

Jesus Christ - The Author and Finisher of Our Faith in the Book of Hebrews (Part 3 - Chapters 11-13)

Meeting 5

The book of Hebrews is a wonderful book because it is a summary of the whole Bible. To understand it you must read the Bible. Chapter 12 is very practical – it tells us to run the race and how to run it to reach the goal. It would not be good if it only showed us the goal but did not show us how to get there. Don't become weary or discouraged because it is not an easy goal to reach. Nothing is easy. To get a degree in architecture you need endurance or else you will quit. If you study for four years but quit in the fifth year, the university will not give you half of a diploma – you will get nothing! I have seen so many people quit this race halfway. If we quit so close to the goal, we will not get the reward. This is why Hebrews gives us so many warnings: don't quit, don't draw back, don't drift away etc. Run the race with endurance! Consider the Lord Jesus – He did not quit. Can you imagine if the Lord said, "I can't make it," and quit when it was time for Him to go to the cross? As a human being like us, it was not easy for Him to go to the cross. So, in the garden at Gethsemane He prayed, *"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"* (Matt. 26:39b). How wonderful! He finished the course! If we see what He has done, may we not become weary and discouraged as we run this race. After so many years, praise the Lord, we are still here! I hope that we will not quit but will continue to run this race until the Lord comes.

"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4). Are you fighting and striving against sin and temptations, or do you give in to sin right away? Have you learned to say to sin, "No, I am not going to do that! I am not going to give in to you!" Learn to say "No!" to strive against sin and temptation. This is a practice. "Striving"

means that there is a battle! When you play soccer, it is a battle. If your opponent comes towards you and you just move out of the way for him, you will never win. You should stop him and take the ball away from him, and then hold on to it and let no one take it away from you. In the same way, we must fight and strive against sin even “to bloodshed.” The apostles strove against sin until they became martyrs. “Martyr” is the same word as “witness.” When you tell people about the Lord Jesus and of what you have experienced, you are a witness. When they kill you because of your witness, you are a martyr. To witness is not just to speak and tell people about Christ, but to give your life for it because you know it is real and because you don’t want people to be lost and to perish. *“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin,”* that is, to martyrdom. Here “sin” is the personification of Satan. We are striving against the devil himself. That is why Paul, Peter and James said, *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (Jam. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9; Eph. 6:11-16). Learn to resist the devil: “No! Get behind me, Satan! Get far away from here! Disappear!”

We are striving against Satan and the power of darkness today. Don’t just take in the world situation and think it is normal. If you have the eyes to see, you will see that it is not normal! When the Lord Jesus came on this earth, people did not have eyes to see the real situation, but the Lord saw it! Everyone thought Judaism was a wonderful religion and respected it. But Jesus called the religious leaders “Brood of vipers!” (Matt. 12:34; 23:33). When they said Abraham is their father, He told them that the devil is their father not Abraham (John 8:39-41, 44)! John the Baptist also told the Pharisees coming to be baptized, *“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance”* (Matt. 3:7-8).

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons” (Heb. 12:5a). God speaks to you as to sons. No parent would allow their children to fall into a trap. What are the exhortations from God? You think they are problems, but God is using them to discipline you. You ask why those things are happening to you. It is because God is using the problems to teach you something. How else will you learn? After you finish architecture school you cannot immediately build a house because you also need practical experience. The seriously ill will

look for the best physician with the most experience in treating patients, not the new grads with no experience. Spiritually it is the same. You cannot just learn the Bible doctrinally and think you know everything. The practical experience is important – you need to go through the exhortations, difficulties, and challenges in your daily living.

