

Hebrews: Pursuing the Highest Pleasure

“Dealing with Hindrances”

Hebrews 12:1-3 – November 27, 2005

Overview of Hebrews

HEBREWES: PURSUING THE HIGHEST PLEASURE			
	Bible Text	Sermon Title	Date
SUPERIOR PERSON	Hebrews 1:1-3	Pursuing the Highest Pleasure	Aug 21
	Hebrews 1:4-14	All About Angels	Aug 28
	Hebrews 13:2	What the Bible Says About Natural Disasters	Sept 4
	Hebrews 2:1-4	Once Saved, Always Saved?	Sept 11
	Hebrews 2:5-18	Dealing with Shame	Sept 18
	Hebrews 3:1-4:13	Dealing with Distractions/Restlessness	Sept 25
	Hebrews 4:14-5:10	Dealing with Unanswered Prayers	Oct 2
	Hebrews 11:5-6	Rachel’s Challenge: A Modern Day Enoch	Oct 9
	Hebrews 5:11-6:12	Dealing with Immaturity	Oct 16
SUPERIOR WORK	Hebrews 6:13-7:28	Dealing with Distance from God (1)	Oct 30
	Hebrews 8:1-13	Dealing with Distance from God (2)	Nov 6
	Hebrews 9:1-28	We’re Getting a New Sanctuary!	Oct 23
OUR RESPONSE	Hebrews 10:1-18	Dealing with Sin in My Life	Nov 13
	Hebrews 10:19-39	Dealing with Joylessness	Nov 20
	Hebrews 12:1-3	Dealing with Hindrances	Nov 27
	Hebrews 12:4-17	Dealing with God’s Discipline	Dec 4
	Hebrews 12:18-29	Our God is a Consuming Fire	Dec 11
	Hebrews 13:1-6	Sex in Marriage	Dec 18
	Hebrews 13:7-25	Giving God a Sacrifice of Praise	Dec 25

Overview of Hebrews

- Audience = A group of Jewish/Hebrew Christians (believers) who were considering abandoning their Christian faith and reverting to Judaism (old covenant) because of the persecution they were experiencing (10:32-36).
- Main Message: Don’t give up! Don’t go back to the old covenant! Jesus and the new covenant are superior! Hang in there! Patiently endure the persecution that you are undergoing by fixing your eyes on Jesus who is superior in all ways – He is the highest pleasure (12:1-3).

Two Word Pictures from Hebrews 12:1-3 That Will Encourage, Inspire, and Motivate You

Word Picture #1: Losing Your Heart _____ (Heb. 12:3)

- “heart” = the seat of your emotions
- If you don’t have a heart, then you don’t have any passion, drive, or will to continue. Most literally, if you don’t have a heart, then you die!
- John Eldredge (*Waking the Dead*): “Why are so many people bored or frustrated with their jobs? Their hearts are not in their work. Why do so many relationships fail? Because one or both partners no longer have a heart for making it work. Why are so many people struggling with depression or discouragement? They’ve lost heart. Why can’t we seem able to break free of our addictions? Because somewhere along the way, in a moment of carelessness or desperation, we gave our heart away.... There is no

escaping the centrality of the heart. God knows that; its why He made it the central theme of the Bible, just as He placed the physical heart in the center of the human body. The heart is central; to find our lives, we must make it central again.”

- **Application:** In what ways am I losing heart? _____
- A huge message of the Bible: Don’t **lose your heart** _____!!!!
 - **Proverbs 4:23** - Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.
 - **Deuteronomy 6:5** - Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
 - **1 Samuel 16:7** - The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.
 - **Luke 12:34** - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
 - **Proverbs 3:5** - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
 - **Psalms 119:11** - I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.
 - **Matthew 15:8** - These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.
 - **2 Chronicles 16:9** - For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.
 - **Proverbs 21:2** - All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart.
- **Application:** The way to not “lose heart” is to fix your eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:2-3)
 - 1) Consider who **He is**
 - a. He is Author
 - b. He is Perfection
 - 2) Consider what **He endured** _____ – Fix your eyes on the cross: the ultimate pain and the ultimate shame
 - a. Ultimate physical pain (crucifixion)
 - b. Ultimate emotional pain (separation)
 - c. Ultimate spiritual pain (wrath of God)
 - 3) Consider the **joy** _____ He foresaw and realized
 - a. The joy of being reunited with the Father (Psalm 16:11)
 - b. The joy of being with you forever (Hebrews 2:10)
 - c. The joy of exaltation (Hebrews 2:6-9; Phil. 2:5-11)

