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**HEBREWS 12 - “Pioneer and Perfecter”**

**HEBREWS 11:1**” Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for,

the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1 KJV)

Final Verse of Hebrews 11:

**Heb. 11:39-40 “***These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised,* **40**since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” <>

This ending is a “lead-in” to Chapter 12, which describes these people as “a great cloud of witnesses”.

*(This is also the verse where we get our Series Title from “Author and Finisher”.)*

**Heb 12:1-2** (KJV) “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us,* and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2**looking unto Jesus, the *“author and finisher”* of *our* faith”

*[ Story: Years ago, I was asked to speak during a church service where a popular, beloved, pastor was asked to publicly step down from ministry in a church he had been part of for many decades. As you can imagine the congregation was shocked, the people’s emotions were raw, and the entire environment was volatile and unsettling. It was the most difficult message I ever gave, I knew it would be, and that the best I could do, is somehow direct everyone’s eyes and attention off the volatility of the situation, and onto Jesus.*

*I chose for my text Hebrews 12:1&2. I told the congregation that for many years we have heard it said in scripture and sermons that our faith is not built upon a man, a church, a building, a denomination, or anything else, it is built upon Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone. We’ve all faced tough, challenging, heart wrenching, and seemingly impossible situations. Some are facing them now. The best we can do at these times is fix our eyes completely on Jesus, and nothing else, and run the race that is set before us.]*

**HEBREWS 12**

**Hebrews 12:1&2 “**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2**fixing our eyes on Jesus, the “pioneer and perfecter” of faith.”

The spent the entire previous chapter describing the great faith of those who went before us;

***Abel****,* ***Enoch****,* ***Noah****,* ***Abraham****,* ***Sarah****,* ***Isaac****,* ***Jacob****,* ***Joseph****,* ***Moses****,*

***The Israelites at the Red Sea****,* ***The Israelites at Jericho****, & even* ***Rahab the prostitute.***

The implication is that those who lived by faith, even after enduring hardship and testing, and have gone on to receive their heavenly reward in heaven and have a vantage point by which they can perhaps see what takes place in *our lives* here on earth. 👀!

Even our loved ones in the faith who have gone on to glory, are able to witness the trials and struggles we go through, and are present with Jesus who is interceding for us (according to Hebrews 7:25)

*Remember they are now like Paul who said of himself;*

***1st Cor. 13:* 12“**For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”

Who is the “Author & Finisher”? “Pioneer & Perfector”?

**[Jesus!..]**

**Hebrews 12:2**“For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3**Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Jesus’ suffering was in many ways worse than those who suffered by faith in Hebrews 11. He had in his grasp the power and glory of God to not only escape but overcome his oppressors, yet He “endured the cross, scorning its shame”, in other words He willingly suffered severe and horrific torture and death for our sake. The author tells us to “consider Him so that we don’t *“lose heart”.*

You know what “lose heart” means? Discouraged!

(Heart = “cour” in Latin), “disheartened” is the same as “discouraged”)

**John 16:33** **“**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

The “trouble” we have is not just adversaries, and circumstances that come against, us sometimes it’s our own “flesh” rising up within us, and our struggle is against sin.

**Hebrews 12:4-11“**In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5**And have you completely forgotten this word of *encouragement* that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
    and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
**6**because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
    and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”[ Prov. 3:11,12]

**7**Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? **8**If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. **9**Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! **10**They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. **11**No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

Discipline is not always punishment. When a good faither disciplines his children, it is not out of *repugnance,* it’s done out of *love.*

[<<<Story of man whom parents did not discipline, even hygiene, it was not “love”>>>].

**Hebrews 12:12-13“**Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. **13**“Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.”

God’s plan is never to do away with the lame and weak among us. He wants to encourage he discouraged and not forsake those who are hurting.

**Isa. 42:3 “**A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.”

(This is why we ALWAYS pray for healing, even in dire circumstances, not just comfort, support, and acceptance.)

**Hebrews 12:14-17 “**Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. **15**See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. **16**See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. **17**Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.”

