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OUR SUPPORTING WITNESSES

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
NUMBER 117
HEBREWS 12:1-2

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Hebrews 12 is divided into three parts--

1. Verses 1-3--Here we have the challenge to follow the colors and maintain the high ground.
2. Verses 4-15--These verses present the tragedy of being in the royal family and missing super grace.
3. Verses 16-29 --This is the section which tells of the alternative to saving grace and divine discipline which comes for the unbeliever.

Verses 1-3

These verses really should have gone with chapter 11, for they refer to the glorious witnesses that we presented in this chapter. These verses contain the great field order to the royal family. The royal family is first in line as we saw in our last study, and even the super grace heroes like David and Abraham and Moses and Isaiah are behind us in line. They will receive their resurrection bodies after we do. That was the very dramatic note on which we ended the previous study.

Verses 4-15

This section presents the great tragedy of living in this life as a member of the royal family and missing super grace. They have salvation, saving grace, but then they say, "Goodbye, God, I'll see you in eternity. But for the time being, I want to do my own thing and have my own fling." But just remember this, no matter what you can come up with in your own planning and own scheme of things, it is not as good as the road of super grace. (Always keep this in mind--Living grace--Saving Grace--Super grace-- Dying Grace which is the Golden drawbridge--Surpassing Grace.) There is no problem we will ever face that doctrine does not cover. This is the road to glory and the more God blesses us, the more he is glorified.

Now there is another road. It begins by assuming that doctrine is not important and that other things are more important than doctrine. So instead of the road to glory they travel the road to gory--Just leave out the "l." (Japanese who couldn't pronounce UCLA always said UCRA and that's the way these people pronounce glory, they say gory.) In their stage of warning, God gives a little happiness and prosperity, but it always winds up in great misery. God always gives ample warning along the way before the sin unto death comes. We will study all these things in verses 4-15 of this chapter. And if you don't think it is a gory road, then just step out on that road and try it for yourself. Now, I would like to make this suggestion to you. Some of you will not stay with me in this class too long. You are here tonight, but you won't be here long because you don't believe doctrine is as important as I say it is. But I hope you will stay long enough to get verses 4-15 of this chapter, for in these verses, we will pick up what is gory. It will tell you about the fun you can pick up on that gory road and then how that fun will turn sour and will never carry you through adversity. When it comes up to the time when the chips are down and you need help and you are minus doctrine, then just what are you to expect? How miserable do you believe you can get? Now please

don't call me in the middle of your misery to tell me that you have found out the hard way that I was right. I already know that I am right. So, don't bother to call. The Word of God is always right. Young people always face the rosy side of life and they are healthy and happy and they just never think of the hard times that lie ahead when they don't know doctrine and they don't have God. It is so easy to assume that life will be great without doctrine. So, please stay with us through verse 15 of this chapter so you will know your biography and later on you will look back on your life and say, "That's exactly what Hebrews 12:4-15 said life without God and doctrine would be.

DOCTRINE GIVES CAPACITY

Doctrine will give you capacity, and if you have it, your capacity for happiness here and in heaven will be amazing. But if you don't have it, then heaven will be equal to your capacity to enjoy it. You can go to heaven the doctrine way or you can go the low gory road and experience dying grace and get there crawling through cut glass and all the other horrors that accompany the sin unto death. Your capacity will be determined by the amount of doctrine in your mind. Therefore I beg you to get the truth of this section in your mind before you cut out and go out in the world and do your own thing.

Verses 16-29

This is the section of the chapter which is for unbelievers, and we will learn a lot that we ought to know as we study the fate of the unbeliever. We will study how Jacob trapped his brother with the most famous pot of baked beans in the history of the world. Then we will see the crybaby Esau and see why he turned out like he did.

