIMB] WHICH IS LAME MAY NOT BE  
DISLOCATED, BUT RATHER BE HEALED."



THE LORD IS NOT EASY TO DEAL WITH WHEN WE RESIST HIM.

It is far better to:

RESPOND BY OBEDIENCE than

PERSIST IN THE PATH OF DISOBEDIENCE.

Responding properly to discipline and returning to the straight and narrow path of the will of the Heavenly Father will allow that which has been lamed through the affliction to be healed.

### Galatians 2:11-13

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Owen says:

To make straight paths is to walk uprightly in the paths of obedience; and so to walk in them that others may see and know that our paths are straight, for this is necessary unto the end proposed, namely, the preservation of others from being turned out of the way, or their recovery from their wandering. The duties especially enjoined in this precept are courage, resolution, constancy in profession, with a diligent watch against all crooked compliances or fearful relinquishment of duties.

p. 252

Lane says:

Instead, the imagery of v 12 is enriched from another passage from Proverbs which the writer evidently recalled:

My child . . . let your eyes look straight ahead;  
                     fix your gaze directly before you.  
 make level paths for your feet  
                     and take only ways that are firm.  
 Do not swerve to the right or to the left;  
                     keep your feet from evil. (Prov 4:25-27)

The instruction is appropriate for a person who is to compete in a race that will be long and arduous. He must move straight toward the goal, not swerving from the track that will lead him to his determined destination. Normally, those whose limbs are lame cannot compete in the race. Christians who are prepared to heed the writer's pastoral instruction, however, have the prospect that even the lame will not be disabled but will experience the healing that God provides to those whose purpose is narrowly determined by Christ.  
 p. 427

Lange quotes Rieger who says:

--Those are sure steps which are made in accordance with the course and conflict which God has ordained, with our eye on the goal of joy and glory that is set before us, and in confidence in the grace of God, accompanying us at every step.  
 p. 203

Bruce says:

Sprains and similar injuries must be bound up, so that the whole community may complete the course without loss.  
 p. 348

Stedman says:

That is, if you keep on going the way you are going it will only get worse-- that which is lame will be put out of joint. But stop it, he says, strengthen these things. Stop being so weak, stop being so anxious, so worried. How will the world get the impression that Christ is Victor if they look at you and you are always in defeat?  
p. 219

Pink says:

Here, then, is an exhor[ta]tion unto the Christian to see well to his *walk*, which means the regulating of all his actions by the revealed will of God, to be obedient unto the Divine precepts, to follow not the ways and fashions of an evil world, but to cleave to the narrow way, and turn not aside from the Highway of Holiness. "It is our duty not only to be found in the ways of God in general but to take care that we walk carefully, circumspectly, uprightly and diligently in them.  
p. 87

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God's Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

*We can never know in prospect what God  
will do with us--his will is always best seen  
in retrospect--but when the time comes  
to know we will know.  
I cannot tell you how you will know  
but you will know.  
Life gets exciting when we give God permission  
to chart our course.  
He takes us where others have never gone before  
and where we've never thought we could go.  
He leads us beyond anything we  
could ever ask or think,  
beyond our wildest dreams. He takes the smallest  
momentous occasions.*

p. 42

(Seeing Through: Reflecting God's Light in a Dark World by David Roper)

George MacDonald captured the spirit of this hesitant obedience in verse:

I said--"Let me walk in the fields,"  
 He said--"No, walk in the town."  
 I said--"There are no flowers there."  
 He said--"No flowers, but a crown."  
 I said--"But the skies are dark,  
 There is nothing but noise and din."  
 And He wept as He sent me back--  
 "There is more," He said: "there is sin."

I said--"I shall miss the light  
 And friends will miss me, they say."  
 He answered--"Choose tonight  
 If I am to miss you, or they."  
 I pleaded for time to be given,  
 He said--"Is it hard to decide?  
 It will not be hard in Heaven  
 To have followed the steps of your guide."

Then into His hand went mine,  
 And into my heart came He,  
 And I walk in a light Divine,  
 The path I had feared to see.

pp. 104-5

(The Finishing Touch: Becoming God's Masterpiece: A Daily Devotional by Charles R. Swindoll)

The Touch of the Master

About the time we are ready to give up, along comes the Master, who leans over and whispers, "Don't quit. Keep going," as He provides His finishing touch of grace, joy, and love at just the right moment. His touch assures that we will be finishing well.

p. 481

(The Message: Proverbs by Eugene H. Peterson)

Proverb 15

A life frittered away disgusts God;  
he loves those who run straight for the  
finish line.

p. 51

## CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The "cloud of witnesses" are bearing testimony to the fact that the race can be won in victory.

LESSON #2: We must lighten the load and separate ourselves from those things which will trip us up in order to win the race.

LESSON #3: We are to "be running with perseverance the race lying before us."

LESSON #4: Our focus should be on the Lord Jesus as we are running our race.

LESSON #5: We are strengthened and encouraged in our own race when we consider all that He, our Savior, went through for us.

LESSON #6: Suffering in our lives can be explained sometimes as a part of the disciplining process.

LESSON #7: We are to take discipline seriously and hang in there when we are being corrected by Him.

LESSON #8: The Lord spends His time disciplining those He is loving. He is loving all of us who are His children.

LESSON #9: God is "disciplining us for our good, that we may share His holiness."

LESSON #10: Discipline is not a "joyful" experience but a "sorrowful" one that "is yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

Let us meditate for a brief moment on 3 VERSES of Scripture.