*V. 14 “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone, AND to be holy…”*

Sometimes in the culture we live in, it seems that we have to decide whether to “live in peace with everyone” OR ‘be holy”. The author is telling us to do both!

There is a way, if we understand what it is to *“Live in Peace” and “Be Holy”.*

*Living in Peace* with everyone, does not mean forsaking your Godly values and condoning everyone’s behavior or godless beliefs. It simply means being so at peace with who Jesus is, and what He’s done in you, that the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guards your hearts and your minds as you live in Christ Jesus. This inevitably affects everything you do, say, and even how you respond to those who oppose you with truth in love.

*“Being Holy”* does not mean being flawless or piously legalistic, it simply means “Set apart”. That means that you focus, your priorities, and your heart is different than that of the world. You endeavor to speak and live in a way that submits to God’s authority above all others.

### The Mountain of Fear and the Mountain of Joy

**Hebrews 12:18-29“**You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; **19**to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, **20**because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” **21**The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.”

**22**But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,**23**to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, **24**to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

**25**See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? **26**At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” **27**The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

**28**Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, **29**for our “God is a consuming fire.” <>

Here the author is telling the Hebrews (and us), that we do not need to come to the Mount Sinai that Moses climbed in Exodus, which was a place of fear, fire, where God's holiness kept people at a distance, but we are welcomed by God’s grace to Mount Zion, the city of the living God. This is not just symbolic, but a present spiritual reality and ALSO, a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem to come.

God’s grace does not diminish His holiness; it reveals it more fully. The same God who once shook the earth will soon shake the heavens.

As believers, we are part of God’s unshakable Kingdom, and we are called to worship Him in both *gratitude and awe*, recognizing both grace and awesome power!

Sometimes we get lax and forget who we’re dealing with. We can easily become too complacent with God and neglect to approach him in “*awe and reverence”.*

*We need to remind ourselves that* our “God is a “consuming fire” and an “Awesome God.”

Song: “Awesome God!” (1988 Rich Mullens)

(Recorded in 2001 *MWS live worship*, and again this year by MWS & Phil Wickham).

The song tells of God’s awesome power, (not in a “Casual California” sort of way, but in a reverent and Biblical way)

***Our God is an awesome God***

***He reigns from heaven above***

***With wisdom, power, and love***

***Our God is an awesome God***

*When He rolls up His sleeves*

*He ain't just putting on the ritz*

*There's thunder in His footsteps*

*And lightning in His fists*

*And the Lord wasn't joking*

*When He kicked 'em out of Eden*

*It wasn't for no reason*

*That He shed His blood*

*His return is very close*

*And so, you better be believing that*

*Our God is an awesome God*

The author of Hebrew wants us to remember that the same God, who offers us grace, forgiveness, comfort and joy, …is also capable of shaking heaven and earth, is the Judge of all, is a consuming fire, and whose kingdom shall have no end!

[Every time I read about God’s incredible power and glory, His wrath and judgement, and even the extreme and severe ways He dealt with people in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. It makes me more and more grateful for Jesus, who we just read is; (**Jesus)** “the mediator of a new covenant.’ (v.24).]

And that’s who we were told to look upon, in the very beginning of this chapter;

**Hebrews 12:1-2** “And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2**fixing our eyes on Jesus, the “pioneer and perfecter” of faith.”

***[ Song: Perfecter]***

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith,” reminds us that the Christian life is not about striving in our own strength but about focusing on the One who has already paved the way.

The word "pioneer" (Author) means that Jesus is the originator or trailblazer of our faith—He initiated the path by living a perfect life of obedience, enduring the cross, and rising in victory.

As the “perfecter” (Finisher), He also completes and matures our faith, walking (or running) with us every step and ensuring we reach the finish line.

Fixing our eyes on Him means centering our thoughts, focus, and trust on Jesus above all distractions, discouragements, or difficulties, knowing He alone is both the source, and also the goal of our faith.

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