STAND UP, STRENGTHEN UP, AND STAY UP

**DATE: 3/18/2015 Wed.**

**TEXT: Hebrews 12:12-17**

**INTRODUCTION**

Let’s stand for the reading of the Word of God

Paul begins chapter 12 with the exhortation …

***“let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us”***

Paul continues to draw upon the analogy of an Olympic runner

The Christian runner is encouraged to go on while facing spiritual fatigue

I don’t know about you, but I’m tired

But we are admonished …

**Galatians 6:9 *– “not (to) be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”*** *(and again in)*

**II Thessalonians 3:13 – *“brethren, be not weary in well doing”***

Paul declared his weariness in …

**II Corinthians 11:27 …**

***“In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness”***

The Bible declares Jesus’ weariness in …

**John 4:6 *– “Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour”***

Even the Son of God became wearied

Therefore the Bible tells us to …

**Hebrews 12:3 *– “…consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds”***

The believer's race is not a sprint; but a marathon

Let’s read our Text, than we will pray and think on these thoughts tonight

**“Stand up, Strengthen up, and Stay up”**

**Read Text**

**~~~Prayer~~~**

**I. THE “EXHORTATION TO FAITHFULNESS” – vs. 12, 13**

**Faithfulness -** *believing firmly in something or somebody*

The conjunction ***“wherefore”*** introduces us to the conclusion that is to be derived from the lessons of chastisement that we saw in our last lesson

A Positive response needs to be taken by the readers

**A. Lift up – v.12**

***“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;”***

Paul again quotes the OT to get his point across

**v.12** is a quote from …

**Isaiah 35:3 – *“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees”***

I picture Eeyore …

He is generally characterized as a pessimistic, gloomy, depressed, unable to enjoy life, old grey stuffed donkey who is a friend of Winnie-the-Pooh

The phrase ***“lift up”*** means to *straighten, strengthen up*

The word ***“feeble”*** means *to be paralyzed*

These words describe someone who has become weary and wounded

Paul is exhorting the spiritually paralyzed Hebrew Christians to straighten up and get back in the race

There is a marathon to be run and nothing will be accomplished by sitting on the sidelines

They must draw upon God's strength and get back in the race

**Lift Up**

**B. Make Straight – v.13**

We are admonished ... ***“make straight paths for your feet”***

That is … We are to stay on the right path

We must not only strengthen up and stay in the race,

But we must also run on the right course

The word ***“straight”*** means *to stand straight in a prostrate position*

The word ***“paths”*** refer to *the lanes on the track*

The analogy of the runner is in view here

Paul is saying that we must stand straight and stay in our own lane

***“lest that which is lame be turned out of the way;”***

If you pull up lame, disabled unable …

What would cause someone to become lame, disabled?

Sin, unbelief, resistance to God’s will

When a runner veers off course he not only disqualifies himself, but also wreaks havoc on others in the race

This is true in every aspect of life

Husbands / Fathers who get off course and don’t lead their families will wreck the family

Wives / Mothers who get off course and try to lead their home will wreck the home

Someone is off course when they try to go outside their God given authority

Don’t overstep your boundaries and meddle in another person’s responsibility

**Proverbs 4:25-27 – *“Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee” “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established” “Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil”***

If we are not careful we will get off course

And others will become victims of our failure

How do we remain Faithful?

By running patiently the race that is set before us

Keeping our eyes on the Author and Finisher of our Faith

**THE “EXHORTATION TO FAITHFULNESS”**

**II. THE “EARNESTNESS TO FOLLOW” – v.14**

***“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”***

The word ***“follow”*** means *to pursue, to press hard after*

The idea is to pursue with *earnestness* and *resolve*

Earnestness - *Fixed desire or attention; seriousness*

Resolve - *To confirm; to be Settled; established; firm; stable*

Paul used the word ***“press”*** in his letter to the Philippian Church

… Which has the same idea

**Philippians 3:14 –** ***“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”***

We are still on the race track here

Paul is saying – “*Like a runner who puts everything he has into the race, we are to do the same for Christ”*

The runner stays in the right lane, focuses on the goal and diligently pursues the prize

Paul states that our goal is to see the Lord

In this verse he names 2 requirements that are necessary if we are to reach our goal

**A. ‘Peace’**

We are admonished to ***“follow peace with all men”***

***“Follow”*** – *be at*

This does not mean to surrender biblical convictions

Paul said in **Romans 12:18 – *“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”***

