

Commentary on Hebrews Chapters 12, by Chuck Smith 11.3.24

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November Memory Verse, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

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Wherefore, seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses ([Hbr 12:1](#)),

What this does not mean is that the Old Testament saints, which are spoken of in chapter 11, are sitting there in heaven watching the activities on the earth. It doesn't mean that they are just watching us to see how we are going to react and respond and we've got this big gallery up here of Old Testament saints. It does mean that their life of faith and accomplishments through faith are a witness to us of what faith can do when we exercise faith in our own lives. Their lives bear witness to us of the value of walking with God. And seeing that their lives are such a witness to us,

let us run with patience the race that is set before us, as we look unto Jesus ([Hbr 12:1-2](#))

So their lives become an example to us of the life of faith, but we look from them to the greatest example of all, and that is of Jesus Christ. We're encompassed with this great cloud of witnesses. They bear witness to us of the value of living for God, living a life of faith and commitment to God.

Life here is likened unto a race, as it is many places in the New Testament. Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" ([II Timothy 4:7](#)). The racecourse, I've completed it. He said, "They which run in a race run all, only one receives the prize. So run, that ye may obtain." Give all you've got to this race, go all out.

Seeing we're encompassed about with this great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us as we look unto Jesus.

God has given to every man a measure of faith. The faith that I have in my heart is a gift of God. Paul said, "By Grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourself; it's a gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast" ([Ephesians 2:8](#)). Our salvation, the

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faith by which I believe, is God's gift. In [I Corinthians 12](#) Paul lists faith as one of the gifts of the Spirit.

Looking unto him the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross ([Hbr 12:2](#)),

Jesus is our example as we run the race. There are going to be hardships along the way. God doesn't promise us an easy life. "In this world," Jesus said, "you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)).

despising the shame ([Hbr 12:2](#)), In fact, it was loathsome to Him.

You remember, in the garden He was praying that God if possible would take an alternate course. "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but Thy will be done" ([Matthew 26:39](#)). If man can be saved by being religious, by being good, by being sincere, by being anything; let this cup pass from Me. But, Jesus drank the cup. He endured the cross, though He despised the shame.

And is now sat down at the right hand of the throne of God ([Hbr 12:2](#)).

Having triumphed, He now sits there in the eternal glory.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself ([Hbr 12:3](#)),

"The contradiction of sinners." Here is a man whose life was marked by love, by goodness, by good deeds. One time when they took up stones to kill Him, He said, "Hey, I've done a lot of good things. I've healed the blind. I've caused the lame to walk. I've restored life to the dead. For which one of these things are you going to stone Me now?" ([John 10:32](#)). "Hey we're not stoning you for... but because You, being a man, are constantly saying You're the Son of God." He went around doing good, and yet, the most evil deed ever was perpetrated against Him when they crucified Him on the cross. Here a man who did nothing but good is the victim of one of the foulest deeds. Here a man who proclaimed and taught love as the supreme value of life, and then demonstrated that love, being killed in the most hateful way, receiving the venom of man. Such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

lest you be wearied in your mind. For which one of you have [actually] resisted unto blood, as you were striving against sin ([Hbr 12:3-4](#)).

Here was Jesus striving against sin and He resisted unto the shedding of His blood. But you don't have it that bad. None of us have been martyred for our faith in Jesus Christ. We may receive some verbal abuse, and it is possible that some of you have actually experienced physical abuse. It could be that you have family that don't understand and you've experience physical abuse, but so little compared to what Jesus endured.

Now he changes the subject and deals with the subject now of God's correcting procedures with His children. Our Father is a loving Father and He loves us so much that He corrects us when we do wrong. Now, I want you to notice that God's work in our

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lives is not that of punishment. And I think that in dealing with our children and in their mistakes, they understand that we are not punishing them, but we're seeking to correct them. God's dealing with us is dealing with us for correction, and correction is for our good and for our benefit.

It is true God does watch us, not as a policeman to put the handcuffs on us the moment we do something wrong, throw us into jail. Watching us as a loving Father so concerned with His child He just can't take His eyes off you.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as unto children, My son, despise thou not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receives. And if you endure chastening, God is dealing you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you are actually a bastard, and not son ([Hbr 12:5-8](#)).

Don't despise the chastening of the Lord. It's proof that God loves you. It's proof that you're a son.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness ([Hbr 12:9-10](#)).

