

## The Christian's Race, and The Standard by which the Race is Run

### Introduction:

1. The book of Hebrews was written to Hebrew Christians. One great objective of this book was to instill faith and confidence in Hebrew Christians, so that they would not fall back either into the ways of the world, or the works of the Law of Moses which had been fulfilled by Christ, and succeeded by His New Covenant, Heb. 3:12-13; 6:1; 7:12; 8:6.
2. Chapter eleven has been called "faith's hall of fame," for it cited many examples of Old Testament worthies who demonstrated what it meant to "*believe to the saving of the soul*," Heb. 10:39. In chapter 11, the writer defined faith, Heb. 11:1, cited the necessity of faith, Heb. 11:6, and then mentioned so many who demonstrated true faith. These are the ones contextually referred to in Heb. 12:1, as being that "*great cloud of witnesses*" by whom we are "*compassed about*."
3. Chapter 12 thus begins by reminding us of their example, and then urging us to "*run with patience the race that is set before us*," v. 1.
4. **Title:** The Christian's Race, and the Standard by which the Race is Run. Text: Heb. 12:1-29.
5. Brief Outline of Hebrews 12:
  - a. "*Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*," Heb. 12:1-3.
  - b. Perils that threaten the life of faith, Heb. 12:4-17.
  - c. The nature of the Old Covenant contrasted with the new, Heb 12:18-24.
  - d. Sober Warnings, Heb. 12:25-29.

### Discussion:

#### I. Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, Heb. 12:1-3.

- A. The life of a Christian is likened to a race.
  1. To successfully run this race there are certain things to be laid aside, Heb. 12:1.
  2. We must look to Jesus, v. 2. (a Runner must keep his eyes on the goal).
  3. We must "*run with endurance*," (or "*patience*," KJV) the race set before us." Three stages to a race:
    - a. Preparation.
    - b. Patience, Phil. 3:12-13.
    - c. Prize, Phil. 3:14.
- B. Why must we look to Jesus?
  1. He is "*the author and finisher of our faith*," v. 2. He is our pacemaker and our strength, Phil. 4:13, and gives us our "second wind."
  2. For "*the joy...set before Him*" He "*endured the cross*," v. 2. The "*joy*" was in the ultimate effect of His death, it being our salvation! For this "*joy*" He became the "*man of sorrows*," Isa. 53:3.
  3. Because He ran His race and was victorious, Heb. 12:2.
  4. Lest we become "*weary and discouraged*," Heb. 12:3. Cf. Rom. 8:17-18.

#### II. Perils that threaten the life of faith, Heb. 12:4-17.

- A. Failure to endure chastening, Heb. 12:4-13.
  1. Chastening comes to those who strive against sin, Heb. 12:4-5.
    - a. Some had even "*resisted unto blood, striving against sin*," Heb. 12:4.
      - (1) Jesus did, Matt. 26:28.
      - (2) Paul, the probable writer of Hebrews, had, Acts 16:13; 2 Cor. 11:23-25.
    - b. Yet many of the Hebrew saints had "*forgotten the exhortation*," Heb. 12:5-6; cf. Prov. 3:11-12.
      - (1) And some today think they are going beyond the call of duty if they have to sit five minutes "overtime" in order to listen to God's saving word – while sitting on padded pews in an air-conditioned building!
  2. Chastening is evidence of divine Sonship, Heb. 12:7-10.
    - a. God chastens us even as human fathers chasten their children.
      - (1) Human fathers who properly chasten their children receive respect – yet their motive in chastening may not be as noble as God's motive (it being that we might "*live*," it is for our "*profit*," and that we may be "*partakers of His holiness*," vs, 9-10.
      - (2) No child of God who lives a natural life span should expect to enter heaven without having to pass through the furnace of affliction!
  3. Chastening yields good fruit. Heb. 12:11; cf. 2 Cor. 4:17; Psalm 119:71.
    - a. Therefore "*lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees*... Heb. 12:12-13.
- B. A failure to "*pursue peace...and holiness*," Heb. 12:14; cf. Matt. 5:8-9; Eph. 4:3; 2 Cor. 7:1.
- C. Becoming defiled through bitterness, Heb. 12:15.

