

THE EPISTLES TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 10:19-13:19, THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

A. An outline of Hebrews

1. The superiority of the person of Christ (1:1-4:13)
2. The superiority of the work of Christ (4:14-10:18)
3. The superiority of faith in Christ (10:19-13:19)
 - a. The assurance of faith (10:19-39)
 - b. The reality of faith (11:1-40)
 - c. The vitality of faith (12:1-29)
 - d. The outworking of faith (13:1-19)
4. Conclusion (13:20-25)
 - a. Benediction (13:20-21)
 - b. Final greetings (13:22-25)

B. Review of Hebrews 11

1. Thomas Constable, *God intended this wonderful chapter to encourage us to continue to trust and obey Him in the midst of temptations to turn away from following Him faithfully.*
2. Raymond Brown, *If these courageous and devout sufferers achieved so much when, comparatively speaking, they had so little, then there must be no limit to our service. The opportunities are innumerable and the resources are limitless.*

C. Introductory comments on Hebrews 12

1. Raymond Brown, *At this point in his exposition the author turns from the lives of Old Testament heroes to the sufferings and achievement of the greatest example of all, the Lord Jesus Christ . . . The letter has already made it clear that it is immensely rewarding to be a believer (10:35), but it is not easy. Ours is a strenuous race demanding steady perseverance. We must surely be encouraged by the fact that we are surrounded by former contestants who are witnesses to us of the faithfulness of God.*
2. Donald Hagner, *The readers, together with Christians of every era, are called to walk in the steps of faith that characterized the saints of the past and the one who has now been made Lord. Only such an attitude of faith can sustain them during the adversities they may be called to face.*
3. Warren Wiersbe, *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).*

HEBREWS 12:1-29, THE VITALITY OF FAITH

HEBREWS 12:1-17, MAINTAIN AN ATTITUDE OF FAITH

A. Jesus is our example of endurance despite suffering (1-4)

1. Christian readers are called to an enduring life of faith (1), *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*
 - a. *Therefore*
 - 1) The testimonies of faith in chapter 11 are meant to motivate the readers in their Christians lives.
 - 2) Douglas Mangum, *If it was not already evident why the author included the many faith examples in the previous chapter, this portion of the letter begins with a clear statement of purpose. They were meant to serve as witnesses . . . Those examples bear witness to God's faithfulness and ought to serve as strong motivation to stride forward down the track of life ahead of us.*

- b. *a great cloud of witnesses*
- 1) Thomas Constable, *They are “witnesses” not because they presently witness our actions, but because by their lives they bore witness to their faith in God.*
 - 2) Donald Hagner, *They show that it is possible to live by faith.*
 - 3) William L. Lane, *They figure in Scripture as witnesses to the character and validity of committed faithfulness, whose lives provide evidence for subsequent generations of the possibilities of faith.*
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, . . . *they are bearing witness to us that God can see us through. God bore witness to them (Heb. 11:2, 4–5, 39) and they are bearing witness now to us.*
 - 5) It has been said that the *great cloud connotes the unity of the witnesses to the integrity of faith.*
- c. Such testimony demands appropriate actions.
- 1) *lay aside every weight*
 - a) *Weight means burden or impediment.*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *“Encumbrances” are weights that may not be sins but nevertheless make perseverance difficult.*
 - c) William Barclay, *No one would attempt to climb Mount Everest weighed down with a whole load of unnecessary baggage. If we want to travel far, we must travel light. There is in life an essential duty to discard things. There may be habits, pleasures, self-indulgences or associations which hold us back. We must shed them as athletes take off their tracksuits when they go to the starting blocks; and often we will need the help of Christ to enable us to do so.*
 - d) Ray Stedman, *Each runner must honestly judge what hinders faith for him or her and resolutely lay it aside, even though others seem to be unhindered by the same thing.*
 - e) W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Some one is recorded to have asked whether a certain thing would do a person harm, and the reply was given, ‘No harm, if you do not wish to win.*
 - 2) *and sin which clings so closely*
 - a) Ephesians 4:22, *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,*
 - b) Hebrews 3:13, *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
 - c) Raymond Brown, *The sin which clings so closely all too easily entangles. Before we know where we are, we have been tripped up and hurled to the ground in a race which had all the possibilities of triumphant victory.*
 - d) Ray Stedman, . . . *the primary block to gaining the prize is the sin that so easily entangles. Since the writer does not specify what this is, it may be taken for granted that it is the sin continually warned about in Hebrews— persistent unbelief. Do not take God’s Word lightly. Do not excuse any sin as all right for you, but forbidden to others. Do not feel you can evade God’s discipline or judgment.*
 - 3) *let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*
 - a) Hebrews 10:36, *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*
 - b) 2 Timothy 4:7-8, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*
 - c) William Barclay on endurance, *It is not some romantic notion which lends us wings to fly over the difficulties and the hard places. It is a determination . . . which goes steadily on and refuses to be deflected. Obstacles do not daunt it and discouragements do not take its hope away. It is the steadfast endurance which carries on until, in the end, it gets there.*
 - d) Ray Stedman, *The race, of course, is life itself. . . We are all here for a purpose, and that purpose is to live our lives in fulfillment of God’s intent for us. This requires not only faith in God’s revelation, as we have seen, but also perseverance and endurance . . . Jesus says to the suffering saints of Smyrna, “Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10).*
 - e) Warren Wiersbe, *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.*
 - f) Raymond Brown, *Running with perseverance is possible only whilst they are looking not to the encouraging witnesses, the present contestants, the ultimate goal, or even the promised reward; but to Christ alone, or they will either drop out through distraction or collapse with exhaustion.*

