

Will You Finish the Journey From Sinai to Zion? (Hebrews 12:18-24)

Why This Text?

1. The author of Hebrews has been using the metaphor of running a race in Hebrews 12.
 - a. Hebrews 12:1-3 gave us practical considerations in running the race; we were implored to meditate on the actions of Christ as encouragement to finish the race.
 - b. Hebrews 12:4-11 focused on the discipline that would be needed to run the race. There would be scoffers, opponents, and those who would seek to persuade us to give up.
 - c. Hebrews 12:12-17 spoke of the need to be a community in order that we finish the race together. We looked at
 - i. Qualities of those who finish well:
 1. Be Heroic (v. 12) - be strengthened in the Lord so you can continue. Let your own troubles and trials qualify you to sympathize and relieve. You will be of great value in the Church of God if you acquire the art of compassion, and are able to help those that are bowed down.
 2. Be Harmonious (v. 13) - Are you being used by God to help others or are you an impediment (there is no middle ground). You are making the path easier for another or you are hindering them either by personal sin or by apathy.
 3. Be Holy (v. 14) - Be characterized by peacefulness, Be characterized by holiness, Be characterized by forgiveness. Peacefulness and

holiness go hand in hand; if you are not a peaceful person you are not a holy person. Do not look at another (the heart of a self-righteous legalist) - look at yourself (the heart of the obedient believer).

4. Be Helpful (v. 15a) - you are commanded to shepherd others lest they fall away. This word to look carefully is the act of overseeing another person; it is only used twice in the NT. The understanding is that a person or group of people are to oversee the spiritual state of others. In Heb 12:15, where the readers are commanded to “see to it” (episkopeō) that no one fails to lack the grace of God. The second is found in 1 Pet 5:2, where the overseer is commanded to shepherd the flock of God, “exercising oversight” (episkopeō).
- ii. Qualities of those who fail to finish:
1. Guard Against Fleshly Attitudes (v. 15b) - the root of bitterness is apostasy causing trouble. This is a chronic, repeating injury. What fleshly attitudes are you tolerating in your life? Don't look around - look in the mirror because even if you ignore them others see them. Not only can your fleshly attitudes cause you to fail to finish the race, but it can affect another.
 2. Guard Against Fleshly Appetites (v. 16-17) - Esau is given as an example. We often miss the importance of the birthright. The firstborn generally received the double-inheritance, over others. To desecrate means to make an object or place unclean by the impure action. It would cause the object or place to be unholy, impure, or unclean. There is only one action for fleshly appetites - repentance.
2. In today's text, Hebrews 12:18-24 we ask the question, Will you finish the journey from Sinai to Zion?

The Description of Mount Sinai (Hebrews 12:18-21)

What are the things we see of Sinai?

1. It is full of terror (v. 18-19a, 21) - Moses refers to the people's response but he also refers to his own fears.
2. It is impossible to bear (v. 19b) - this refers to an unpleasant or difficult experience you either bear for yourself or another
3. It is impossible to finish (v. 20) - because it was so difficult they could not continue in what was commanded.
4. The people were visibly, physically assaulted with the holiness and majesty of God. This palpable divine display on Sinai communicated far more than any speech or written word ever could—and all Israel, young and old, could understand.
5. The effect of these physical signs was to display in no uncertain terms the absolute unapproachableness of God. The mountain was so charged with the holiness of God that for a man to touch it meant certain death. Even if an innocent animal wandered to the mountain, it would contract so much holiness that it became deadly to the touch and had to be killed from a distance by stone or arrow.
6. The problem with the trip to Sinai was that while men and women could come to see God's holiness and their sinfulness, the Law provided no power to overcome sin.
7. He is admonishing these people as they attempt to run with perseverance the race that is marked out for them to not listen to the voices of their old friends who are still immersed in the futile pursuit of attempting to live up to Sinai, but rather to do everything in their power to maintain a straight path to Zion's grace.

The Description of Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22-24)

1. The *you* is referring to those who are believers trusting Christ.
2. He is reminding them what they left and where they have arrived.
3. What is the description of Zion?
 - a. It is called the city of God—But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God (v. 22a)
 - b. We have come to innumerable company of angels (v. 22b)
 - c. We will be in the presence of fellow-believers (v. 23a) - to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven
 - d. We come God the Judge of all (v. 23b)
 - e. We come to the spirits of just men made perfect (v. 23c)
 - f. We come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant (v. 24a)
 - g. We come to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (v. 24b)

Applications

1. Have you truly left Mt. Sinai?
 - a. Few in our day are tempted to embrace the Levitical body of the Old Testament. Sinai, with its fiery mountain and its code, is simply too daunting.
 - b. Instead, we fabricate our own mini-Sinai's with a series of mini-laws which reflect nothing of the fiery presence and which are, we think, well within the reach of our unaided powers.

- e. Legalism is always judgmental. How easily our hearts imagine that our lists elevate us, while at the same time providing us with a convenient rack on which to stretch others in merciless judgment.
 - f. To you I offer the words of Hebrews 2:2-4, still ringing in these Hebrew believers ears.
2. For those who have left Sinai, we must not veer off course toward Sinai, because Jesus has met Sinai's great demands for holiness and perfection at Calvary atop Mount Zion
- a. The importance of Zion is it was where God dwelled.
 - b. Consider Rev. 21:2
 - c. Though this has not happened yet it has in a sense - the same sense as the Old Testament saints lived as recounted in Hebrews 11:16; 13:14
 - d. Every thing you are hanging onto here - even good things - it is slowing you down and causing you to stumble along the way. I call you back to Hebrews 12:1-3 in closing