Our parents corrected for their pleasure. In other words, to make it easier on them many times. We had rules in our house that were just making things easier on my parents. A lot of the correction was for their convenience, or a lot of the rules were for their convenience. They weren't necessarily thinking of my good always. They were thinking of their own convenience many times. How many times I heard that story, "Now, Son, this hurts me worse than it hurts you." Somehow I never believed that until I became a father, then I understood. When God corrects us, it's always for our profit, for our benefit.

Now if we revered our earthly fathers, who trained us and brought us up in the right path, how much more should we respect our heavenly Father who for our profit corrects us?

Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous ([Hbr 12:11](#)),

And I'm sure we can all say "amen" to that. When you're going through a chastening process it's never a real joy. How many of you really enjoyed the spankings that you got? It was to me... you know, I'd always go into that "nobody loves me" mood. I'd be in the dark bedroom, because Dad would take me into the bedroom. The family would be out there playing in the other room and all. You could hear all the noise out there, but you'd be in the dark bedroom, and Dad would talk to me, and then he would spank me. Of course, I would yell so that he would go easier, make him think he was really getting through. Then he'd walk out and close the door and it would be dark. I'd lie there on the

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bed and I'd cry; wish I were dead. They'd be sorry then that they spanked me if they came in and I was dead. Then I'd think of my little brother how he would be crying if I were dead and I'd cry more. Now, if any of you are psychologists you can have a lot of fun with that, I suppose. But you lie there for a while and you go through the whole little routine, and then it's all over. "Sounds like they are really having fun, what am I doing in here? Go out and see what is going on. Why are they laughing?"

But during the chastening process it isn't pleasant. It isn't joyous, but what is great is the fruit, or the result of it. The relief of the guilt. Oh, how beautiful that is. When it is all over and you feel the sense of guilt is gone. Yes, I had disobeyed my dad. I did what he told me not to do. I got caught and now I've been punished and I'm no longer guilty. I'm now again a member of the family and I can go out and play Monopoly with them, and I can join in and participate. During the chastening process itself not so joyous,

but grievous: nevertheless [the fruit of it], the after effects of it the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby ([Hbr 12:11](#)).

If I will accept this as God's correction. I've been wrong and God now is correcting me. Not easy, not an easy thing to take, but I'm His son and He loves me and He's not going to let me get by with it. And after He has corrected me, that peaceable fruit of righteousness, that peace that I feel within as now fellowship with God is fully restored.

Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down ([Hbr 12:12](#)),

We get sort of beat when going through a chastening process. We are not so apt to be lifting our hands in praises to the Lord, but God is really dealing heavy with us. We sort of have our problems rejoicing and praising God. But lift up your holy hands which are hanging down,

the feeble knees ([Hbr 12:12](#));

Return to that place of worship, return to that place of full fellowship.

And make straight paths for your feet [or even paths], lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ([Hbr 12:12-14](#)):

Interesting, isn't it? Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Follow peace with all men and holiness. We have a tendency to put down holiness because of what people have done with holiness--making holiness a way of dress, making holiness a thing of outward appearance. So we have what are known as the holiness groups, the Pentecostal holiness, Pilgrim holiness and other holiness groups. And to them the interpretation of holiness is often the women not wearing any makeup, not wearing any gold jewelry, and a matter of the way you dress. And we have properly revolted against that interpretation of holiness. Holiness is a thing of the heart, not of dress. You can go through all the outward appearances of holiness according to their standards of holiness, and they do have their public standards of holiness. You can deny yourself all

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of those things that they say are not holy, but within your heart you can still be just as filthy and impure as anybody else. True holiness is a thing of the heart.

Boy, you ought to have read the list of things that were the do nots for me as I was a little kid growing up in a holiness church. I mean, about the only thing that they left for us teenagers was necking, going out and parking. I mean you couldn't go to shows. You couldn't go dancing. You couldn't do anything. Fortunately they never put a prohibition on that, so we were left something. And here we thought we were all these righteous little prudes, you know, because we didn't do all of these negative, horrible, awfully, worldly, sinful things.

Jesus really laid it on the Pharisees because their whole concept of holiness was outward. It was in rules and regulations, in outward conformities to certain laws. But there were such inconsistencies there and Jesus pointed out the inconsistencies. But they didn't like that. He said, "You strain at a gnat but you swallow a camel."