We can't always live peaceably with others

However we can still have the peace of God

Forget about the idea that we are to ditch doctrine and just get along with everyone

As much as possible we ought to live peaceably with others,

But we are still exhorted to ***“fight the good fight of faith”* – II Tim. 4:7**

And to ***“Earnestly contend for the faith” -* Jude 3b**

**B. ‘Purity’**

Paul adds... ***“and holiness”***

*Be at* peace with all men

And … live in Holiness *before* all men

Holiness is one of the neglected doctrines of our day

God, however, still takes it seriously

**I Peter 1:15, 16 – *“But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;” “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”***

A Holy God requires that His people be holy as well

The word ***“Holy”*** means *to be set apart*

God's people are set apart from this world

Our holiness is not only in Position, but in our Practice as well

**I Thess. 4:7 - *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness”***

**THE “EXHORTATION TO FAITHFULNESS”**

**THE “EARNESTNESS TO FOLLOW”**

**III. THE “ENEMY TO FIGHT” – v.15**

***“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”***

**1. One of Man’s worst enemies**

Bitterness is one of the cruelest attitudes that man will ever faced

The Christian is to be sweet—not sour

Bitterness is a *deep seated, long burning, smoldering resentment*

It is an anger that is constantly brooding and holding grudges

Paul describes bitterness as the state of those who …

***“fail of the grace of God”***

And therefore, are ***“troubled and defiled”***

**2. Bitterness is always self-inflicted**

Bitterness is not something that someone can do to you

We cause our own bitterness

Bitterness is anger in its most poisonous stages

It is a deep seated anger that has stewed deep down inside until its poison rules the heart

It is the most dangerous form of anger

**Quote:** Someone has said – “*Bitterness is anger that is so deep seated and so pervasive that it colors a person's entire perception of life”*

Bitterness will completely destroy someone

Bitterness is holding onto an offence until it has a hold on you

So how do we fight this Enemy?

**A. ‘Unrelenting Diligence’**

The Warning is … ***“Looking diligently …***

What an eye opening statement

If we become bitter it is because we have failed to receive the grace of God

Bitterness is a dangerous and dreadful sin

Therefore the utmost attention must be given to identifying and dealing with it

If you have bitterness in your heart you will know it!

For the Bible says so in **Prov. 14:10 – *“The heart knoweth his own bitterness”***

***“diligently”*** means - *with steady application and care*

We must wholeheartedly apply ourselves to the task of finding and rooting out any bitterness

**‘Unrelenting Diligence’**

**B. ‘Unseen Danger’**

Bitterness is Described as a …

**1. Root**

It is likened to a dangerous weed growing in a bed of flowers

At first it is just a root under the soil and unseen

However, it is there stealing the nourishment, depleting the soil and starving the flowers,

Until at last it springs up choking and destroying the rest of the life in the garden

Failure to weed out the root of bitterness will ensure defeat in your life

Notice that bitterness is Revealed by its …

**2. Springing up**

You can't hide bitterness

You may keep it beneath the soil of your heart for a while,

But sooner or later it will spring up

The word ***“springing”*** means *to puff, to swell*

It pictures the germination of a seed as it swells, burst open, and springs forth out of the ground

Bitterness is just like that

It lies underneath, hidden deep in the heart draining it of valuable resources until at last it springs forth ruining the whole life

Sin in a person’s life doesn’t just happen

It’s a series of steps taking place little by little until one day it manifests itself

Be sure your sin will find you out

**‘Unseen Danger’**

Will lead to …

**C. ‘Unbearable Distress’**

***“ lest it … trouble you”***

That word ***“trouble”*** describes a bitter person

The word ***“trouble”*** carries the idea of *disturbed or annoyed*

Bitterness disturbs the whole life

The Prodigal's older brother is a good example

He was so disturbed by his brother leaving the farm and blowing his inheritance that he couldn't rejoice even when the prodigal repented and returned home

**Luke 15:28*-  “And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him”***

The older brother had allowed his anger to grow into full blown bitterness

Bitterness caused him to focus first on the prodigals offence and secondly, himself

Here is the father rejoicing over the repentance and return of his son

And the older brother is pouting over what he falsely perceives to be an injustice

**Luke 15:29 - *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:”***

What was wrong here?

