

shake it off

hebrews 12

Head over to Hebrews chapter 12 this morning. We've got just 2 chapters left in this letter. There's been a lot of talk about Jesus and what He's done and our calling and position as Christians and now we're in the home stretch, where the author talks about the same thing again.

He attempts to get our attention one more time before closing out the book with a few practical directions and closing statements.

So let's look at our text and see what we see.

Hebrews 12.1-29 - Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

**“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.”**

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

Paul Baloche is a worship leader in Texas. He’s been around for a long time, we sing a lot of his songs. He has a great ministry to the Church. One of his songs, titled *Shaken* has a chorus that says:

Everything that can be will be shaken and only You remain.

It’s taken from this passage. When interviewed about the song, Paul talks about how through the suffering and struggles of life we can cling to the Lord who will always remain and will always be sure for us. We can always hang on to Him.

And that’s true.

But it’s interesting to look here and see that God wants to shake things up too. It’s not just the storms of life, but it is He Himself who sometimes grabs hold of us and gives us a good shake.

He does this a lot, because it’s an effective way of getting someone’s attention.

Have you ever been shaken by someone?

The Lord does this figuratively and, sometimes, literally. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and the place was shaken.

As referenced in our chapter, when the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, the multitude of people and the mountain itself were shaken.

In Isaiah chapter 6 the Temple is shaken as angels worship the Lord.

God is interested in our attention. He shakes things up so that we'll keep moving forward and keep growing as His people.

Because Hebrews depicts life as if we are a ship on the water. If we're not sailing forward, we start to drift aimlessly toward disaster. That was way back in chapter 2. Or here, we get the picture of having to run quickly so that we're not trapped and ensnared by sin and all these other pitfalls, as if we're running across quicksand.

There is a constant warning and motivation to get moving so that we don't fall victim to these traps. But then there's also the motivation of Christ. Along with all these warnings we've been shown that Jesus Christ brings real power, real help, real purpose, real satisfaction and a real future for those who believe God and walk by faith.

So, in this urgent letter, we're shown all these things in order to jump start our walk with the Lord. All the dangers of not living the Christian life and then all the power and perfection of Jesus and then all the plans He has for us and the calling we have. We see that we're invited to be a part of saving souls and ministering to people and we're invited to live forever in the heavenly city that God has made for us. All this discussion should charge us up in our walk with God. If it's not, then we probably need to have a different conversation with the Lord about why we're not excited by the Word and the Christian life.

Because we are headed to an everlasting Kingdom and as we make our way there the Lord wants to shake off anything that isn't going to last. All the extra junk we acquire needs to be dealt with. So, because God loves us, He looks at our lives and He chastens us and prunes us and tugs at us because He's working on a project in our lives and, in His perfecting He says, "Ok, we're not going to need this. We're not going to need that." And He chastens and prunes and fashions us into lean, mean, Christian sheep.

And since we find ourselves in a relationship and a partnership with Jesus Christ, we see here that we can shake stuff off too in order to keep our lives from drifting away from God or sinking down into the sand.

First, in verse 1, we see that we must shake off sin. The text says, "Man, lay it aside. Get rid of it." Sin is serious. Temptation is serious. We've got to remember that. Greg Laurie once wrote:

"Many people want to be delivered from temptation, but they would (also) like to keep in touch."

Sin isn't playing around. It's a serious thing. Jesus purged our sins once and for all on the cross, but He didn't purge our sins just so that we didn't have to pay the penalty for them, He purged our sins so that we could be set free from them. And the writer to Hebrews says later in verse 4 that we're to contend against sin past the point of physical bloodshed! That's hardcore!

We can't keep in touch with temptation. If we do, it's going to bite us and trap us like it did before the Lord set us free.

In verse 3 we read that we're to shake off weariness. That's an encouragement we get a bunch of times in the Bible. Galatians 6.9. 2 Thessalonians 3.13. Don't grow weary in doing good. If that's a command we receive then we must have some control over it.

