

Encouragement to Endure (Heb 12:3-17)

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Intro

Good morning!

My name is Cam Sardano, I serve on staff down at City on a Hill Church in Forest Hills, and I have the privilege of leading the core team of people being sent out to plant City on a Hill: Lower Mills.

All that to say, we are wicked excited for what God is doing here in the Boston area.

I am grateful to the pastors here for the invitation to preach God's Word

We will be in [Hebrews 12:3-17](#) this morning

The title of the message is "Encouragement to Endure"

As I consider this passage, and the role it plays in the book of Hebrews, I am reminded of an athlete by the name of Derek Redmond...

III. Redmond

Redmond is a decorated runner, who used to compete for Britain as a sprinter, but is now retired

Yet while he was in his prime, he ran in **1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona**, and was apart of one of most memorable races in Olympic history

It all started soon after the starting gun when off in the **400-meter**

When Redmond , in full stride, **tore his hamstring** and collapsed in pain

In a split second, **all hopes were shattered** that he would finish the race, let alone win gold

Yet, after a few moments of being collapsed on the ground in pain, **he slowly, painfully got up** and started limping toward the finish line

To the amazement and applause of everyone, **he eventually crossed the finish line**

Redmond's story has a lot of parallels to the way Hebrews describes the Christian life

If you recall, this letter is written to people who are running a race, the race of faith in Christ

Yet, it didn't take long for them to realize that the race of faith is not easy

They are, like Redmond, realizing their race will be far more difficult to complete than they first thought

The question our passage speaks to for us as believers is one that I think we can deeply relate to....

Question: How can we possibly endure such a difficult race?

We all can resonate with this, can't we?...

Need:

Because all of us either already have, or surely will, be tempted to quit

And often, this temptation to lose heart and quit comes as a result of difficult, opposition, pain, and suffering

Which inevitably come into our lives, often uninvited

And often stay in our lives far longer than they are welcome to

What we need, just as much as the Hebrew Christians, is not simply to be told to keep running, to not give up

But to KNOW the God we are running WITH

The God we are running FOR

PAUSE

And this is exactly what we get in our passage today!

What we will see in [Hebrews 12: 3-17](#) are THREE custom-fit encouragement for us as we run

Think of it as the author of Hebrews shouting pointers and cheering us on from the grand stand as we run past him on the course

Let's start in verse 3, where we hear his first encouragement, to...

Body

Section #1: Consider the Endurance of the Son (3-4)

Starting in verse 3, we are called to...

Hebrews 12:3-4 ESV

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.

To endure in our faith in Jesus, our passage immediately draws our eyes to consider Jesus

That word "Consider" conveys the idea of careful, active, focus.

Jesus is to be the one we channel our energy to focus upon

The one who **"endured from sinners such hostility against himself"**

The immediate context certainly reminds us that the chief hostility Jesus endured from sinners was the brutal, bloody crucifixion he endured at their hands on the cross.

We sometimes forget how brutal, how hostile, the cross is don't we?

That is was a device of horrifying torture, not a decoration for gold and silver jewelry

That the one who hung upon it was brutalized, beaten, whipped, bloodied, mocked, stripped naked in shame for all to see

Jesus endured *SUCH* hostility against himself - even though he was perfectly righteous and blameless

And the author of Hebrews wants us to CONSIDER Him

“So that,” as the verse concludes...

English Standard Version Chapter 12

...you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

In other words...

Seeing that Jesus didn't quit, but endured his cross, encourage and strengthens us not to quit as we face our own

He goes on in Verse 4 to remind us...

Hebrews 12:4 ESV

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

Now, this is kind of a curious statement...

Notice that he describes the difficulty we face as a “struggle against sin”

In other words, as we face difficulty, persecution, suffering, we are facing the struggle to chose sin rather than Christ

Maybe this struggle comes when we face the difficulty of...

App. Suffering Because of Christ

- Being labeled by others as “weird,” or even “backwards” because we believe this Book is true and that it's words should direct our life, isn't it so tempting to just gloss over what it says, twist it, or not bring it up at all?

Or when we face a a trial such as...

- Being passed over for a promotion at work, because we aren't willing to idolize our jobs at the expense of our family and faith, isn't it so easy to cave in, and make work your everything like others may at your job?

Or even when our brothers and sisters overseas are...

- For their faith beaten, imprisoned, having their families threatened, and even facing down death, can't we imagine the pressure the are under to cave and deny Christ?

