

Hebrew 12: 1-13 "So that you will not grow weary and lose heart" How to Not Grow Weary

Beginning

- I am thankful that we can worship together today via YouTube livestreaming. The novel coronavirus outbreak has become a source of worry and anxiety because of the spread of infection and absence of effective treatment or vaccination.
- Therefore, today let's find the secret of not losing heart in the bible. When we are weary, we want help. Now we are in the middle of a test that is not in our control. How can we "not grow weary and lose heart"?
- Today we will look at the new testament, the book of Hebrew, chapter 12. This chapter is written to encourage those who are going through suffering and tests. Although plagues like coronavirus is not mentioned, the audience of this book were suffering opposition, persecution, and their own sins, and had crises of faith in God.

[Hebrew Chapter 12: 1-13]

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us

also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,

13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

- The first point that I'd like to discuss is to fix our eyes on Jesus. The number 1 secret of not growing weary or losing heart is to fix our eyes on Jesus without being distracted.
As the second point, we will examine the reason why we lose heart, stumble in faith, and get weary. It is about the root cause of losing true strength of life.
- As the third point, let's keep in mind our heavenly father's purpose of training us. That is the secret of keeping the right perspective and attitude to avoid losing heart amid tests and suffering.

The three points of today's message are: ① Fix the eyes on Jesus, ② Reasons of losing heart, ③ Training by our father.

1. Fix the eyes on Jesus

- Today's scripture describes the scene of athletes running in a stadium. In order to win, athletes must go through strict training. No matter what kind of sport it is, once the competition starts, athletes must stay focused and do their best to achieve success. They have to use all their strength to jump, throw or run. There are many audience in the stadium, who watch and support the athletes with loud cheers. Verse 1-2:

12:1 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. 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.

- According to the author of book Hebrew, "fixing our eyes on Jesus" is the most important to avoid getting weary and losing heart. The expression "fixing the eyes" carries the nuance of staring at something in a distance. It means to focus on it without looking anywhere else.

- But what does it mean concretely? Jesus suffered pains and humiliation on the cross, but he endured it. And now he has achieved triumph and sit at the right hand of God. Verse 3 says that Jesus “endured such opposition from sinners”. Therefore, we should emulate Jesus and endure with perseverance. That is what it means.
- Verse 2 introduces Jesus as “the pioneer and perfecter of faith”. Jesus is the start and the fulfillment of the believers’ faith. This emphasizes the grace, the accomplishment of the believers’ goal by Jesus.
- The author of Hebrew did not have a single word on emulating Jesus. Rather, he focuses on reminding us who Jesus is, and how he endured crucifixion and sinners’ opposition and accomplished salvation.
- Therefore, everyone, let’s fix our eyes on Jesus. The bible tells us to look unto Jesus and fix our eyes on him. That is the number 1 secret to avoid getting weary and losing heart. Achieving something through our own effort is not the key. The key is rather brushing those aside and fixing our eyes on Jesus. We should keep looking onto Jesus, rather than rely on things other than him. Why is that?
- Charles H. Spurgeon is a pastor who is called “the Prince of Preachers”. One Sunday he visited a small church. That day the pastor did not show up because of a snow storm. Hence Spurgeon, the guy who was suspected to be a shoemaker by the people in the room, started preaching. His sermon was about only one sentence in the bible (Isiah 45:22) “Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth”. The message was so easy to understand, as if it was by an uneducated man.
- “The preacher began thus: ‘My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says Look. Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pains. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just Look. Well, a man needn’t go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, Look unto Me. Ay,’ said he, in broad Essex, ‘many of ye are lookin’ to yourselves, but it is no use lookin’ there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, Look unto Me. Some of ye say, “We must wait for the Spirit’s working.” You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, Look unto Me.’ Then the good man followed up his text in this way: ‘Look unto Me, I am sweatin’ great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin’ on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin’ at the Father’s right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! Look unto Me!’ When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, ‘Young man, you look very miserable.’ Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: ‘And you will always be miserable — miserable in life and miserable in death — if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.’ Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.’ I saw at once the way of salvation ... Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do 50 things. But when I heard that word “Look,” what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun.”
- We tend to think that we have to do something to earn a meaningful life, be it doing good or not doing evil. Now it is the time to stop relying on ourselves. If our faith is in ourselves and our sinful behavior, we will grow weary and lose heart. Let’s fix our eyes on Jesus!

