

Sunday 9am & 11:15AM Notes

9/1/19 – Jeff Lyle

“Enduring With Jesus” Hebrews 12:1-15 | 9AM

There is one thing that no human being gets to negotiate in this life: we will all be assigned some struggles. These struggles have a wide variety of intensity, but nobody gets a free pass. Scripture teaches that our days will be full of trouble and that we only enter the Kingdom after much tribulation. The beautiful thing for the Christian is that we do not navigate trouble alone. This passage from Hebrews reminds us of those who have gone before us, including Jesus himself. Even better, Jesus lives within us, so we are empowered to endure and overcome all that this life presents us. There is a danger that we might become weary, bitter or fatalistic in our attitudes. When we intentionally keep Jesus’ example and words central in our thinking, we learn how to endure alongside of Him by faith, and we eventually experience His assigned breakthrough in the midst of our assigned challenges.

I. Enduring Life’s Difficulties (1-2a)

A. A helpful motivation (Remember) - “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...”

B. An essential liberation (Release) - “...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely...”

C. An important clarification (Refocus) - “...and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...”

So many Jesus-followers have gone before us. Their testimonies speak to us concerning how to endure, trust and eventually overcome. If we will finish our races in victory as they finished their own races, we will need to run this race as free from our flesh and the world as possible. We decline opportunities to sin or saddle ourselves with the weight of our flesh. We run our assigned races, putting our feet of faith one in front of the other and we complete the course upon which God has placed us. We remain aware that there will be deep challenges, steep circumstantial hills to climb and exhausting seasons wherein we repeatedly come to the end of ourselves. But we refuse to grow weary and remain that way. We refuse to quit. We press on in the daily strength which God supplies. We wait for answers to all of our unknowns. We operate according to what we know about Jesus and what He has already taught us thus far. Yes, when trouble, challenges and potential weariness begin to find us, we choose to remember, we choose to

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release, and we choose to refocus. This is the blueprint for enduring life's difficulties.

II. Adopting Christ's Mindset (2b-4)

A. Jesus looked towards the finish (2b) - "...who for the joy that was set before Him ..."

B. Jesus endured an excruciating process (2c) - "...endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God..."

C. Jesus left us His example to sustain us (3-4) - "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."

If you and I are truly going to experience breakthrough in the midst of pain, challenge or doubts in this life, we must put on the mind of Jesus Christ. We must adopt the inward attitude of the Son of God as our very own. Jesus kept His heart constantly focused on the finish line as He ran His race. He had to be the person whom the Father called Him to be. He had to fulfill the assignment that the Father entrusted to Him. Jesus lived to always do those things which pleased the Father. Because of this, Jesus was able to endure the shame of the cross, even as He despised it. When all was accomplished, He took His place of honor and glory at the right hand of the Father. His return to glory came via His endurance of all that was inglorious. The writer of Hebrews then calls us to intentionally consider Jesus and how He responded to these challenges. He experienced hostile opposition from humans. He did not allow their rejection and betrayal to cause His heart to quit on the Father's plans. He resisted the sin around Him and never allowed it to become sin within Him. We are instructed to arm ourselves with the same kind of determined, spirit-empowered attitude. We are reminded that Jesus went further than any of us, in the end, He died in order to complete His assignment from the Father. We have not resisted yet unto the death. We are still able to press forward in endurance for all that the Father has entrusted to us. We will do this as we remain committed to adopting the mindset of Jesus.

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III. Embracing God's Discipline (5-11)

A. The fact of God's discipline (5-6) - "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. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

B. The faithfulness of God's discipline (7-8) - "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? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."

When we hear the word discipline, we almost always think in terms of punishment or correction. When scripture speaks of God's disciplining of His children, it does not always limit the understanding to correction. Discipline may mean that God acts in opposition to us for something we are doing in ignorance or rebellion. Yet, there is more. Scripture reveals at least three reasons why God disciplines us in this life:

- 1. For Correction** - God will oppose us when our attitudes or actions are in opposition to His will or character.
- 2. For Prevention** - God will frustrate our plans and pathways when they might lead us into something He does not intend for us to experience.
- 3. For Education** - God will often limit us, confine us or place on the sidelines so that He can impart greater wisdom to us - wisdom and understanding that we will not be able to receive if we do not slow down.