So we have three great principles here--

1. The challenge to follow the glory road--Verses 1-3.
2. The alternative to super grace and divine discipline for the doctrineless believer and the gory road--Verses 4-15.
3. The alternative to saving grace and the terrible experience of divine discipline for the unbeliever. (Verses 16-29)

HEBREWS 12:1 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, 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," This is an order for those who are going to be first in line in eternity. This is for everyone in the Church Age who is a member of the royal family of God. Now at one time or another all of you have had to stand in line. Everywhere you go in the world, you will find lines. Lines at the cafeteria, lines getting into the gate at the ball game, and lines when you check out of the grocery store. There are lines everywhere. All of these wonderful people we have studied in chapter 11 will be in the line behind us. We are first in line and this is a beautiful grace picture. Now before we line up to get our resurrection bodies, there is an order that goes out to all the members of the royal family. It is very important that your attention is given to these three paragraphs.

We begin with a triple compound inferential particle toi gar oun and this is the most intensive particle in the Koine Greek Language. "Wherefore" is really too weak. It should be "For that very reason, therefore." It means "Since we are first in line." In other words,

R H I P, Rank Has Its Privileges. And we should remember T G F T B O T H S which means "Thank God For The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit" for that's how we got there to be first in line. The only one who has gotten a resurrection body is Christ, and we will be the next ones to get ours. This compound particle tells us we get our resurrection bodies next, even before Moses and Abraham and David. They are in eternity, minus their resurrection bodies and they cannot be completed without us. The Church Age is the key to everything in history and they are not completed aside from our completion. They will come in at the end of the Jewish Age, which marks the end of the Tribulation. So this compound particle carries forward the idea of Hebrews 11:39-40. It goes back to verse 39 which says, "But we are not of the retreating category of the royal family of God, for the purpose of destruction (sin unto death). For we are the doctrinal type for the purpose of the possession of the soul. (This means the doctrinal possession of the soul.)" There is no excuse for us ever to retreat again. There is too much challenge to grow up and become what God wants us to be. This is a balance of both the filling of the Holy Spirit and the intake of doctrine. This is the proper balance for the soul of every believer. We are not the retreating kind. We are first in line. We are going to seize and hold the high ground. This is always accompanied by positive attitude toward doctrine, and this is the narrow road. But if you are not willing to walk this road, then you will walk the road of discipline.

LOOK AT THIS LAW OF LIFE

You go from positive volition toward doctrine to negative volition toward doctrine, from negative volition toward doctrine to reversionism, from reversionism to warning discipline, from warning discipline to intensive discipline, and from intensive discipline to the sin unto death. This is exactly the picture of the five cycles of discipline to the Jews as it is outlined in Leviticus 26. This is the whole point of toi gar oun. "For that very reason, therefore." God has designed the glory for us and if we go the gory road instead, it is not his will for us. He designed something better and he will not compromise his maximum love and let you slip by without discipline. It is possible to miss the provision God has made for you on the upper road. This intensive particle says this--"Look, this material you had in Hebrews 11 was glorious. This is some of the greatest material in all the Word of God. But toi gar oun says we are not to take our present status for granted. We are to keep on guard all the time, and there is one way to do it and that way is to take in doctrine continually."

"Seeing we also." This is the adjunctive use of kai and means "also." "We" is the nominative plural of ego. Next we have "are compassed about with" and this is the present, active, participle of echo and it means to have, to have and to hold. Now we have a second participle here and it is a present, middle, participle of perikeimai and it means to surround with the sense of support. So thus far, we have this-- "For that very reason, therefore, since we also keep having support surrounding us." It means to surround with the idea of support. These Old Testament heroes form permanent support for the royal family. In order that we may advance, we need this support. Every person who went before you in this great list of super grace Old Testament heroes is a support for you. This is why Hebrews 11 has been so important for us.

We look back on their lives and they support us. They serve as encouragement for us. So this participle says "supporting us." Sometimes in greek between two participles, they will put words like we have here "so great" or "such great" from tos outos. Next we have the word nepfos meaning "cloud," and is used to describe a battalion of these great super grace heroes. This is a figurative reference to this numberless throng, a battalion of numberless witnesses. So it reads, "Such a great battalion of witnesses supporting us."