2. Reasons of losing heart

- Today’s scripture says that there is a big audience who are watching and cheering for the athletes. “we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses” (verse 1). Among the audience, we also see the familiar giants in faith.
- These are: Able, who offered an excellent sacrifice to please God; Enoch, who walked with God and never saw death; Noah, who built the ark out of faith and escaped perish; Abraham, who believed in God’s promise and became the start of God’s blessings to all; Moses, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt. However, according to the bible, none of them received what they were promised:
 11:39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised
- Isn’t this a surprising and impactful sentence? Even though they were commended for their faith, none of the received the promised blessing. Isn’t this the reason why we grow weary and lose heart? We don’t get what we desire, we cannot control our own life, and we are often confronted with frustration and opposition.
- Let’s keep in mind our life is prone to weariness and loss of heart. Not able to gather for worship because of coronavirus, accumulation of frustration caused by work or style of work, fear of being infected. All of these can be reasons to grow

weary and lose heart. We cannot help thinking: "When will all these end?"

- If we linger on the frustration, they become burden on our life. You are already carrying loads of burden in life. Do you need more? This is what the psalm says:
91:3 Surely he will save you, from the fowler's snare, and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- What is more, we are hindered by "entangling sin" (verse 1). In the ancient Olympic games, athletes compete without any clothing, because clothes could hinder their performance. (This is different from modern days, when sportswear is indispensable to enable to best performance).
 - Do you know the movie "Chariots of Fire"? This movie is based on the 1924 Olympic games about two runners. One is Eric Liddell, a 100-meter sprinter who was Christian and went on missionary to China later in his life. The other runner, Harold Abrahams, was also a 100-meter sprinter. These two runners had completely different view of sports.
 - The 100-meter dash in Paris Olympic was scheduled on a Sunday. Because of this, Eric decided not to participate even though he could have won the gold medal. He believed that he was already blessed in Jesus and could still live a joyful and thankful life without winning the 100-meter dash. (Instead of 100m, he competed in the 400-meter race and won)
 - On the other hand, Harold bet his whole life on winning the gold medal, because he thought that was the blessing and joy of his life. Harold confessed that he had "10 lonely seconds to justify [his] whole existence". Eventually Harold won the 100-meter dash. However, the gold medal, the praise, and the fame did not bring him the joy and blessing that he was seeking.
- What is the "entangling sin" that makes us grow weary and lose heart? That is everything that makes you seek triumph and joy without Jesus. If your confidence is in anything that is not Jesus, be it good ideas, be it great performance, you will grow weary. These are all good things. But if they become more important than Jesus to you, you must desert them.

3. Training by the father

- Then how do we see hardship? According to the bible, hardship is the training given by our father. Verse 5-7:
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." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?
- This passage shows a completely different view of suffering and tests. It is often thought that hardship is devils' work, which should be avoided because it is dangerous damage to our lives. If you are confronted with hardship, you are not loved by God.
- But here the bible says that hardship is rather evidence of God's love. It shows that you are God's beloved children. It is seen positively as the training by God, which makes you grow as a person and allow you to achieve true happiness. It is similar to athletes' training. Without strict training, athletes cannot improve or win.
- The author admits that suffering and tests cannot be avoided, but he pointed out that the purpose of these is to give us joy. If you endure the tests with perseverance, you will receive rich fruit beyond imagination. Verse 10-11:
12:10 They (human fathers) 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.
- Your heavenly father knows your strength, your weakness and what training you need for growth. You probably want to decide your road on your own. But in this life this world there are so many danger and tests beyond your awareness, that it is better for you to trust God and follow him.
- We are now in the middle of a big test. "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 (verse 12-13). What should we do? Fix our eyes on Jesus, get rid of all burden and entangling sin, and go through our fathers' training with trust and perseverance.
- Let's pray for this. Let's call upon our father's name for healing, praying that God will constrain the spread of the virus which is now out of our control, and end it soon, praying that more and more people get free from worry and fear, and have peace and true security in Jesus our Lord.
- Of course, we as the church should also avoid becoming the source of infection, and exemplify Jesus' love by giving necessary help and encouragement to those who need it. Thanks to the ultimate salvation in Jesus, Christians and churches have served with love amid disasters and plagues in all times. Let's serve with love.

Hebrews 12 New International Version (NIV)

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⁴ 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.”

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.

¹² Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ¹³ “Make level paths for your feet,”^[b] so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.