-- He had been a faithful son

-- He stayed the course and he was quick to point that out to his father

But while he worked he couldn't get his mind off of the younger brother's offence

**Quote:** Frederick Buechner (Beek-ner) described this type of anger and bitterness in his book, “Wishful Thinking.” He said: *“Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun, to lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to savor to the last morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back. In many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.”*

Bitterness will bring rejoicing to a halt

Bitterness is the reason why so many Churches and homes are miserable and unhappy places

Just like the angry and bitter son ruined the Father's rejoicing,

Many today have sucked the joy out of other's lives

Bitter people ruin the happiness and rejoicing of others

The older brother completely missed the Father's joy and the repentance of his lost brother

He was so focused on the offense that bitterness sprang up, troubled and defiled him

Bitterness is an **‘Unseen Danger’**

Bringing **‘Unbearable Distress’**

With …

**D. ‘Unavoidable Defilement’**

***“ …and thereby many be defiled”***

Because of Bitterness, many are Defiled

Not only the one who is bitter, but also those affected by it!

The word ***“defiled”*** means *to taint or to contaminate*

It speaks of defilement in a ceremonial sense

The same word is used by the Apostle John

**John 18:28 -**  ***“Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover”***

Had Jesus' accusers gone into the judgment hall they would have been tainted and therefore unfit to partake in the Passover

The idea is that bitterness so taints and defiles a person that it makes him unfit to enter the presence of God

Bitter people have no fellowship and no walk with the Lord

But there is Hope

Let’s look at the **…**

**E. ‘Unlimited Deliverance’**

Let’s go back to the beginning of **v.15**

That Hope is found in **…**

***“... the grace of God”***

As the people of God we are dependent upon the grace of God

This truth is paramount in digging out the roots of bitterness

The Bible declares in **Romans 5:20 – *“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”***

The word ***“abound”*** carries the idea of *super abounding* and means to *surpass by far*, *exceed immeasurably*, or *overflow beyond*

This is where we get victory!

If we will live by the standard of grace we will never get bitter because grace will *surpass by far*, *exceed immeasurably,* and *overflow beyond the offence* that would normally anger and embitter us

No wonder God said in **II Corinthians 12:9 – *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”***

People who are bitter have failed to draw upon God's grace

We must draw constantly upon God's grace … Why?

… in order to be victorious in overcoming bitterness

**Hebrews 4:16 – *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”***

This verse pictures us coming right into to the throne room of God to find the grace we need to overcome our failures and difficulties

**THE “EXHORTATION TO FAITHFULNESS”**

**THE “EARNESTNESS TO FOLLOW”**

**THE “ENEMY TO FIGHT”**

**CONCLUSION**

Let’s close with the Example Paul uses in **vs. 16 & 17**

The Bible gives us many Examples

**I Corinthians 10:11 *– “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition”***

Paul draws upon the failure of Esau to bring home his point

**v.16 – *“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright”***

He calls Esau a fornicator to emphasis his unfaithfulness to God

The word ***“profane”*** means *godless*

It speaks of someone who lives without regard for God's will

Esau... *“****for one morsel of meat sold his birthright”***

Esau's birthright was God's blessing upon the firstborn

However, we learned in **Genesis 25:34** that Esau despised it, and in despising it, he despised God

He wanted God's blessing, but he did not want God

We all should be familiar with the story of Jacob and Esau in the book of Genesis

Esau came in from the field one day and was hungry

Jacob had prepared food

When Esau asked for food, Jacob told him to …

***“sell me this day thy birthright”* – Gen. 25:31**

Esau did as Jacob asked

For one morsel of meat, that’s a single meal, Esau gave up his right as firstborn

By doing so he *“****despised his birthright”* – Gen. 25:34**

The birthright carried with it a number of privileges

The recipient became chief over the entire family

He further received a double portion of the father's estate

Esau rejected the faith of his father and grandfather, by despising his birth­right

His birthright was a special privilege, but Esau did not consider it special

Esau got so caught up in his hunger that he forgot and neglected the higher and more important things

Esau characterizes a man who lives according to the dictates of his flesh

**v.17 – *“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears”***

The reason Esau was rejected is that he found no place of repentance

Paul is not saying that Esau sought to repent but God refused to forgive him

What the writer is saying is that Esau sought the blessing with tears

He was remorseful because of what he had done, but not repentant

In essence, Esau still wanted the blessing, but he didn't want God

So what lessons are here for us to learn?

**THE “EXHORTATION TO FAITHFULNESS”**

**THE “EARNESTNESS TO FOLLOW”**

**THE “ENEMY TO FIGHT”**