But yet, because of that we should not neglect the fact that there is a true holiness that each of us should aspire to. Living a holy life, living a pure life, living a life that would be pleasing to God. Without holiness no man shall see God. That should concern each of us.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God ([Hbr 12:15](#));

There has to be real care taken that we do not presume upon God's grace. It is not a cloak to cover our lasciviousness. It is something there for our benefit and our good, that we will rely and trust totally in Jesus Christ rather than trusting in our own works. It is there to bring us to God, because my works can never bring me to God. But it is not there just to cover over any kind of lying and stealing and cheating and all that I might want to do, saying, "Well, God's grace covers." We actually then fail of the grace of God. We don't understand the grace of God.

lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled ([Hbr 12:15](#));

Bitterness is something we have to really guard against. What a destroyer it can be of ourselves. Oh, what problems a bitter attitude can create physically to you. The chemicals that are produced by your glands when your heart and mind are filled with bitterness, destructive chemicals tearing your body, and what it does to others.

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright ([Hbr 12:16](#)).

Esau came in. He had been out in the fields. He was hungry. He was famished. Here his dainty brother Jacob had been fixing up some delicious tidbits. He said, "Awe, give me some of that. Smells great!" Jacob said, "Well, trade it for your birthright." "Hey man, I'm going to die of hunger. What good is my birthright? Sure." He didn't care about his birthright. Sold his birthright for a mess of potage.

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For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance ([Hbr 12:17](#)),

The reason for his rejection, he found no place for repentance.

Now beware, an unrepentant heart, set in my ways; I won't change.

even though he sought it with tears ([Hbr 12:17](#)).

Now don't make a mistake here thinking that he could not repent. That he was trying to repent, but couldn't. No, all he sought with tears was the blessing. When Jacob received the blessing and Esau finally came in with the venison for his old man, and he said, "Hey, Dad, I fixed the barbecued venison just like you like." And he said, "Then who was it that was here earlier? I've already given the blessing." He said, "No, Dad, I'm Esau your son." "Well," he said, "it must have been Jacob then, but I blessed him." He said, "Oh, but bless me." And he started to cry. He wanted the blessings of the father. And he sought the blessings with tears. And he said, "I can't. I've already given everything to your brother." And so, though he sought the blessings with tears, there was still no repentance, no place of repentance in his heart. All he wanted was the blessings, the benefits.

There are a lot people like that, and we are told to beware lest we be like Esau who really disregarded the birthright, didn't care about it. And thus, lost the blessing. Some of you don't really care about being a Christian, but you want the blessing of Christianity. "I want to live in a Christian nation. I don't want to live in a pagan nation, but me a Christian, no way, man. Live in Russia, no way, man. I want the blessings of freedom that Christianity brings wherever it goes." But there is no place of repentance.

Now the contrast. He is writing to Hebrews who had been under the law, who were now come to a new covenant through Jesus Christ, and thus, a new relationship with God in the new covenant. He speaks again in contrasting now the old covenant of the law. And he said,

For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, that burned with fire, nor unto the blackness, and darkness, of the tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a spear: And so awesome was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) ([Hbr 12:18-21](#)).

Let's go back for a moment to Exodus, chapter 19, and read the account of Mount Sinai where God gave the law to Moses. Let's start reading with verse 14. "And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and he sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, 'Be ready for in the third day: do not come to your wives.' And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the

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people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord and gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also come near,'" and so forth ([Exodus 19:14-22](#)). And here is this awesome scene, and then in the next chapter God gave the law to Moses.

He said, "You haven't come to this awesome scene of Mount Sinai. The mountain that couldn't be touched with hands. People dared not come close. The mountain that was covered with the smoke and the fire and the thunders, and the darkness, the tempest, the trumpet sound. So awesome was the sight that Moses himself quaked."

But you've come [to a different mount] to mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, unto an innumerable company of angels, unto the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks of better things than that of Abel ([Hbr 12:22-24](#)).

Haven't come to Mount Sinai, which, if you came to it, you'd be thrust through or stoned. But we've come into another mount, to Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, this heavenly Jerusalem, the myriads of angels, the church of the firstborn, born again unto God, the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus. So,

See that you refuse not him that speaks ([Hbr 12:25](#)).

"Now God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to us through the prophets hath spoken to us through His own dear Son," coming back now to the first chapter, the introduction to the book. The book of Hebrews is the message of God to man through His Son. The better covenant that God established through the Son, the better way, the better sacrifice. So be careful that you not refuse Him that speaks, that is, Jesus Christ and the revelation of God given to us through Him.

for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth [that is, Moses], much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven ([Hbr 12:25](#)):

So Jesus came down to speak to us the words of God, to reveal to man the truth of God, to speak to us the truth of God. So be careful that you don't refuse that word of Jesus Christ. For they that despised Moses' law, rejected it, were stoned if they had two or three witnesses against them. How much more shall we not escape, if we turn from the word of Jesus Christ spoken to us, this heavenly messenger.