A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORD "WITNESS"

Quite often when we mention the word "witness" or "witnessing," we think of going out and collaring someone and telling them about Christ. The greek word for "witness" is martus and the martus is the one who goes to court and declares the truth. This is the person who gives witness in a case. They are saying this to us--"The high ground can be seized and held until death." This is their deposition to us. They are shouting this down the halls of the centuries to us. They are saying to us--"Keep your head up, move on, it is possible for you to seize and hold the high ground."

So thus far, we have this--"For this reason, therefore, since we also keep having such a great battalion of witnesses surrounding and supporting us."

Next we have, "Let us lay aside" and this is an aorist, middle, participle of apotithemi. It means "having taken off--having stripped for action." It means to get rid of distractions so you can concentrate on the study of the Word of God. (For us it means all the preparation you do to get ready to come here. Then it means rebound prayer and getting yourself alert so you can take in doctrine into your mind.) You have to get rid of certain things as you get ready to advance. The words "every weight" comes from pas orgos and it means "every impediment." It refers to distractions. We have to get rid of distractions before we can take in the Word of God. There are thousands of things that cause us to deviate from the path where doctrine is taught. This means that you must make your routine of life conform to the intake of doctrine every day. There will be social distractions, sexual distractions, economic distractions, pleasure distractions, personality conflicts. You will have some hang-ups concerning the pastor-teacher. You will have many mental attitude impediments. Bitterness can close your mind to doctrinal truth. Self-pity can blind you to truth. Reactor factors such as loneliness, boredom, discouragement, and frustration. Now these distractions must be distinguished from sin. The distraction itself is not a sin, just like temptation is not a sin. The sin comes when you yield and do it. When you yield to the impediments, then they become a sin. The next words we have are "The sin" and this is the accusative of hamartia. This includes special categories of sin--mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, and then finally, overt sins. We are really talking about the old sin nature. Next we have "which doth so easily beset" and this is an adjective from euperistasos. It so easily ensnares us. Eu means "prosperity." Peri means "around." Stasos means "to stand." It means the sin that stands around you and makes you think you are prosperous, you are doing all right without God and without doctrine. So every person has an easily ensnaring sin. What is yours?

Thus far we have this--

"For this very reason, therefore, since we also keep having such a great battalion of witnesses (namely, Old Testament super grace believers of the previous chapter) surrounding and supporting us, having stripped for action every impediment (social, sexual, monetary, pleasure hang-ups, mental attitude distractions) and the sin (refers to the old sin nature and what comes out of the old sin nature) which doth so easily beset us."

Now what is the easily ensnaring sin?

1. It is the believer's current area of weakness. Areas of weakness change because of spiritual growth. Loss of health or change of outside environment can come into play here.
2. The change in the area of weakness for the believer is related to the believer's progress or retrogression in the Christian life. As the believer advances or retreats, his area of weakness changes.
3. The advancing believer faces the easily ensnaring sin of carnality.
4. The solution for this advancing believer is the understanding and use of 1 John 1:9.
5. The believer who is retrogressing and retreating has a much more complex area of weakness in reversionism.
6. The solution is likewise more complex--it involves more than rebound. It involves a change of attitude toward the intake of doctrine.

Next we have the words "let us run" and this is a present, active, subjunctive of trecho. It is used for running in a track meet or advancing in a military situation. It means to charge, to move on the run with double time. This is the objective for all Christians. The subjunctive mood here means that the writer invites the reader to join him in this course of action so this, therefore, becomes a command-- "Let us advance on the run."

Next we have "with patience" and this is dia plus the genitive of hupomone and it really means "with or through endurance." This is Hebrews 10:23 all over again.

Next we have "the race" and this is the accusative of agon. From this we get the word agony. It means a contest, a fight, a battle. It is used here for a struggle, a battle. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." "That is set before us" is a present, middle, participle of prokeimai.

Verse 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Now we have the objective for this advance.

