

It's Our Turn (Hebrews 12:1–4)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (10/1/2017)

Introduction

1. Paul's aim (again) is to warn and encourage the disheartened saints that God's plan had not failed nor had He given up.
 - a. Tribulation and testing should be expected as the normal experience of the believer who is being sanctified and made holy (2 Tim. 2:11–13).
 - b. 2 Corinthians 4:7–18 parallels Hebrews in this emphasis—trials precede reward.
2. "To give up is faith's unforgiveable sin" (Norman Grubb cited in *Principles of Spiritual Growth* by Miles J. Stanford, pg. 90).
 - a. Israel in the wilderness refused to believe that God was providing them a Sabbath rest if they would only "*hear His voice*" and not "*harden their hearts*" (3:7–4:9).
 - b. In what may seem like a contradiction, Hebrews exhorts, "*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest*" (4:11).
3. Thus, the exhortation of 12:1 and 2, in light of the faithful saints before us, is that it is now our turn.
 - a. They died in faith, having endured every circumstance in hope of a better resurrection.
 - b. Will we follow in their train or fall under judgment like those in the wilderness whose unbelief prevailed against Him who promised?

I. The Race to Run

1. We must enter this faith-race and not fail in it for three reasons:
 - a. Unlike those faithful saints who passed before us, we are assured of something better (11:40); therefore . . .
 - b. We are encompassed with a great host of witnesses ("*those who have proved the strength and genuineness of their faith in Christ by undergoing a violent death*")—the same faithful ones of Chapter 11 who received God's witness (11:2, 4, 5, 39); therefore . . .
 - c. We have the opportunity to be *coached* by the very One who is both *predecessor* and *perfector* (One who has in His own person raised faith to its perfection)—the highest example of the faith we could follow (v. 2; 2:10, 11); therefore . . .
2. We must follow the specific instructions on how we are to run this race.
 - a. We are to lay aside every "*weight*"—everything that encumbers us and would impede us in our spiritual progress—things not necessarily sinful but clearly detrimental to the race.
 - b. We are to lay aside "*the sin*"—the disobedience of unbelief (4:1, 6, 11; 10:38, 39).
 - c. We are to "*run with endurance*," not giving in when every muscle and nerve scream in pain and exhaustion to quit. It is only he that endures unto the end that shall be saved (Matt. 24:13).
 - d. We are to run "*looking to* (to turn the eyes away from every distraction and fixing only on) *Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

II. The Prize to Win

1. Jesus *endured* (past and completed action) His awful trial of suffering because He had His sights set on the reward of suffering (v. 2). So we also must fix our eyes on the reward of enduring faith (10:35; 11:6, 26; Matt. 5:11, 12).

2. Note here the prize or consequences for enduring and completing the race.
 - a. There was the *joy* set before Him—the many sons that He would bring to glory through His suffering (2:10); our joy in the race is proving our sonship.
 - b. There was *honor* in being seated (perfect tense—seated and reigning) at the right hand of the throne of God; our honor is being seated with Him in glory (Eph. 2:6; 2 Tim. 2:12; 4:7, 8).

III. The Example to Follow

1. We are to *consider* (to study with fixed concentration—only used here in Scripture) Him as the example of our own endurance (v. 3).
2. This study should result in the motivation to endure, not *growing weary and faint*—an idiom for total physical and mental exhaustion (Deut. 20:3; Matt. 15:32; Gal. 6:9).
3. Finally, Jesus' struggle involved conflict with sinners and their *hostility* (*cf. consider*—contradiction of opposition and rebellion) against Him (v. 3).
 - a. By way of contrast, our struggle is against our own *sin*—our contradiction of opposition and rebellion against Him.
 - b. As He was crucified for us, we are to *crucify* our flesh (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13, 14). Nevertheless, in this struggle, we have not resisted to the shedding of blood.

Application

In Luke 12 and 13, Jesus instructs us to live in light of His return.

1. Watching servants are blessed (12:35–40).
2. Faithful servants are rewarded (12:43–48).
3. Wise servants are informed (12:49–59).
4. Striving servants get in the door (13:22–30).

These things, among others, are all involved in the race that we are to run with endurance.