Isaiah 40:29-31

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Isaiah 50:7

Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

Lange quotes Fricke:

--Every chastisement of God is, in His children, a seed, which subsequently produces fruit.  
p. 203

Richards says:

Are we ready then to call Him not only Saviour but also Lord? Are we ready to run the race that He sets before us? To submit to His discipline? To say, "Yes, Lord, I commit myself to live for You by faith"?

That's what God invites us to do. That's what the Christian's life-style is. There is no other way to maturity.  
p. 132

Hession quotes the hymnwriter:

It will be worth it all  
 When we see Jesus.  
 Life's trials will seem so small  
 When we see Him.  
 One glimpse of His dear face  
 All sorrows will erase.  
 So let us run the race  
 Till we see Christ.

p. 197

Wiersbe says:

We must not treat His disciplines lightly (12:5) or fight against them (12:9). Rather, we must yield to them and let Him have His way. His disciplines encourage us to exercise our "spiritual muscles," and that helps us to grow.

Only a wise Father such as we have could figure out a way to make trials and sufferings work *for* us and not *against* us!

Whenever we find ourselves losing ground in the race of faith, we should take inventory of our spiritual lives.

Consider the winners and let them encourage us from their experiences recorded in the Word.

Consider ourselves, and see if there are encumbrances or entanglements that are making our progress difficult.

Consider the race and make sure we are in our own lane, running our own race and not another's.

Consider Jesus Christ and fix our eyes of faith on Him, because He is the greatest "winner" of all!

Finally, consider God's discipline, and don't faint under it. Strong muscles come from great challenges, and our Father knows how much we can endure.

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us!"

p. 157



(The Power of Suffering: Strengthening Your Faith in the Refiner's Fire by John MacArthur, Jr.)

William Cowper was an eighteenth-century English poet and hymn writer with a naturally melancholy disposition. In spite of his sufferings and struggles, Cowper ministered as a lay assistant to the great John Newton and wrote sixty-eight hymns. One of those, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," expresses well the mind-set all believers should have toward life and its difficulties.

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.  
Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
the clouds ye so much dread  
are big with mercy and shall break  
in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
but trust Him for His grace;  
behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
unfolding ev'ry hour;  
the bud may have a bitter taste,  
but sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
and He will make it plain.

p. 151

(Heaven Help Us! Truths About Eternity That Will Help You Live Today by  
Steven J. Lawson)

One evening a woman was driving home when she noticed a huge truck behind her that was driving uncomfortably close. The headlights were shining in her rearview mirror, blinding her eyes.

She stepped on the gas to put some distance between her and the truck--but to no avail. When she sped up, the truck sped up. The faster she drove, the faster the truck followed.

Her heart began to pound. With sweaty palms, she turned the steering wheel and took the next exit ramp off the freeway. But the truck stayed with her as closely as ever. Now frantic, this woman turned up a main street, hoping to lose her stalking pursuer in the traffic. But the truck ran a red light and continued to chase her.

Reaching the panic point, the woman whipped her car into a service station, threw open the door, and bolted across the pavement screaming for help.

The truck driver jumped from his rig and ran toward her. He yanked open her back door and pulled out a man who was hidden in her back seat.

The woman had been running from the wrong person!

Unknown to her, the truck driver had spotted a would-be rapist in the back seat of her car. The chase was not his effort to harm her. His pursuit was intended to save her, even at the cost of his own safety.

His desire was to help the woman escape that which would harm her.

Many people are like that woman. They run from God, fearing what He might do to them. But if they would only stop running from God, He would give them their escape from what truly threatens to harm them--Satan, sin, and the second death.

p. 151

After losing their husband and daddy, Mike, at age 37, Jay and Julie Alexander composed this poem in his memory:

These three little sheep have a Shepherd who cares  
 As we give Him our pain, our sorrow He bears.  
 The Lord is our Shepherd, He will lead us each day  
 Our job is to follow Him and listen to Him say--  
 "Be still my little sheep and know that I am God  
 I alone can bring you comfort--take my staff and my rod.  
 This road of much sorrow I've walked in it too  
 It led Me to Calvary where I suffered for you.  
 I know that your pain on this earth is intense  
 But look to the future--heaven's glory is immense!  
 So trust Me each moment--one day at a time  
 My grace is sufficient for each sheep of mine."  
 Jay soon will be ten, his interests are many  
 It seems that Mom's taxi is running a'plenty!  
 There's sports and piano and scouts and school  
 And time at the computer is another new tool.  
 Now Julie is five, but approaching fifteen  
 Her vigor is constant--always full steam!  
 But her child-like faith has been such a guide  
 To learn how our Shepherd wants us to abide.  
 Her memories of Mike have brought joy each day  
 As she fondly reminds us "what Daddy would say"  
 It's a matter of fact and so full of love  
 We can't help but smile and look up above.  
 Then back to our Shepherd we come for that hope  
 We give Him the glory as we're learning to cope.  
 "Be still my little sheep and know that I am God  
 I am with you each moment, each step that you trod.  
 Stand firm in the fact that I don't make mistakes  
 Your days have been numbered--it wasn't left to fate.  
 Just look to eternity as you shine forth My light  
 And soon that strong faith will become full sight."  
 These three little sheep are "going for the gold"  
 (1 Peter 1:6,7)  
 As to our dear Shepherd we tightly hold.  
 We're thankful for family and friends each day  
 Who've been faithful to remember us and continue to pray.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)