"Looking" is a present, active, participle from aphorao. It means to turn your eyes away from the distraction and turn them on something else. To focus, to view from the source of doctrine. It means concentration and occupation with the person of Christ. So the meaning is "Be concentrating on." And the one on whom we concentrate is Jesus Christ.

What Is Occupation With Christ?

It is not being excited or sincere, it is not healing, or having a rosy glow, or having chills run up and down your spine, or healing or speaking in tongues. Occupation with Christ comes from doctrine in the soul. You can't stand around and hold hands and sing little ditties and say, "O how I love Jesus!" and "God be with you 'til we meet again" and away we go. It just doesn't happen that way. It is possible to love Jesus Christ but it takes doctrine in the soul.

THE DOCTRINE OF OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST

I. DEFINITION.

Occupation with Christ is the highest achievement of the believer on this earth. It is much more important than loving people, or anything else.

- a. The mature believer with maximum doctrine in his soul is capable of appreciating, respecting, and loving the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. Since Jesus Christ is the manifest person of the Godhead, it becomes maximum love toward this one person, the Son of God.
- c. Therefore, maximum love for Jesus Christ means maximum love for God. (Deut. 6:5)
All real love emanates from the mind. You have heard that expression, "You've got to have heart!" The word heart here means the mind. Knowledge is the key to loving Jesus Christ.
(If a person really knows you, will they love you?)
But God loves me and he knows all about me. This is the amazing grace of God.
You can't walk the high road unless you share it with Christ. This is the road to glory.

II. THE BEGINNING OF OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST.

Occupation with Christ comes when we enter into the super grace life. (Colossians 3:16-17)

III. THE WAY TO GLORIFY CHRIST.

The way we glorify Christ is to be occupied with him. (Eph. 3:19-21) This passage speaks of the "surpassing knowledge love of Christ" and "Filled up with all the fullness of God."

IV. OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST COMES FROM GRACE PERCEPTION.

- a. This comes by keeping on taking in doctrine every day. This comes only from the Word of God.
- b. Maximum doctrine in the soul brings maturity and super grace.
- c. The basic characteristic of super grace is occupation with Christ.
- d. Man's sense of accomplishment on his own human effort can never be compared to daily intake of doctrine that alone leads to super grace. You can't depend on your talent or ability or good luck.
(Jeremiah 9:23-24; Ephesians 4:20 and 3:18)

- V. OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST ELIMINATES THE SUPERFICIALITIES OF HUMAN CELEBRITY-SHIP. (Phil. 3:7-8)
Human celebrity-ship is nothing. Don't rely on it.
- VI. OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST MOTIVATES THE PREACHER TO GIVE DOCTRINE TO THE PEOPLE.
Any Pastor who studies the Word will love Jesus Christ and will get people to study and love also. (Hebrews 6:10)
- VII. THE MECHANICS OF GRACE PRODUCE THE DYNAMICS OF OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST. (James 1:19-21)
You cannot employ that which you do not have. You only can use the doctrine you have in your soul.
This passage says, "Are you willing to learn, O empty man, that doctrine without production is unemployed?" Abraham had to have doctrine in his soul before he could employ it.
- VIII. THE DOCTRINE OF OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST IS FOUND IN THE DOCTRINE OF RIGHT-MAN AND RIGHT-WOMAN. (Ephesians 5:25-33)
- IX. OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST IS RELATED TO THE STRATEGIC VICTORY IN THE ANGELIC CONFLICT. (Col. 3:1-2)
- X. CHARACTERISTICS OF OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST.
- a. This is the way a believer can contribute to national blessing. (Deut. 30:15)
 - b. Produces courage in combat. (Joshua 23:10-11)
 - c. It is the basis for your preservation and blessing. (Psalm 31:23-24)
 - d. Basis for stability and great happiness. (Psalm 16:8-9)
 - e. Results in super grace blessings. (Psalm 37:4-5)
 - f. Results in strength under pressure. (Heb. 11:27)
 - g. It causes you to avoid soul fatigue. (Heb. 12:3)