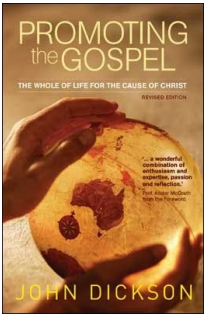




The Message of Hebrews
ENDURANCE

HOLINESS TO THE END Hebrews 12:12-29



Have a brief discussion on Chapters 3 & 4 of 'Promoting the Gospel'. What was the main message in these chapters? What struck you as particularly helpful? Were you given a fresh understanding on any particular points? What were you most challenged by?

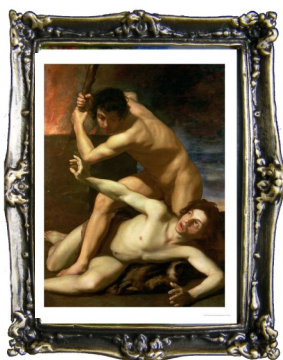
What's one hard task that you've completed? It could be in the area of house construction, or some physical exercise, or some research project, making a pirate ship birthday cake, anything! And what was the goal that kept you going?

Read Hebrews 12:12-29

With the context of Hebrews 12:1-17 in mind, what's the meaning of 'strengthening feeble arms and weak knees' (v12) in the Christian life?

Much of Hebrews is about the need to endure until the end. The Christian life can be hard, but a life of faith is one in which we hold firm to the salvation we have found in Jesus and keep looking ahead to eternal life. This future life is described in various way in Hebrews—rest (chapter 3), an internal inheritance (9:15), and even 'a city' (11:10, 16). It's Jesus' 'once and for all' sacrifice that gives us the confidence that we have entered into a secure and eternal relationship with God. But as part of enduring to the end we must watch our life carefully—we must put Jesus in first place and make every effort to be holy.

Chapter 11 of Hebrews gave us a catalogue of men and women of faith. In this part of Hebrews, we're told about two men who demonstrated a lack of faith. It will be handy to have some background on these Old Testament figures.



Read Genesis 4:1-11. What was the terrible thing that **Abel** did? What was going on inside Abel's heart?



Read Genesis 25:29-34 & 27:1-36. What was the terrible thing that **Esau** did? What was the tragedy for Esau?

What are the two areas of immorality that Christian people are being warned about in verses 14 and 16?

This won't be the last time sexual immorality is mentioned in Hebrews. **Read 13:1-5**. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews highlights these areas— the need for peace, and sexual immorality?

Note that in v15, the phrase 'root of bitterness' seems to be borrowed from Deuteronomy 29:18-19, where it says,

Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry.

Why is Esau's example such a relevant example in this passage which warns Christians to not let a poisonous influence enter their hearts and fellowship?

In Hebrews 12:18-29, another old covenant versus new covenant comparison is given. The events referred to about Moses and the mountain come from Exodus 19 & 20. It at this moment when the famous '10 commandments' were given.

a) What's the difference in location between the two covenants? ie. what the Israelite people went to, versus, what the people who belong to Jesus go to?

b) What's the difference in the shaking—the earthquake that took place on the mountain (see Exodus 19:18), versus, the shaking that will take place?

c) What's the overall response of the people to coming to this mountain (12:21), versus, the overall attitude of people who come to the city of the living God?

d) What makes this new covenant confidence possible? (v24)

Christian people are given a warning in this passage. We've been given so much, therefore we must 'see to it that no-one misses the grace of God' (v15) and 'see to it that you do not refuse him who speaks' (v25). God is a holy and just. What will happen if we do not follow the word of God and strive for holiness?

a) What can we do to make sure that strife and division does not enter our church? (v14)

b) Is sexual immorality a danger for our church? Is it a danger for you? What can we do to ensure the marriage bed is kept pure?



This coming Sunday is 'neighbour day'. At freshchurch the encouragement has been given to take the opportunity do something with a neighbour sometime over the weekend. Christians are told to 'love thy neighbour' so why not actually do it with a neighbour! A BBQ, a morning tea, a game of cricket on the street, anything that works for you. Why not give it a go.