And we could go on..

But the point is, whether it is one of these examples, or another altogether, **we all face the struggle of choosing Christ over our sin, especially when we face suffering**

Yet we are to be encouraged and endure, because the Son endured for us

And, as the Author reminds us in verse 4...

Hebrews 12:4 ESV

...you [and I] have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Growing up as a kid, I would frequently complain when I was asked to do chores...

III. Dad and Chores

One of my Dad's favorite responses to my complaining was to say something like...

"Come on son, all I asked you to do was move your bike, it's not like I've asked you to go dig a ditch!"

Now to be honest, I don't think I had ever dug a ditch, but it got the point across

It put in perspective that what I was called to do was not comparable to what could have been true

That phrase at the end of verse 4, "to the point of shedding blood" is not merely describing a physical injury, but a violent death

In their struggle against sin, they have not yet had to resist to that point

And the author is essentially telling them, and us... "Christian, don't lose heart, endure in your struggle against sin, it's not like you've died yet!"

"You haven't been nailed to a cross like Christ was yet! So keep going!"

This really put's into perspective just how valuable Jesus is, doesn't it?...

App. Is what you are living for...

As long as we have breathe in our lungs, Jesus is worth pursuing with our lives, no matter the cost

City on a Hill...

Is what you are living for worth dying for?...JESUS IS

And Jesus not only calls us to live in this way, but he himself lived in this way for us

As [Hebrews 12:1-2](#) reminds us, he...

English Standard Version Chapter 12

...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.

Before we move on to verse 5, I just want to stop and ask...

Gospel Appeal

Have you placed your faith in him?

Have you turned from your sin, have you forsaken the the things your are placing your faith in to be secure and satisfied

And have you turned to the Son, and his work on the cross?

As we unpack what it means to endure in the race of faith today, my invitation to you is to enter this very race

And here's the thing...

We all chose to run a race of faith, trusting in someone or something to make us feel that life is worth living

The only question is...

Is the object of your faith One so good that he lived his very life for you all the way to his last, dying breath?

Jesus Is

And you can embrace him as your's today!

We must consider the endurance of the Son

This is the first way he gives us encouragement to endure in our race

And the second is this...

Section #2: Remember the Exhortation of the Father (5-11)

Look with me, starting in verse 5, where the author asks...

Hebrews 12:5-6 ESV

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."

Here our passage is quoting from [Proverbs 3:11-12](#), a passage that describes the way that God instructs us, and puts trials and pain in our path, for our good, for our blessing

And this is conveyed by the word "discipline"

To get at how [Hebrews 12](#) is using the term discipline, it reminds me of soccer practice as a kid...

III. Soccer Drills

At practice, we would often run drills because that was what the coach had planned for us.

BUT, on occasion, we did extra drills because someone showed up late, we were dragging our feet, or for some other reason

Yet here's the thing, whether it was planned ahead of time or in direct response a wrong thing we did, the net affect was that at practice our coach made us run

And this was not because he hated us and wished us ill, but because he cared about us, and wanted us to be ready for the game ahead

The type of "discipline" we experience from the Father is similar...

The "struggle" and suffering in verses 3-4 is this "discipline" in verse 5-6

And...

Just like with soccer practice, this training and instruction that can be painful and hard, and sometimes in response to sin

Yet, as we are about to see, God uses it to train us, to instruct us, to grow us

And knowing who disciplines us, and what it results in for us, should encourage us in three powerful ways

Firstly, because ...

His Discipline Reveals His Love (5-6)

When you and I face suffering and trial, the default of our hearts is to conclude something like...

- **Oh no, what did I do wrong this time?**
- **God, where are you?**
- **God, why do you hate me?**

In short, when we are disciplined by the Father, our default is to assume that this is proof that we are being rejected by Him

Verse 6 teaches that the opposite is true...

God's disciplines us not because he has rejected us, but because he has "received" us

Not because we've lost him, but because he "loves: us

And he loves us so much that he will always do what's best for us, even if it hurts

As C.S. Lewis put it...

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. - CS Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p 93

God's shouts in our pain his goodness and mercy, so that we can better grasp his heart for us

His discipline reveals his love, and secondly...

His Discipline Reminds of Our Sonship (7-8)

As verse 7 goes on...

Hebrews 12:7-8 ESV

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.