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD” (Heb. 12:5b). In verse 2, we see Jesus who endured the cross, despising the shame. Now in verse 5, we see that this is the way God will chastise us and discipline us. Someone in your family might say a little sentence that will cause a volcanic explosion. Are you an explosive Christian, who is triggered by any little thing? We need the discipline of the Lord! How will you learn that unless you are in difficult environments? How will you train to endure, to have patience, and to be able to brush it off and keep your mouth closed? We must learn to take and apply the wonderful humanity of Christ, and not just have the knowledge of His perfect humanity. Yes, Jesus Christ is perfect, but I am not. So, I have to use this opportunity: *“Now is the time for me to take Christ!”*

“... nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him” (Heb. 12:5c). Have you ever been rebuked by God directly or in the reading of God’s word? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that the Word of God is the breath of God and is profitable *“for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete...”* Suppose I am sick and don’t know it, that would not be good for me. So, God’s word will expose you in order to heal you. Praise the Lord! Don’t be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him! When you are rebuked, tell Him, *“Thank You, Lord Jesus! This is a wonderful chance for me to gain You and to be perfected to reach the goal!”*

“For whom the LORD loves, He chastens” (Heb. 12:6a). We have to learn this! Those who are doing the chastening must do it with love. If you chasten someone with anger saying, *“Why did you do this! You never learn!”* then that person will not accept the rebuke but will react. Chasten with love, as our heavenly Father does. And those who are chastened must realize that it is being done out of love because He cares for us. Who else will care for you in such a way – your friends? No!

“The LORD” refers to God our Father. *“For whom the LORD loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”* (Heb. 12:6-7). Spare the rod, spoil the child (source Prov. 13:24). Everyone knows that saying, but nobody likes it because everyone likes to be spoiled. But spoiling you is not real love. Real love will tell you the truth – as Paul said, *“speaking the truth in love”* (Eph. 4:15).

“But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons” (Heb. 12:8). I don’t chasten other people’s children, but I do chasten my own children.

“Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect...” (Heb. 12:9a). “Respect” is a good word. In Malachi, God said, *“If then I am the Father, where is My honor?”* (Mal. 1:6b). Learn to respect your parents. *“...Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?”* (Heb. 12:9b). Then we will have life and grow and mature in life. You cannot mature spiritually without chastening. We all need chastening!

“For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness” (Heb. 12:10). God is holy – holiness is the very nature of God. We as His children should be like Him – especially the priesthood must be holy. Peter wrote, *“Be holy, for I am holy”* (1 Pet. 1:16). It is impossible for me as a man to have children that are monkeys. Children should always have the same nature as the father. We are born again, born of God. And as we grow in our spiritual life and are chastened and disciplined by the Lord, we will be changed into His likeness. We will be holy, as He is holy; righteous, as He is righteous; perfect, as He is perfect (Matt. 5:48). This is why we must leave the elementary principles of Christ and go on to maturity (Heb. 6:1). Salvation is not just about believing in the existence of God and Christ – that is the foundation, the elementary principles of the word of God – but now you must have the glorious and wonderful faith described in Hebrews 11 to perfect you. There are so many examples of this faith for us in that chapter, but the best example

is our Lord Jesus Christ, who went through more sufferings than any of us did to reach the goal (Heb. 12:2-3)!

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful” (Heb. 12:11a). At the moment you are being chastened you may shed some tears. That is normal and is our experience. *“...nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”* (Heb. 12:11b). These are perfect words! If you pay attention to them, you can learn a lot! This is training for you. It trains your character; it trains you to turn to the Lord to gain the humanity of the Lord Jesus. Without all of these problems, how will you experience the humanity of the Lord? Usually, it is only in situations that your humanity fails that you say, “Lord, I take Your humanity. I am going to eat more of You, the unleavened cake, the bread that came from above, and purge away all the leaven that is within me.” This is the real way to do it! Otherwise, we will just complain. Praise the Lord! We want to yield the peaceable fruit that goes with righteousness. Peace and righteousness are twins – you cannot have one without the other. We need to be trained.

“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb. 12:12). Have you ever seen hands that hang down and feeble knees, especially after a lot of hard work? We should not be like that. *“And make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed”* (Heb. 12:13).

