

Hebrews 12:1-13  
Proverbs 3  
Psalm 13

“Consider Him”

May 30, 2021

In Proverbs 3, the Father says to his Son,  
“Do not forget my teaching.”

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

And the Father promises that the one who trusts God – honors God – fears God –  
will be blessed.

I think sometimes we hear these words, and we see our present circumstances,  
and we are tempted to say, “really?!”  
This is blessing??!

But that’s why verses 11-12 are so important:

“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof,  
for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,  
as a father the son in whom he delights.”

This is why we need wisdom!

We need wisdom to understand how to live in God’s world!  
And if we would learn wisdom,  
then we need to listen to our Father in heaven.

Our Psalm of response does just that!

Psalm 13 asks the question, “How long will you forget me, Lord?”  
How long will you hide your face from me?

The Psalmist does not give the answer.  
But the Psalmist *has* learned wisdom!

“But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.  
I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.”

He says this in the midst of his trouble.  
He says this from the cross!

Sing Psalm 13  
Read Hebrews 12:1-17

Do you feel forgotten?  
As though God has hidden his face? (Psalm 13)

Or in the language of Hebrews 12,  
Do you have drooping hands?  
Do you have weak knees?  
Are you spiritually lame, injured?  
Are you spiritually “out of joint”?

Hebrews calls us to endure faithfully through suffering.

Faith and endurance cannot be divorced from each other.  
A faith that does not persevere is not truly faith.

Over the last three weeks we looked at Hebrews 11 and the “hall of faith”  
which set forth the great heroes of the faith in the OT.

What characterized all of these believers?  
They did not focus on what they could see with their eyes.  
They saw, by faith, the heavenly city,  
they saw by faith what God was doing in history,  
in order to establish a heavenly country,  
and that spiritual vision gave them the courage  
to endure trials and sufferings of all kinds.

Now in Hebrews 12 we are shown the founder and perfecter of our faith.  
Look at Jesus in his humiliation—  
he endured suffering and death,  
because he had that same spiritual vision as the fathers.  
He saw the joy set before him.  
He saw the heavenly city,  
but he not only saw it from afar,  
he established it through his own work,  
and so he is not simply an example of faith,  
but the author and perfecter of our faith.

It is appropriate to say that Jesus lived “by faith.”  
But Hebrews chooses to say it differently.  
Because Jesus’ faith is not like our faith.  
(That would say it backwards!)

Jesus’ faith is the archetypal faith—  
he is the “archegos” (the author or champion) of our faith.  
You can’t just say, “Jesus believed, so you should believe just like Jesus!”  
That would be to minimize what Jesus’ faith was all about.  
His spiritual vision was clear and undimmed by sin.  
What is more, his spiritual vision was rooted in his eternal vision,

as the eternal Son of God who was the very stamp of God's substance,  
the radiance of God's glory.

That is why Hebrews says that Jesus is the author *and perfecter* (or finisher) of our faith.

He is the beginning and the end of our faith—

the champion—the one who brings all things to completion.

Our passage today begins and ends with the idea of running.

In verse one we are exhorted to “run with endurance,”

a theme that concludes our passage in verse 13 with the idea of

“making straight paths for your feet.”

The two main themes are “endurance” (used four times in this passage)

and “discipline” (used 9 times).

The Christian life is not a sprint.

It's not about how fast you are.

For that matter, the Christian life is not a marathon —

because the marathon is a test of you as an individual.

No, the Christian life is a Tough Mudder.

For those who are not familiar with the Tough Mudder,

the Tough Mudder is a group race, where you have to work together

through a variety of obstacles.

It's a race you have to finish *together*.

### **1. Consider Him – So that You May Not Grow Weary (v1-3)**

*12 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, <sup>2</sup> 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.*

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

Hebrews grounds this entire exhortation to endurance in the idea of looking to Jesus.

Jesus is the one who endured the cross.

Jesus is the one who has passed through suffering and has come to glory,

being seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

This calls us to remember all that Hebrews has said about the once-for-all,

finished work of Christ.

Jesus is the great high priest who has dealt decisively with sin

through his sacrifice of himself which he offered to the Father,

thereby establishing the new covenant

which gives us access to the heavenly holy of holies.

And as we've seen in Hebrews 11,  
the response that God is pleased with is the response of faith.  
Faith responds to God's mercy in Christ  
by running with endurance the race that is set before us.

Too often we run our race with our head hanging down,  
doggedly running, like a gerbil on a treadmill,  
running, running, running—but never getting anywhere!

Hebrews provides for us a very different perspective on this race.  
Hebrews calls us to run with endurance the race that is set before us,  
“Looking to Jesus.”  
What does it mean to “look to Jesus”?

We've been talking about faith as a sort of “spiritual vision”  
that enables you to see that which is invisible.  
Looking to Jesus means to see him in his glory—  
how he has passed through suffering and shame,  
and how he has come to his eschatological glory—his last-days glory.  
In Jesus the end of history has come.  
In these last days, God has spoken to us in his Son.

And if God has spoken to us in his Son,  
and has made us sons together with Jesus,  
then Jesus becomes the pattern for us as well.