Here, the author shifts from what discipline says about God to what it says about us

We are to endure the sufferings we face, because we know it is discipline, from our no one less than our loving heavenly Father

And this discipline reminds us that we are his children.

It's like when your out in public...

III. Father Running after their Kid

And you see a kid scream or giggle or yell, and then immediately take off running

Generally what you do see 2-3 seconds afterwards?

The parent, right!? Taking off running after them.

We don't wonder to ourselves...

Hmm, I wonder who that adult is running after them?

No, we intuitively know it's the parent, running after their son or daughter

When God disciplines us, it reminds us that he doesn't just love us in the abstract, but concretely, as his very children

This is the kind of relationship we have with the Creator of the Universe

And [Hebrews 12](#) reminds us, an aspect of his fatherly care of us is the fact that he disciplines us

Maybe this is especially hard for some of us to understand because of the complex or difficult you had with your father...

App. Understanding God as Father

- Maybe he was absent, either physically or emotionally from your home
- Or maybe he was present, but not with love, but with anger or even abuse
- Or maybe he was a great dad, but nevertheless flawed and imperfect like us all

Wherever we find ourselves today, we likely all carry with us blind spots and obstacles to coming to terms with God as our good, loving Father

Yet here's our hope...

God's perfect goodness as our Father is our ultimate hope, not our limited grasp of him as such

He acts towards us in perfect love and goodness regardless of how well we understand what he is doing

We can rest assured knowing that when he disciplines us, we don't face his anger or wrath or apathy, but rather his loving, purposeful, tailor-made training for our good

In a way that is far better than any earthly father ever could

As verse 9 goes on to say...

Hebrews 12:9–11 ESV

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.

His Discipline Results in Our Good (9-11)

God's design is for earthly...

Fathers is to be filled with a deep love for their children, and that children are to love and respect their fathers especially when they are being disciplined

So, as our passage drives home...

How much more should we respect and receive the discipline of our Heavenly Father?

Whose love is always perfect, and whose discipline is never too little, too much

He NEVER has to apologize for it later on

And Whose discipline is not just for our good, but our GREATEST GOOD - our righteousness and holiness and peace

The Father causes our holy, righteous IDENTITY, which became ours through faith the endurance and suffering of Christ

To become true of every area of our lives, our ACTIVITY, through our own endurance and suffering

Now, to be clear, this does not in any way mean that our suffering and discipline are light and easy...

App. Suffering is Real

- The grief and confusion of losing someone close to you IS REAL
- The confusion and fear of being fired or laid off from your job IS REAL
- Navigating the pain of not being married when you are single IS REAL

Yet, what we can take heart in, brothers and sisters, because we experience these things in light of the fact that we have a Father who is treating us as his sons and daughters

In ways that, beyond our comprehension, are out of his mercy and grace towards us

And in ways that result in our greatest good, coming to know and look like Christ more

His discipline, though it is very real and painful

It is worth it, because our Father is giving us more of himself

As we consider...

The Son who ran the race before us

And Remember...

The Father who lovingly disciplines us for our good

Let us continue in the race together

Which brings us to the last section of our passage...

Section #3: Run with Vigilance by the Spirit's Power (12-17)

Here, in the last 6 verses of our passage, we are given several concrete areas of application for us to endure

And the first one is fairly straightforward, we should...

Keep Running (12-13)

As he writes in verses 12-13...

Hebrews 12:12-13 ESV

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.

This is actually an allusion [Isaiah 35](#), where God gave his people the promise of future hope to his people in their present brokenness

And this passage concludes with these words in [Isaiah 35:10](#)...

Isaiah 35:10 ESV

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Brothers and sisters, we are running a race that concludes in this heavenly city

Christ has ransomed us, and the race we run will conclude with singing, a crown of everlasting joy, unending gladness and joy, and all sorrow and sighing fleeing away!

So, let's keep going!

As verse 14 goes on...

Hebrews 12:14 ESV

¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone...

In Peace & Holiness (14)

Peace is to characterize us as runners

And it makes sense doesn't it?...

If we are running because God has made peace with us, it follows that we would strive for peace with one another

In a city, nation, and world that is so fixated on dividing and denigrating and distancing ourselves from the people that we label as "other"

We are called to live differently towards one another, because God has related to us in a radically different manner

And the same is true when it comes to holiness...

Do you see verse 14 concludes?

We are to strive...

Hebrews 12:14 ESV

for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

What this means, church family, is that...