Then positively, we need to *“Pursue peace with all people...”* (Heb. 12:14a). If you have peace, that means you have self-control. You have no outbursts. You learn to take Christ and let the peace of God rule in your heart (Col. 3:15). Believe in that! Christ is our peace and peace offering. *“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord”* (Heb. 12:14). You must desire to be holy to see the Lord. You cannot see Him with your physical eyes on your face, but you can see Him with the inner eyes in your heart. Paul prayed for the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to open the eyes of our hearts (Eph. 1:17-18). This is why God said that these people *“have eyes and see not”* because they only see outward things but not the real things, and *“have ears and hear not”* (Jer. 5:21). Do not be like that! We have outer ears

to hear outward sounds and inner ears to hear the speaking of the Spirit, *“He who has an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit says...”* (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

“Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God” (Heb. 12:15a). The grace of God is so rich, but you fall short because you don’t know how to gain it and apply it. If you fall short of the grace of God, there is a warning, *“...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble”* (Heb. 12:15b). You will say, *“Where is God? He didn’t help me. He didn’t listen to me.”* You expect Him to listen to you, but you don’t listen to Him. Then there will be bitterness. You may not realize it at first because the root starts out very small. So, you think you’re still okay. But all roots grow even though you cannot see that happening underground. If bitter roots grow in your heart, your faith will disappear slowly and, in the end, you will not care about God anymore. *“...and by this many become defiled”* (Heb. 12:15c), meaning, that kind of behavior will influence others. It will cause trouble everywhere – in the family, in the church, and at work. Don’t let that happen to your heart. We don’t want to be like that. This is a warning!

Even worse than the root of bitterness: *“Lest there be any fornicator...”* (Heb. 12:16a). The flesh will come out. Then you are free to do anything you like, whatever your flesh tells you to do. You will have no strength to overcome the flesh; you will fall into it. And even worse is if you sell your birthright: *“...or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright”* (Heb. 1:6b). Esau sold his birthright! The birthright is very important! You may not be the firstborn in your family; but spiritually, as sons of God, what is your position – the thousandth born or the firstborn? You are a firstborn because you were baptized into Him! You became one with Him, and He is in you. So, you partook not only of His life but also of His birthright. As a man is your head the only part of you, or is your hand also a part of you? Your whole body is one with you. We were baptized into Christ; we are His body! This is why Zion is called the church of the firstborn, plural, because we all are the firstborn (Heb. 12:23)! Spiritually, in the church, all of us are partakers of His birthright! That is why you can be a king and own the whole universe as your inheritance. You even get a double portion if you are a firstfruit at the second coming of Christ and will be reigning with

Christ for a thousand years! Otherwise, if you lose your birthright, you will lose a portion of your inheritance – the portion of reigning with Christ for a thousand years. You cannot lose your salvation, but you can lose or sell your birthright. Whatever price you sell your birthright for is always too cheap. Esau despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob. Don't do that!

“For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears” (Heb. 12:17). That is a very serious warning! It is important to have this living faith (Heb. 11:1) bringing us all the way to the goal, to reach maturity, to run this race! Don't be weary! Don't be discouraged! Don't let your hands hang down! Straighten up your life, hold it together through Christ! Run the race with endurance! We will all make it by this wonderful faith! This is an encouragement.

All those listed in Hebrews 11 obtained a good testimony but did not receive the fulfillment of the ultimate promise (see outline II.H.). What are these promises? Concerning the first and second coming of the Messiah, the Savior King, Peter said that the prophets searched diligently, looking for the time when the Messiah would first come (1 Pet. 1:10). They read it in Zechariah: *“Behold, your King is coming to you”* (Zech. 9:9). They didn't see His first coming, they only knew of it and saw it from afar. The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, of course, will be even greater. At His second coming, they will be partakers if they are these witnesses described in Hebrews 11 together with us if we make it, too. Another promise of God is the better covenant. They were in the old covenant, which is not bad, but the new covenant is better. Instead of having to carry the law on tablets of stone, now in the new covenant, the Lord says: *“I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts”* (Heb. 8:10b). The ink is the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3). He is putting His law in your mind so that you will not forget it, and so that it will become a part of your nature. And there is also the promise of the heavenly Jerusalem – when will you get there? Now! Right now, we are having a real foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem and are in the process of building that heavenly city. We have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God. Abraham was looking for it, waiting and seeing it from afar. And there are many more wonderful

promises! We are really in a better position today. We need to be thankful!

Note: The above content has not been reviewed by the speaker.