When we are being disciplined of the Lord, He is dealing with us as a loving Father deals with his own sons and daughters. The writer of Hebrews wants to remove the unhealthy fear and unprofitable frustration from us as we seek to cooperate with God's discipline. If He is correcting sin in us, then we cooperate by repenting. If we discern that He is frustrating our plans and pathways, then we trust that He is preventing us from entering into something that is not His will for us. If we find ourselves being slowed-down, sidelined or stopped, then we engage in patience and seek to receive the wisdom He has for us while we are on pause. Discipline is an indicator that we are His beloved children. A person who is never disciplined by God

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should have great concern. These verses tell us that the person who is never disciplined by God is not God's child.

C. The fruit of God's discipline (9-11)

1. We learn submission to God (9) - "... Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?"
2. We gain practical holiness (10) - "...He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness."
3. We grow in contentment in Christ alone (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..."

The Bible is so real and authentic in what it reveals about the human experience. We are told here that we simply need to learn to submit to God and what He is allowing in our lives. He is working all things together for our good, even though they often leave us with unpleasant feelings. We do not like denials. We do not enjoy limitations. None of us wants to suffer, struggle or feel pain. Yet the writer of Hebrews tells us that God is using these very things to purify us spiritually. He is making us to share in the holiness of Jesus. One of the most amazing statements made about Jesus is that He "learned obedience by the things that He suffered" **{Hebrews 5:8}** If Jesus cooperated with this process from the Father, how much more do we need it? Realistically, we are also told that enduring challenges with discipline is not a pleasant experience. We are, again, told to consider our finish line. After the discipline and all its unpleasantness, we experience the fruit of righteousness and peace as we learn to endure. As is true in the physical world of athletics and fitness, it is also true in spiritual exercises: **no pain, no gain.**

IV. Overcoming Personal Discouragement (12-15)

A. We are exhorted to get up & move on (12-13) - "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."

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C. We are exhorted to get low (14) - “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

D. We are exhorted to wise up (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.”

While we really have no choice about whether or not we go through challenges and trials that we must endure, we have full choice of how we respond when those seasons find us. God’s grace is sufficient to empower our endurance so that no bitterness makes us unfit for His use. Trouble can either purify you or contaminate you in your spirit. If we respond in self-preservation, self-justification or resentment, we will find ourselves living in bitterness. We will become hostile toward others through whom some of these challenges may come our way. We can enter into discouragement and even depression. We are commanded here to take responsibility for our attitudes and decisions during these times of struggle and discipline. We choose the straight paths and walk upon them with an expectation of arriving where God desires us to arrive. We believe Him for healing - bodily, emotionally and spiritually. We refuse to lose hope that our struggles will swallow us whole. Instead of becoming bitter with others, we commit to seek peace with all who will receive our offers for peace. We deny the bitter root of resentment to defile our hearts. Knowing that bitterness disconnects us from experiencing the restoring grace of God, we choose the higher path to endure with Jesus so that we do not fall victim to personal discouragement.

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“A Fresh Revelation of Grace” Zechariah 4:1-10 | 11:15 AM

Nearly 2500 years ago a man named Zerubbabel believed in freedom. He left an easier life in the Persian Empire and traveled to a desolate city - the city of his fathers - to build a temple for Jehovah in Jerusalem. He left with great zeal and visions of the splendor of a restored glory to the city of God and its people. Yet when the difficult task of rebuilding the temple began, Zerubbabel encountered a mountain of obstacles. In chapter 4 of Zechariah God sends a word through His prophet to encourage Zerubbabel to put his hands to this great work and continue to spend himself for something greater than himself. The mountain of difficulty was immense indeed, but the grace of God was waiting to do something that had eluded Israel for nearly 100 years. It was time for God to work and he needed his man to embrace the challenge. In the face of immovable mountains, God has never flinched. Not for Zerubbabel in his day, and not for you today.

I. The Grace of God In Our Confusion (1-5)

A. Zechariah was awakened (1) - “And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep.”

B. Zechariah was questioned (2a) - “And he said to me, “What do you see?”

C. Zechariah was aware (2b-4) - “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?”

D. Zechariah was confused (5) - “Do you not know what these are? I said, No my lord.”

As Zechariah was being granted repeated visions from God, he is here awakened from a trance with an angelic visitation. Before Zechariah there unfolds a surreal scene for which he has zero understanding. The vision of the two olive trees, the

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golden lampstand and the seven ignited bowls on the lampstand is beyond the prophet's ability to grasp. Zechariah is clearly seeing everything before him, but he has no comprehension of what the message from God actually means. It must have been humbling for Israel's prophet to be asked by the angel if he understood what the vision meant. Even more humbling, Zechariah had to admit he was clueless about the message being entrusted to him. He simply told the angel that he did not understand what God was doing. In times when God is moving in our own lives in powerful ways that we cannot truly fathom, we will be occasionally forced to acknowledge to Him that we do not know what to make out of what is happening. We can see all the pieces of the puzzle clearly, but that does not mean we know how they will all fit together. Zechariah is being set up by God to receive a message of grace that he will deliver to the civic leader of Israel named Zerubbabel.