2. Our supreme example of faith is Jesus (2), *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 - a. *looking to Jesus*
 - 1] Introductory notes
 - a] The word used for *looking* is that which means to deliberately look away from other things.
 - b] Douglas Mangum, *Readers are urged to look to the one who not only exemplified enduring faith, but also founded and perfected it.*
 - c] Raymond Brown, *Believers rely completely on him, for he ran the greatest race right to its finish, and we come to fullness of life only in him . . . No man or woman can hope to stay the course in such a hazardous contest without divine aid. But this letter and the rest of the New Testament assure us that the promised help is in Jesus. We must look away to him.*
 - 2] *the founder*
 - a] Zane Hodges, *The word “author” . . . suggests that Jesus “pioneered” the path of faith Christians should follow.*
 - b] Thomas Constable, *He is our “author” (lit. file leader, captain, pioneer; 2:10). It was by looking to Him in faith that we were saved.*
 - c] Raymond Brown, *Christ is described here as the pathfinder or trail-blazer of faith. He certainly initiated our faith as Christians and is used to bring many sons to glory (2:10), but he is also the pioneer of those Old Testament saints whose valiant deeds have just been described.*
 - 3] *perfecter of our faith*
 - a] Warren Wiersbe, *The phrase “by faith” (or “through faith”) is used twenty-one times in Hebrews 11, indicating that it is faith in Christ that enables us to endure.*
 - b] Buist Fanning, *He alone is the source of hope and help in their time of need. Looking to Him in faith and devotion is the central theological and practical message of Hebrews.*
 - c] Raymond Brown, *He brings the faith of the former saints (11:40) and ours to triumphant completion. He makes it all perfect and he alone. Our moral integrity is essential, but that cannot bring our faith to completion. Our devoted service is valuable, but that cannot perfect our faith. Our spiritual experiences can be inspiring and illuminating, but Jesus is faith’s only consummator.*
 - b. Distinctives of Jesus’ faith to be duplicated by His followers.
 - 1] He viewed his journey to Golgotha as joyous.
 - a] Luke 24:26, *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?*
 - b] John 17:4, *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.*
 - c] Zane Hodges, *He kept His eye on the joy set before Him, the “joy” alluded to in 1:9 wherein He obtained an eternal throne.*
 - 2] He endured suffering and shame.
 - a] Isaiah 53:3, *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*
 - b] Philippians 2:8, *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
 - c] Thomas Constable, *Jesus should be our primary model when it comes to persevering. The writer used the simple personal name “Jesus” to accent our Lord’s humanity, especially His endurance of pain, humiliation, and the disgrace of the cross . . . This is the only occurrence of “cross” outside the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles, and its presence here stresses the shame associated with Jesus’ crucifixion.*
 - d] Raymond Brown, *They might be mocked, assaulted, scourged, forsaken, handed over by informers, imprisoned, falsely accused and even killed—but so was he. In the last few days of his life especially, he had suffered all this. They must consider him and his endurance in the face of such bitter hostility, lest they become exhausted in the race . . . When we feel that we cannot summon another ounce of energy for ‘the race that is set before us,’ we must think of the race that was set before him. He endured, though his course was incomparably more difficult than ours. Jesus triumphed and, in his strength, so can we.*