Holiness is not an optional add on to the Christian life

Those who are Christ's demonstrate that they are such through the fruit of holiness in our lives

Now, this doesn't mean that our holiness is how we earn our salvation

But, rather that our holiness is how our salvation given freely by God's grace surely becomes evident in our life

There is no contradiction between being saved by grace and the significance of holiness in our lives as Christians

As Dallas Willard put it...

Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. -Dallas Willard

Church...

We are to vigilantly lay aside sin as we run the race of faith

And as verse 15 goes on, we are also to vigilantly help others do the same

As verse 15 goes on to urge us...

Hebrews 12:15 ESV

¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

As We Guard Each Other from Sin (15)

In other words...

We are to make sure no one gives up or becomes a "root of bitterness," an image that describes someone who chooses to reject God and lead others away as well ([Dt 29:18-19](#))

Because, as [Hebrews 3](#) reminded us, sin is "deceitful," and none of us are immune to its lies

We are to keep a close watch the others running besides us

And to prove his point, the Author of Hebrews ends by giving us a vivid illustration

Look with me at verses 16-17, where he concludes by commanding us to also "see to it"...

Hebrews 12:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Learn from Esau's Folley (16-17)

Esau, whose story is told in the book of Genesis, is a man who lived a life indulging in sin rather than of faith in God

And because of this, he gave away his very birthright, his most valuable possession, and his right to an inheritance, which included being counted as one of God's people, all for a bowl of soup.

He wanted the fleeting satisfaction that a bowl of soup could give MORE than the forever satisfaction that God, and only God, can give

Brothers and sisters, we must learn from Esau's foley!

Because we too are tempted to trade the long-term preciousness of Jesus for the short-term pleasure of sin

And we must make no mistake, if we chose to forsake Jesus for short-term pleasure of sin, we will surely regret it in this life

It is NOT worth it

And if we continue on this path, we will forever pay the consequences

As I've heard it put...

CLICK

Sin will take you further than you ever wanted to go, keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay and cost you more than you can ever pay. - Steve Gallagher

This is sobering, and is why we should all the more ask ourselves...

How can we take seriously the call to keep a close watch on ourselves and one another?...

App. Keep a Close Watch

Here are a few examples that come to mind...

- It looks like choosing to become a member here at COAH, so that you are not just an attender of a service, but accountable to a Body
- This looks like prioritizing attending your CG, and while you are there being willing to be vulnerable and honest about what's really going on in your life.
- Not assuming that someone else is probably confronting that person about that sin issue so I don't need to worry about it - I am conflict-averse after all.

I must be honest with you. This is a lot easier to say from the pulpit than it is to live it out in our lives

Being vigilant against sin is messy, it is uncomfortable, it requires repentance, sacrifice and risk, 1000 times over

Yet, the consequence of sin is just that serious, and the reward of Christ is just that good!

As we conclude, it may very well be that you still feel that opening question gnawing at you...

Conclusion

Sure, we've covered the importance of Christ's work for us

And the role of the Father's discipline

And the seriousness with which we should take our sin

But...

Question: Even then, HOW can we possibly endure in such difficult race?

We may still still feel incapable of doing these things on our own

PAUSE

At the start of our time, I shared the story about the runner Derek Redmond...

III. Redmond Revisited

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynhD-vq2DUE>

In his race, though he experienced a devastating injury, he got up with incredible determination and limp forward to the end

But there is another key fact about his race that I failed to mention

Let's take a look at the screen together and watch it for ourselves...

VIDEO (0:58-2:07)

To be honest, I was brought to tears the first time I watched this video

The love and compassion of Derek's dad is so evident, isn't it?

And he doesn't just encourage his son from the stand, he comes close to him in his moment of need and pain and weakness and humiliation, and walks with him all the way, helping him endure to the end

Brothers and sisters, this is even more true for us...

We can take heart in the race we are running

Not only because God the Son has done in the past, when he endured for us

And not only because of the kind love and sovereign hand of God the Father in the present

But because God has drawn close to you and I by the Spirit

He isn't just beside us as we run, he literally indwells you and I right now

So that as we run this race, we don't do it on our own, in our own power, But by HIS

You and I, like Redmond, are runners in a race that we can't finish on our own

Yet, we too have a gracious and faithful God, Father, Son, and Spirit, who together ensure that we have everything we need to endure

This is the God we run with

So, let's keep running

Let's pray together...