Word Picture #2: Running A Marathon _____ (Heb. 12:1-3)

- The marathon course: God is the Author of this course. He has marked out the race course of our lives and the finish line.
- Kent Hughes: “We each have a specific course mapped out for us, and the course for each runner is unique. Some are relatively straight, some are all turns, some seem all uphill, some are a flat hiking path. All are long, but some are longer. But the glory is, each of us (no exceptions!) can finish the race ‘marked out for us.’ I may not be able to run your course, and you may find mine impossible, but I can finish my race and you yours. Both of us can finish well if we choose and if we rely on Him who is our strength and our guide!”

How to run the marathon race of my life (Heb. 12:1-3)

1) Get rid of the things that weigh you down and hinder you

Literal Marathon		Life Marathon	
Things That Hinder	Things That Help	Things That Hinder	Things That Help
Excess body weight	Eat healthy Exercise	Sin	God's Word
Heavy clothes and items	Shed them!		Serve others
		Life baggage; emotional ball and chain	Friends; small grp
			Christian counsel; Freedom in Christ

- o "the sin which so easily entangles" = besetting sin; sin that easily surrounds us; putting off a long heavy robe that would be a hindrance in running
- o **Application:** What things are hindering you from running your life race effectively? What sin is it that so easily entangles you? _____

What action steps do you need to take to run better? _____

- o **1 Timothy 4:7-8** – Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.
- o **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** - Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2) Run with perseverance

- o Hang in there! Don't give up! Push through the pain! Don't quit!
- o Hitting the wall in a marathon

What Helps When You Hit the Wall in a Literal Marathon	What Helps When You Hit the Wall in Life's Marathon
Energy/fuel: Gatorade, orange slices, energy bar	Spiritual fuel: Word of God, prayer, worship, serving others
Encouragement of others	Encouragement of others (Heb 10:24-25)
Set sights on the finish line	Set sights on the finish line

- o **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** - Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- o **Application:** In what ways have you given up or "hit the wall"? _____

What steps do you need to take to keep running the race? _____

- 3) Fix your eyes on Jesus
 - o He is the pacesetter for the marathon!
 - o He designed the course!
 - o He perfectly finished the race Himself!
 - o He has endured more "hitting the wall" pain than anyone else!
 - o He is the highest pleasure! Key to overcoming temptation is to set your eyes on a higher pleasure than the temptation itself.
 - o **Application:** In what practical ways can you fix your eyes on Jesus this week? _____

- 4) Be inspired by the testimonies of others
 - o Upcoming Sermon Series on Hebrews 11 (January-March 2006)
 - o **Application:** I'm going to spend some time listening to the testimony of someone who has already successfully run the marathon (Heb. 11):
 - Abel – worshipping God God's way (11:4)
 - Enoch – walking with God faithfully until He took him (11:5)
 - Noah – obeying God concerning something he didn't understand (11:7)
 - Abraham – following God's calling even though he didn't know where it was taking him (11:8-10)
 - Sarah – trusting God for the birth of the impossible (11:11-12)
 - Abraham – offering God his most prized "possession" (11:17-19)
 - Isaac – speaking by faith about the future (11:20)
 - Jacob – blessing others before its too late (11:21)
 - Joseph – believing God for things concerning the next generations (11:22)
 - Moses' parents – obeying God rather than man (11:23)
 - Moses – giving up earthly pleasures for eternal treasures (11:24-28)
 - Other witnesses in my life to emulate: _____
 - The testimony of Paul
- 2 Timothy 4:6-8** - The time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.

Discussion Questions with Family, Friends, and Small Group

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-3 aloud and discuss its meaning.
2. To the extent that you feel comfortable, share your answers to the application questions.
3. Who is a "witness" that inspires you to keep running the race?