**Jesus, Our Great High Priest**

**Hebrews: Hearing and Obeying God’s Son**

**Hebrews 12:1-11**

**Why and how Jesus proves that it’s worth the struggle.**

[Based upon the testimony of God’s faithfulness to His promises and countless examples of past faithful ones. . .]

Precept: Discipline yourself for godliness. v. 1

Our faithfulness requires turning our backs on all that hinders us, including sin and apathy, in order to pay attention to the goal.

Pattern: Jesus Himself has led the way by His example. v. 2

 The joy of the finish line is worth any necessary sacrifice.

Principle: God is training us to persevere by means of struggle. vv. 3, 4

 Consider that our struggle is not nearly as difficult as was His!

Pain: Our Father disciplines us because He loves us. vv. 5-9

 And remember that these discomforts are not punishment.

Payoff: His design is our holiness, righteousness, and peace. vv. 10, 11

 Perseverance in God’s purposes leads to eternal life and eternal joy.

***Moving from the stands into the game. . .***

*First, we remember that life is a training ground for eternity.*

 If you follow our culture’s thinking, all “good people” go to heaven, regardless of what they believe or do. Jesus is not that important because sincerity has become our standard rather than belief in truth. We no longer believe in absolute truth, and so one religion is as good as another. The Bible itself tells a different story. If we are planning to be in Heaven, then it means following Jesus NOW. Our author has given countless reasons for believing in Him as Priest and Sacrifice for our sins, and now explains that we must follow Him, loving Him, not merely loving the idea of Him. Are you a follower of Jesus, or just a fan? Matthew 7:13-27

*Second, looking to Jesus as our example, we streamline our lives.*

 The Bible compares the Christian life to farming (sowing and reaping), stewardship (parable of the talents), being a soldier (in his complete armor), and here, an athletic contest (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:1-7). It requires being relentless in pushing aside any and all hindrances in order to focus upon winning the prize, as do Olympic athletes. Revelation speaks of these actions collectively as “overcoming.” What are the hindrances and sins holding you back? Romans 8:18-30

*Third, we keep in mind that struggles are normal and necessary.*

 Self-pity, anger at God, and love of ease make it easier for us to think our trials are pointless. But walking in God’s Spirit allows His fruit to pervade our lives: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self control keep us on task. Galatians 5:16-26