So, if I'm thinking that I'm tired of living the Christian life, then I'm doing it wrong. I'm doing some kind of religion or merit-based spirituality. Walking with Jesus is supposed to be weary-free. Even though we don't see Him, our relationship with Him is meant to be full of glory and joy inexpressible. So, when we're weary, we need to shake it off and use proper form when we exercise our faith.

In verse 3 we're also told to shake off discouragement. On just about every level, the Christian life is beset with potential discouragement. In personal growth, ministry, you name it. Discouragement is out there. But Hebrews tells us to shake it off. Maybe we don't feel like our ministry is very effective or successful. Ok, shake it off. If we're doing what God asks us to do, that's what matters. The harvest is His business. We're in the planting and cultivating business.

Or maybe you feel the Lord convicting you about something or you receive a rebuke from the Spirit or from another Christian. Even when it's truly from God it's sometimes hard not to feel discouraged about that, and that's human nature. But God says that's not what He wants when He brings us correction. Here we get a long section about how when we're rebuked, when we're chastened by God, we don't need to be discouraged. We need to shake that off. God adjusts things in our lives and smooths out imperfections because He loves us and He wants to do it for our profit. It doesn't feel good to be humbled, but we're humbled by God so that He can lift us up. So shake off discouragement when it knocks on your door.

In verse 12 we're told to get our hands up. We need to shake off dormancy. Inactivity in the Christian life is a scary and deadly thing. It's a huge threat to our spiritual lives. When we 'settle down' and hang up our gloves to rest, then we stop producing fruit and we become dormant, inactive, retired Christians. That's never supposed to happen. Certainly not on this side of eternity.

Here in verse 12 it says, "Get your hands up." I think about that in 2 ways. First, I think about it in the boxing sense. Get your hands up to protect yourself from the attacks you're facing. We can't lay down our arms because we're going to get knocked out if we're not covering up. And the second thing I think of with this image is to get our hands up and working.

God's not a taskmaster, but rest is for eternity. Right now is the work season. Our hands need to be actively pursuing the Lord's work.

In the Bible we believers are depicted as trees bearing fruit. Fishermen catching fish. Salt preserving things. Light shining brightly in the darkness. None of that is dormant. Not even a little bit.

So, if I take an honest look at my life and evaluate what's going on spiritually and come to the conclusion that I'm not catching fish and I'm not bearing fruit and I'm not shining light and I'm not preserving my community, and I mean really doing those things, then I have to figure out what's going on. Because the Christian life is an active life, not a dormant one.

In verse 12 we're also told to strengthen our feeble knees. We need to shake off weakness.

Now, right now it's still popular in the Christian culture to project vulnerability and brokenness and weakness. The idea is that those sorts of characteristics make a person more authentic. And we might think of the verses that say, "My strength is made perfect in your weakness." But the focus of verses like that is God's strength, not our weakness.

We are, of course, bankrupt and worthless in comparison to God. That's important to remember, but we shouldn't *stay* weak as Christians. Christianity is marked in the Bible by contentment and confidence and effectiveness and victory in God's power.

So we shouldn't stay weak in our ministry or our persona. We're to put on God's strength and walk in it. Psalm 28. Exodus 15. Habakkuk 3. The **LORD** is my strength!

I was talking to someone yesterday about some of the problems our nation is facing and he asked me, "When you see all of this, aren't you afraid?" The answer is no. Why should I be afraid when God says there's nothing to be afraid of? We don't need to be afraid of anything other than grieving the Lord through faithlessness.

So we're to shake off weakness and get our legs pumping again.

Then in verse 15 we're told to shake off bitterness. It's hard not to get bitter when we're burned. It's hard not to resent people or hold grudges. At least it's hard for me. But it *is* a choice. And we're told here in this passage that bitterness ruins our lives. And if we want to see the Lord working in our lives, doing all the stuff He says He wants to do in us and through us, then we've got to shake off the bitterness.

James says in his letter that fresh water and bitter water can't come from the same spring.

God wants to shake up our lives. He wants to get our attention and get us free from all the junk that isn't going to last and the stuff that's slowing us down. We need to be a part of that and shake off the weights and the leeches that try to keep us from moving forward in our walk with the Lord.

Let's get running today. Hands up, legs pumping so our lives can erupt with God's power.