D. Fornication, and adultery, Heb. 12:16, a “*heinous crime*” (KJV), Job 31:11!

E. A Lack of Respect for things spiritual, Heb. 12:16-17; cf. Gen. 25:34.

### III. The Nature of the Old Covenant contrasted with the New (Heb. 12:18-24.

A. That to which National Israel had come:

1. “*The mountain that may be touched,*” v. 18. Mt. Sinai, which:
  - a. “*Burned with fire,*” v. 18, f. Deut. 4:11 And which caused fear, Deut. 5:4-5.
  - b. “*And to blackness and darkness and tempest,*” v. 18.
  - c. “*And the sound of a trumpet...*,” v. 19.  
(1) This also is included as a part of their frightening experience. Ex. 19:16; 20:18.
  - d. And “*the voice of words,*” v. 19.  
(1) A voice the whole group heard (v. 19; Deut. 5:22), which “*shook the earth,*” Heb. 12:26!
2. The effect of all this on the people.
  - a. The people were so frightened that they begged (“*intreated,*” KJV) “*that the word should not be spoken to them anymore,*” v. 19.  
(1) The giving of the law excited terror; the gospel brings peace.
  - b. Even Moses said “*I exceedingly fear and quake,*” v. 21!

B. That to which Spiritual Israel Has come:

1. “*But you have come to mount Zion,*” Heb. 12:22.
  - a. Moses’ law was given at Mt. Sinai, but Christians submit to Christ’s law which went forth “*out of Zion,*” or Jerusalem, v. 22; cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; Luke 24:47.
2. “*And to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,*” Heb. 12:22.
  - a. Heaven is meant. The Old law did not make provision for them to enter this city. Heb. 9:8.
3. “*To an innumerable company of angels,*” Heb. 12:22; cf. Heb. 1:14.
4. “*And church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,*” Heb. 12:23; Rom. 8:29; Phil. 4:3.
5. “*To God the Judge of all,*” Heb. 12:23.
6. “*To the spirits of just men made perfect,*” Heb. 12:23, who “*died in faith,*” Heb. 11:13.
7. “*To Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant...*,” Heb. 12:24.
  - a. Moses was the mediator of the Old; Christ is the Mediator of the new and “*better covenant,*” Heb. 8:6.
8. “*To the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel,*” v. 24.
  - a. Jesus offered His Own blood; Abel offered animal blood which cannot take away sins. Heb. 10:4.
  - b. Perhaps this refers to the blood of Abel which Cain shed, and which calls for vengeance, Gen. 4:10,11. Christ’s blood cries out for mercy!

### IV. Sober Warnings, Heb. 12:25-29.

A. “*See that you do not refuse Him that speaks,*” Heb. 12:25.

1. God is meant. At Sinai He spoke through Moses. Now He speaks through His Son, Heb. 1:1-2.
  - a. When God speaks we had better listen!
2. At Sinai God’s voice “*shook the earth,*” Heb. 12:26; Ex. 19:18), but God has promised to shake not only the earth, but “*also heaven!*”
  - a. This shaking will bring about the “*removal...of things that are made,*” Heb. 12:27; the material universe! 2 Peter 3:10.
  - b. When these things are shaken that which will be left intact will be the “*kingdom which cannot be shaken,*” Heb. 12:27-28.

B. “*Let us have grace,*” Heb. 12:28, or “*let us show gratitude,*” NASV.

C. Let us “*Serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,*” v. 28.

1. Because “*our God is a consuming fire,*” Heb. 12:29.

### Conclusion:

1. Let us faithfully run the race set before us, always being careful to follow God’s divinely inspired rulebook!
2. But **to run** the race, we must **enter** the race; to enter the race we must **obey** the gospel.

--Bobby Witherington, July 17, 2016