

Scripture and Life

INTRODUCTION:

1. If you are like me, there are certain songs that connect me to certain times and circumstances of my life.
2. In somewhat the same way, but flipping it, there are different times and circumstances of my life that will connect me to certain scriptures—scriptures that will take on greater meaning to me, or speak to me more clearly than they might have at other times.

BODY:

I. Hebrews 12:1-4 and Life:

- A. Hebrews 12:1-4 has become one of those passages for me:
 1. Heb. 12:1-4 – “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, ² 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. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”)
 2. I think there is so much here that speaks to us that everyone needs to keep this verse in mind.
- B. What circumstances have connected this passage to me? The present distress we live within!
 1. We are living with unprecedented levels of isolation demanded by our government.
 2. We *fear*, or have *feared*, COVID-19, going to great lengths to be cautious in public places where we must...be around other people! Isn't that scary...to be around others!?
 3. This “stay at home” policy has brought much uncertainty, anger, and frustration due to the possible, and for some the *real*, consequences it has produced.
 - a. People are not working and are not getting paid, causing anxiety about their jobs, whether their company will survive, whether they will have money to pay the bills, buy food, etc.
 - b. People are far less active and are unable to live a normal life which causes boredom, depression, a loss of a sense of purpose and meaning, and causes a bit of craziness.
- C. Despite all of this, I must not stop here and express my thankfulness to God for our safety so far and the fact that things are beginning to ease up—the threat is going away!

II. Why is Heb. 2:1-4 so important?

- A. Despite the physical isolation we must endure, I know that this “great cloud of witnesses” is still there, surrounding us and cheering us on to finish our race for the prize of eternal life (12:1).
 1. This means so much because these are the very people described in Heb. 11 that served God in faith by listening to and obeying God, even when they had no idea where God was taking them or why God was asking them to do certain things!
 2. These were people who by their faith walked righteously with God in a wicked world triumphing over the hordes of Satan. These were people who when thrown into a lions' den or into a hot burning furnace by their faith lived to continue their service to God.
 3. These were people of faith that refused to bend when faced with torture, mocking, scourging, chains, imprisonment, stoning, being sawn in two, being killed by the sword, who were homeless and impoverished as they wandered the earth in deserts, mountains, and caves, all the while facing unkind and ungodly treatment by their fellow man.
 4. All these lived out their lives in faith despite never receiving God's promises in their lifetime, seeing their reception of the promises was connected to us, to Christians, who now live in those very promises fulfilled in Jesus.
 5. These witnesses, and so many more, are still here cheering us on that we might...
 - a. Trust Christ, refuse to give up, and run with endurance our race set before us!

b. Allow these difficult times to be our motivation to be more holy, more dedicated to God, and to put sin and the hindrances to greater service out of our lives that we might shine in this so very dark world.

B. Despite our trials and tribulations, Jesus is still there before us inviting us to look to Him for the strength to carry on (Heb. 12:2-3).

1. This is so very important because Jesus gave us the example of endurance, being able to face the shame and suffering of the cross **by keeping His eye on the joy** His work would bring to this lost world, as well as the joy He would receive when He sat upon the throne of God His Father as the crowned King of the universe and High Priest of His people.
2. That same strength to face the hardships and suffering of our life as God's servant, to not grow weary and lose heart in the face of all that Satan throws at us, is there for our taking...if only we will look to Jesus.

C. Despite what we have faced, **UNLIKE** Christ and so many who form that great cloud of witnesses, we have not yet shed our own blood in fighting against sin (2:4).

1. For all of us here, that ultimate sacrifice is yet to be faced...and may never be faced.
2. Of course, the battle for our soul rages on. And if you are not looking to Jesus and Satan is pushing you around during far easier times than has been faced by Christ and so many of our brethren, how do you hope to stand when your life is on the line for your faith?
3. So I encourage you to look to Jesus knowing that with Him on your side you do not have to fear what is before you, whatever it might be, and can be faithful unto death and receive a crown of righteousness (Rev. 2:10).

CONCLUSION:

1. Understand that though hardships are not pleasant and may even be very sorrowful at the time, for those of faith they yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11).
2. And, know that for the people of God in Christ, our afflictions are truly a step along our journey that will end in the great joy, fellowship, wonder, and perfection to be experienced and received for the faithful in Christ in **eternity** in heaven with God.
3. So, don't give up, don't lose heart, don't forget the joy of hope God has placed before you and strive with all you heart, mind, and body to stand strong now and grow stronger each day that you might receive the prize of eternal life.