“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself.”  
In verse two we were urged to “look to Jesus.”  
In verse three we are called to “consider him.”

The phrase “against himself” is actually plural.  
“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against themselves.”  
While that may sound odd,  
It is the same construction found in 6:6,  
where apostates are said to crucify Jesus unto themselves  
(or, to their own harm).  
Here it says that sinners have hostility “unto themselves,”  
calling attention to the self-destructive nature of sin –  
and especially the self-defeating quality of hostility to Jesus!

Their hostility against Jesus is actually hostility against themselves.  
One early Christian commentator speaks of those “who, because of their disbelief,  
appeared to be in tension within their own souls.” (Ephrem, 212).

But think about the results of the hostility of Pilate and the chief priests!  
The priests were concerned to maintain their power and influence.  
But crucifying Jesus did not achieve their goal!  
Did they stop Jesus from becoming King of Kings and Lord of Lords?  
No – actually, they *helped* him get there!  
Did they prevent the Romans from destroying the temple?  
No.  
Did crucifying Jesus help them maintain their own power?  
Actually – no.

When a person is hostile to Jesus, they are actually engaged in self-harm.  
Because Jesus is the Savior.  
He is the one who came in order to reconcile us to God –  
and thus to reconcile us to one another –  
and ourselves – and all creation!

But the point of saying this is not to berate “those silly people out there!”  
Because Hebrews is speaking *to us*.

We have this great cloud of witnesses – that testifies to us of the faithfulness of Jesus.  
And therefore *we* should lay aside every weight that holds us down.  
We should lay aside every sin that cling so closely –  
everything that keeps us from running the race –  
what race?  
The race to become authentically “me”?!

In a very real way – yes.  
Why do we find ourselves alienated from others?  
Why do we find ourselves hostile toward God – hostile toward others –  
out of sorts with even ourselves?!

Well, what are you looking at?  
What are you considering? – Where are you fixing your gaze?

Our culture tells us that we can define ourselves!  
If there is no God who created us –  
then we are free to be whatever we want to be!  
But if God made us in his own image –  
then when we keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus,  
the author and finisher of our faith –  
the founder and perfecter of our faith –  
then we see more and more clearly who we were created to be!

As long as you are focused on *yourself* – you will not see clearly!  
But when you consider Jesus – when you focus on him –  
then you will see how you connect to God – to others – to yourself –  
and to everything else!

And when you consider *him* –  
then you find the strength to endure in the midst of your own suffering.

Enduring hostility from sinners has to do with the worldwide rebellion against God –  
but it can include any struggle.

When your children are rebellious.  
When your parents are harsh.  
When your spouse is cutting you down.

In each of these moments, you are tempted to react badly!  
You are tempted to respond with an equally destructive reaction.

But consider him who endured from sinners such hostility to their own harm,  
so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

The hostility that is being expressed *toward you* –  
is actually a *self-destructive* hostility.

The Christian life is lived in the context of hostility.  
We see all around us – and we experience within us –  
the self-destructive hostility of human rebellion.  
And you will be tempted to grow weary and fainthearted.  
In such times, consider Jesus.

How do you consider Jesus?  
You can do it either silently or verbally–  
and which one you choose may depend on your context.  
If you are in a public place, you may choose to do it silently.  
If you are in a situation where you can speak openly, you may choose to do it verbally,  
as a means of helping others to consider Jesus as well!

But when you are tempted to grow weary,  
when you are enduring hostility,  
consider Jesus in his suffering and glory.  
This used to be called “contemplation.”  
And it can be useful to do this in some quiet peaceful place.

But Hebrews seems to suggest that it is most useful in the midst of our “struggle.”

When you are in the middle of your temper tantrum,  
consider Jesus.

Children,

when you are tempted to throw a fit—or even when you are in the middle of your “fit”—  
consider Jesus—how he endured hostility from sinners—  
how he endured unjust suffering for the joy set before him—  
and then remember that he has called you to endure suffering  
so that you might also share his glory.

You may think your parents are being unfair.

If they are being unfair, then endure patiently,  
remembering that Jesus endured patiently through unjust suffering.

[Of course, if they are sinning against God and against you,  
and they refuse to repent,  
then you need to tell the elders]

But considering Jesus means to remember who Jesus is and what he has done,  
and therefore who we are in Christ, and what that means for our lives.

Because that is exactly where the next verses take us:

Verses 4-11 flesh this out in terms of how God disciplines us through suffering.

## **2. Consider Him – Because God Is Disciplining You as Sons (v4-11)**

<sup>4</sup>*In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

Have you ever spent any time reflecting on this verse?

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

Too often we are not really *struggling* against sin.

We are giving in to sin – feeding and encouraging sin!

But Hebrews says that we should be prepared to *shed blood* in our resistance to sin.

In the first century,

this could take the form of martyrdom –

but it could also take the form of getting a beating – or being publicly whipped.

In our day it is more likely going to take a sort of economic form –

being ostracized – or denied promotion –

but it is important to point out that our struggle against sin

is particularly a struggle against *our sin* (not other people’s sin!)