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Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the heavens ([Hbr 12:26](#)).

There is going to be a tremendous cataclysmic catastrophe that is going to befall the universe. The Bible speaks about it in several places. The Bible says that the heavens are going to be rolled back like a scroll and the earth is going to stagger to and fro like a drunken man. Be moved out of its orbit. It speaks of a meteorite shower falling to the earth, a tremendous shaking not only of the earth but of the heavens too.

And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, and those things which cannot be shaken may remain ([Hbr 12:27](#)).

So God's going to shake the earth once more. He shook it when He spoke from Mount Sinai, but once more. He said, "I'm not going to shake just the earth, I'm going to shake the heavens too until everything that can be shaken will be removed and only that which cannot be shaken shall remain."

Peter, in talking about this great cataclysm that is coming, talks about the heavens being on fire, melting with a fervent heat, the elements dissolving. Seeing then, he said, talking of the material universe, that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be? Everything that can be shaken is going to be shaken; that is the material world. Only those things which cannot be shaken will remain; that is the spiritual things. You have only one life, and it will soon be over and only the things that you do for Christ are going to last. Everything else is going to be destroyed. The whole material universe is going to go up one day. It's going to be wiped out.

Now if you put all of your value in material things, when this material universe goes or when you go, when death comes, you're going to be totally wiped out, because your entire value system was based on the material world around you.

If your value system is placed in the spiritual world, then that can't be shaken. That will last forever. That cannot be dissolved when the elements are all dissolved with a fervent heat. "What manner of persons ought we to be?" Peter asked. We should be spiritual. We should put our value in spiritual things. We should be walking after the Spirit. We should be living after the Spirit, and that is essentially what the Bible encourages us all the way through, telling us that the life of the Spirit is superior to the life of the flesh. And that, basically, is the message that the world hates. They don't want to hear that. They're all caught up in their little material gods, their material possessions. Their whole value system is in that. And to say that is all going to get wiped out, that's all going to be destroyed, that is a threat to them. They don't want to hear that, but it's true. God said, "I'm going to shake once again the earth and the heavens," and that signifies that anything that can be shaken is going to be removed, and only that which cannot be shaken shall remain.

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Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved [our heavenly kingdom], let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire ([Hbr 12:28-29](#)).

Very interesting! We are told in Isaiah that when God destroyed the large Assyrian army that had come against the southern kingdom of Judah, in one night an angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian army and wiped out 185,000 troops; one night, destroyed the army, one angel. In the morning when the Israelites got up, looked out to see the enemy that had been camped around them, there was nothing but these dead corpses, 185,000. And it said a fear gripped the hearts of the sinners in Zion. Those that were in the city who were sinners, man, they really got scared. They saw what the fire of God could do. They said, "Who among us can dwell in the midst of this devouring fire?" ([Isaiah 33:14](#)). They got panicked when they saw what God's fire can do. Our God is a consuming fire.

Well, that all depends. Fire is an interesting phenomena of nature. One thing you can say about fire is that it is everywhere. There is what they call eremacausis. Long word, but it means the slow burning fire of nature. Take a piece of metal and lay it outside here, and in just a short little while on that bare metal you'll see little bronze specks on it. What are those little brown specks? Oxidation, the slow burning fire of nature, as nature starts to deteriorate that piece of metal, starts to eat it away. Slow burning fire of nature, destroying, eating away.

No sooner did we drive the last nail into this building the thing started slowly eroding--eremacausis. We've got to keep this thing up. We've got to keep painting. We've got to keep... we've got a process of continual renewal of this thing, because of eremacausis, the slow burning fire of nature that is gradually devouring everything.

Fire--an interesting substance, because it can consume. But fire is also used to transform into permanency. If you put the alloy into the fire and heat it, it becomes steel; hardened and tempered by the fire. So fire is interesting. It can transmit something into permanency while consuming others. It all depends on the material that it is working with.

The sinners in Zion said, "Who can escape the fire of God?" The answer is no one can escape the fire of God. It is everywhere. You can't escape it. The question is, what is it doing to you? And it all depends on what you are. If you are a child of God, the fire of God is transmitting and transforming you into permanency. If you're not, it's a consuming fire that will one day totally consume you.

Please join us for this event at Open Door Bible Church.

West Ossipee, NH, same parking lot as McDonalds.

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