- 3] He finished His journey and is seated at the Father's right hand.
- a] Hebrews 1:3, *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*
 - b] Hebrews 10:12, *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,*
 - c] Raymond Brown, *He is at the throne of God. His redemptive work complete, he waits for the consummation of the ages and for the great moment when every tongue shall confess his lordship.*
- c. Constantly keep Jesus in view (3-4)
- 1] His victory is the encouragement every Christian needs (3), ***Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.***
 - a] Key words
 - 1} *Consider* means *think out thoroughly*.
 - 2} *Hostility* carries the meaning of *rebellion against authority*. Note Jude 11, *Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion*. We must remember that our sufferings are not specifically against us but against our Savior. Jesus endured and so shall we.
 - 3} *Weary and fainthearted* reveal the physical and emotional aspects of a strenuous race.
 - b] Thomas Constable, *The readers should think upon Jesus so they might not grow tired of persevering and lose heart.*
 - c] Donald Hagner, . . . *Jesus is a model of all the suffering of the righteous at the hands of the enemies of God. Consideration of what Jesus endured will prevent the readers from growing weary and losing heart.*
 - d] William L. Lane, *The writer was well aware of the disheartened condition of his audience and was genuinely concerned that they might abandon their faith in the face of the struggles confronting them (cf. 10:32-35). He invites the congregation to compare their experience with that of Jesus and in v. 3a specifies a further consideration in the endurance of suffering by Jesus. He endured the hostile opposition of sinners . . . He did not allow weariness, despair, or discouragement to deter him from obedience.*
 - e] William Barclay, *So, this passage is in effect saying: 'Don't give up too soon; don't collapse until the winning post is passed.'*
 - f] Raymond Brown, *No man or woman can hope to stay the course in such a hazardous contest without divine aid. But this letter and the rest of the New Testament assure us that the promised help is in Jesus. We must look away to him.*
 - 2] Our sufferings don't compare with those of Jesus (4), ***In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.***
 - a] *In your struggle against sin*
 - 1} Zane Hodges, *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.*
 - 2} William L. Lane, *The sufferings of the community were insignificant in comparison with those endured by Jesus. His sufferings were both quantitatively and qualitatively greater than theirs. Yet the members of the house church appeared to be on the verge of becoming weary and disheartened. They are summoned to a firm resolve to contend for faith, regardless of the cost.*
 - 3} Donald Hagner, *Suffering is necessarily involved in being a child of God and is not a contradiction of God's love.*
 - b] *you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood*
 - 1} Thomas Constable, *Evidently there had been no martyrs among the readers yet, though the writer and the readers undoubtedly knew of Christians elsewhere who had died for their faith.*
 - 2} Raymond Brown, *It looks as though the author is here reminding his Christian friends that, although they have experienced some unpleasant hostility, they have not yet been required to pay for their faith by the surrender of their lives.*

- 3} R. Kent Hughes, . . . *he reminds them that life is not as bad as some may suppose . . . Jesus, of course, had suffered death because of his decision to stay on track—all the way to the cross. And some of the heroes of the faith so memorably praised at the end of chapter 11 had paid the ultimate price as well. But though the Hebrew church had experienced severe persecution early on, under the Emperor Claudius, no one had yet been martyred.*
- 4} William Barclay, *He pleads with them to compare what they have to suffer with what Jesus suffered. He gave up the glory which was his; he came into all the narrowness of the life of humanity; he faced hostility; in the end, he had to die upon a cross . . . Show yourself worthy of the sacrifice that others and God have made for you.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING

- B. Accept discipline as a gift from our Heavenly Father (5-11)
C Pursue righteousness as a priority (12-17)