Verse 1 tells us to lay aside every weight – and every sin which clings so closely...

Are you resisting *your sin* – are you struggling against *your sin*?

And will you resist *your sin* even if it costs you your life?

If we are going to “consider Jesus” as the founder and perfecter of our faith,  
then we must walk his path,  
and not grow weary or fainthearted,  
but endure faithfully until the end.

The central thrust of this exhortation is rooted in this quotation from Proverbs 3,  
but it is phrased as a question:

“Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?”  
Hebrews is all about sonship.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who through his incarnation,  
suffering, and glory has become the eschatological Son of God,  
and therefore has brought “many sons to glory” (2:10).

Our sonship is rooted in his sonship.

And so as we consider Jesus, the Son of God,  
we must remember the exhortation that addresses us as sons:  
(Read v5-6)

<sup>5</sup> *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.  
<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

Children,

do you like discipline?

What would happen if your parents didn’t discipline you?

You would get to do whatever you want, right?

Does that sound like fun?

What is the problem with “getting everything you want”?

Why do your parents discipline you?

Is it because you are selfish?

Is it because you take things from your siblings? (that’s called stealing)

Is it because you lie?

Your parents discipline you because you are not yet what you should be.

Your parents discipline you because you want the wrong things.

Your desires are focused on things that are not good for you.

This is why God disciplines you:

“He disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

If God disciplines you, it is because he loves you.

Because God wants you to become more and more like Christ.



And the only way to get there is through suffering!

*<sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

I know.

That is not a “fun” path.  
It is not pleasant at the time.  
But if you want true joy and peace,  
then endure through discipline.

Genuine sonship, then, is attested through discipline.  
It is a mark that you belong to God.

Consider the alternative:

Adam and Eve sure did...!  
They chose the “discipline” of the serpent.  
The serpent offered them the route of independence:  
Do what you want – be who you want to be!  
But the result of that alleged freedom – was slavery and death.

But God sent his only-begotten Son to come in our flesh and join himself to our humanity  
in order that he might join us to himself! –  
in order that he might make us his own children –  
in order that we might be like Jesus!

Verses 9-11 illustrate this with earthly fatherhood:

*<sup>9</sup> 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? <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.*

Our earthly fathers disciplined us and we respected them.

How much more should we be subject to the Father of spirits and live!

If we have benefitted from the discipline of our earthly fathers,  
how much more should we benefit from the discipline of our heavenly father.  
Our earthly fathers did their best,  
but they were flawed sinners, like ourselves.

But God disciplines us for our good—he always knows what is best for us.  
And notice what is the result: “that we may share his holiness.”  
Those who endure patiently through God’s discipline  
will become more and more like him,  
sharing his holiness as we more and more reflect the patient endurance of Christ.

It’s also important to say that while God does know what is best for us –  
it only results in *good* for us if we trust him!  
If you don’t trust God – then what he offers as discipline becomes judgment.

But it only becomes judgment if you insist on refusing his discipline!

And sure, for the moment all discipline seems painful.  
It seems painful rather than pleasant,  
“but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness  
to those who have been trained by it.”

I think sometimes we only hear this as referring to glory.  
And yes, all of the sufferings that we endure in this life  
are conforming us to the likeness of Christ,  
and therefore the goal of all this is reached in our glorification  
when we share his holiness in that full and glorious participation in Christ  
that belongs to the believer in glory.

But there is also a more immediate benefit—  
the “later” of verse 11 is not a simply a reference to glorification,  
but also to our sanctification.

We share in the holiness of God even now.  
Our patient endurance through discipline is yielding  
the peaceful fruit of righteousness even now.

In this life it is not perfect,  
but all of us have seen those gracious saints, tested and refined through the years,  
whose lives radiate with the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

How do you get there?  
This is where it all goes back to where we started:  
“Consider him!”

Consider Jesus, the author and finisher, the founder and perfecter, of our faith.  
Consider Jesus, and by faith, look to him—  
because he is the one who has defeated the power of sin and death!  
Consider Jesus, because he is the one who has called you by his word and Spirit,  
into fellowship with the Father,  
so that you might be a child of God.

### **3. Consider Him – and Make Straight Paths for Your Feet (v12-13)**

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.*

Consider him, and lift your drooping hands, strengthen your weak knees,  
and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint,  
but rather be healed.

The “your” here is plural.  
You can’t do this by yourself!  
You need one another!

The body of Christ is running this race together!  
That’s why this is not a solo marathon!  
This is a Tough Mudder!  
This is a team race where the whole team works together.

The whole thrust of the following verses makes it clear that Hebrews’ concern  
is that the church walk this path together.

And as we walk this path together,  
we need to make straight paths for our feet,  
so that what is lame may not be put out of joint.  
Do you know where your brothers and sisters are lame?  
Do they know where you are lame?

Or are we all running by ourselves,  
doggedly pursuing holiness, each in our own little world?

We live in a world very much like that to which Hebrews spoke—  
a world that is not only unreceptive to the gospel,  
but one that is increasingly hostile to it.

As we endure the hostility of the world, the flesh and the devil,  
may we consider Jesus,  
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.