II. The Grace of God in His Plans for Us (6-7)

A. An essential truth to be shared (6) - **“Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”**

The angel now brings the larger meaning of the vision of the olive trees and lampstand. They represent an aspect of God's grace that will be imparted to Zerubbabel as he leads the people to restore the foundation of the temple that the Babylonians had destroyed seventy years earlier. The task ahead seemed insurmountable to some of the Jews returning from Babylon. Massive piles of stone and rubbish now littered the place where Solomon's temple once stood. Burned out structure, crushed stones and heaps of debris would have to be removed before they could even begin the work of rebuilding the temple. It must have been overwhelming to try to consider how all of this would be accomplished. God, in His kindness, is sending word through Zechariah that there would be grace to accomplish the task. Through Zechariah's message to Zerubbabel, Israel would learn:

- It is not the strength of numbers that prevail - **“Not by might...”** This refers to organized military might.
- It is not the strength of any individual that prevails - **“...nor by power...”** This refers to human ingenuity and resources
- It is trusting in God that prevails - **“...but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”** This reminds Israel that God Himself would see to it that the work is aided by grace in its beginning and all the way through its finishing.

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B. An undeniable triumph to be shared (7a) - “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.”

Biblical history informs us that Zerubbabel’s present “mountain” included:

1. Rubble from Israel’s past failures as a nation
2. Fear of the surrounding enemy who did not like the idea of the Jews return to the land
3. The massive financial needs and provisions to rebuild the temple
4. Discouraged, critical workers on the team of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:13, Haggai 2:3)
5. Interference from the powers that be in the surrounding territories (Ezra 4)
6. Loss of momentum and vision by the people - fatigue, weariness, quitting (Haggai 1:2)

C. A spiritual treasure to be shared (7b) - Zerubbabel “...shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of Grace, grace to it!”

The vision would come to pass. The project would be completed. And the Lord would receive the glory. Zerubbabel would be learning what all of us must learn as we follow and serve the Lord. He is unwilling to entrust to us a vision that we can accomplish on our own. God jealously guards His glory, and He refuses to share it with another. While He will certainly share rewards with us, He will never share the final glory with us. Zechariah is taken to the very end of the temple rebuilding mission and allowed to hear the final summary of how it would be accomplished: GRACE, GRACE! For every servant of God who is overwhelmed with enormity of what they have been assigned, we must remember that it is never about our individual or collective strength. The Spirit of God will work on our behalf - around us and within us - to ensure that God completes with us what He begins with us. We will come to our own limitations repeatedly. We will know that we are insufficient for the task. Yet, because of God’s grace, we will not despair. We will learn to both rely upon and rejoice in the great grace of our God.

III. The Grace of God in His Determinations for Us (8-10)

A. There was a personal promise (8-9) - “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.”

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B. There was a prevailing promise (10a) - “For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel...”

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C. There was a protecting promise (10b) - “These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth.”

The angel then gives a word to Zechariah to give to Zerubbabel in real-time. The heavenly message is that the man who began the work will see its completion. In essence, God is communicating to Zerubbabel that He will see him all the way through. Hard work does not equal impossible work. Meager strength is not the same thing as zero strength. Obscured understanding is not to be viewed as blindness toward the end of the mission. Also included in the word from the Lord is a call not to compare present day moves of God with previous moves of God. The new temple would not appear as majestic as the former temple. The people were not to despair over the potential sense of loss. They were to take strength from what God was doing in the present moment instead of diminishing the small beginnings they were being offered. Zerubbabel would hold the plumb-line in his hand as a symbol that God had aligned things according to His plans. The final statement reminded Zerubbabel and reminds us today that the Lord is observing how we steward in faith what He entrusts to us in grace. What He begins with us, He finishes. Our job is to keep our spiritual focus on Him and expect His grace to be sufficient.