



Don't Lose Heart

Hebrews 12:3-13

1. Consider His Sufferings (verse 3)
2. Consider Your Sufferings (verses 4-13)

Consider our text:

Hebrews 12:1-13

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the LORD loves he disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Heather Dorniden (now Heather Kampf) was a middle-distance runner for the University of Minnesota, golden gophers. She was a decorated runner in high school, winning the Minnesota state championship in both the 400 meters and the 800 meters. Her success continued in Minnesota, where she was nine-time All American.

Two years ago (in 2008), she was competing at the Big Ten indoor championships. She was running in the 600 meters. There were four in the final heat: one from Indiana, one from Penn State, two from Minnesota. The gun went off, and the runners all got off to a fair start. After 200 meters, Dorniden was in second place, just behind the Penn State runner. After 400 meters, Heather was leading the race, but was accidentally tripped by another runner, and fell to the ground. Although she arose to her feet as quickly as she could, she soon found herself to be some 20 meters behind the pack, with 200 to go. Later, when asked about her fall, she would say that she had "a little bit of disbelief. [But] I knew this was a tight spot in the meet already and that we needed get as [many] points as we could even if I couldn't win that race."

So, she got up off the track, and began running again. And, along the backstretch, she began to catch up to the other runners. She said, "At about 100 to go, I heard the announcer say, 'And here comes Heather Dorniden!' So, I got pretty excited about that and I think that helped out quite a bit. And then, I just gave it all I had." All she had was enough to win the race. She crossed the finish line at 1:31.72, which was 4 hundredths ahead of the next racer. She became the Big Ten champion in the indoor 600 meters, because she didn't lose heart. Instead, she pressed on to finish as well as she could. [\[1\]](#)

As we come this morning to our text, this is the main purpose of the text: Don't give up. Don't lose heart. You can see it there at the end of verse 3, "So that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Aristotle used these words to describe the runner, who crossed the finish line and collapsed, once his goal was accomplished. The writer here is using the same images. The message here is simple. You aren't done yet. Don't collapse. There is still more to run. If you have fallen down, get up, like Heather Dorniden. Get back in the race. You need to finish.

In fact, that's why this paragraph--verses 3-13--is in the Bible. It is here to help us finish. It teaches us ways that we can keep our heart from giving up and losing heart.

For the original readers, it's easy to see why they may have been tempted to give up. Back in chapter 10, we read of how they endured "a great conflict of sufferings" (10:32). The writer goes on to describe in detail what some of these sufferings were. They were made a public spectacle and ridiculed in the public forum (10:33). They were reproached for the name of Christ (10:33). Some were imprisoned (10:34). Others had their property confiscated because of their faith in Christ (10:34). Such things are obvious discouragements to our faith. When publically ridiculed, there is great pressure to lose heart. "Is it really worth it?" you might ask.

In chapter 11, it was not without reason why the author mentioned how "others were tortured, ... and others experienced mockings and scourings, yes, also chains and imprisonment" (11:35-36). He mentioned how "they were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, ... wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground" (11:37-38). Such were the lives that the original hearers were facing; they faced mockings and scourings, torture, and the threat of martyrdom. Because of their faith in Christ, they were facing some great difficulties. And the message that the author had for these people was simple: press on! Endure until the end.

Chapter 10, verse 36 tells us, "You have need of endurance". And chapter 12, verse 1 says, "Let us run with endurance."

There is application for us. Today, your circumstances may be different. There is not any public ridicule or imprisonment. But, you may be losing heart. You may be tempted to give up. Your lack of a job is hard; your marriage is having problems; your children are giving you heartache. This text is for you. Don't lose heart. Don't give up. "Jesus Is Better, So Press On!" "Come Back!" Likewise, you may have no trials or suffering right now. In that case, hearing these words today may be preventative medicine for you, preparing you for your day of trial.

My exhortation is similar to Winston Churchill. On October 29, 1941, Winston Churchill came to his old school, "Harrow School," a prestigious English boarding school. He was addressing the boys of the school in the heat of World War II, after the German Blitz, about a month before the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. In his five minute speech, he reflected upon the state of affairs in the 10 months that had elapsed since the last time he had been at Harrow School. He told of how the fortunes of Great Britain were changing for the better. He said, ...

The ten months that have passed have seen very terrible catastrophic events in the world--ups and downs, misfortunes--but can anyone sitting here this afternoon, this October afternoon, not feel deeply thankful for what has happened in the time that has passed and for the very great improvement in the position of our country and of our home?

Why, when I was here last time, we were quite alone, desperately alone, and we had been so for five or six months. We were poorly armed. ... We had the unmeasured menace of the enemy and their air attack still beating upon us.

And then, he said those famous words, ...

Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never--in nothing, great or small, large or petty--never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.

We stood all alone a year ago, and to many countries it seemed that our account was closed, we were finished. ... Very different is the mood today. Britain, other nations thought, had drawn a sponge across her slate. But instead our country stood in the gap. There was no flinching and no thought of giving in; and by what seemed almost a miracle to those outside these Islands, though we ourselves never doubted it, we now find ourselves in a position where I say that we can be sure that we have only to persevere to conquer. [\[2\]](#)

Truly, it was an inspirational speech. The audio recording of which has lasted until this day. [\[3\]](#) In some regard, this is the message of the text before us. "Never give in. Never give in. We need only to persevere to conquer." Or, to use the Biblical terminology, "Don't lose heart. Don't lose heart. Don't ever, ever, ever lose heart. Even when all looks bleak, Don't lose heart. You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Heb. 10:36).

Well, the author gives us two practical ways to help us not to lose heart. The first comes in verse 3, Consider the sufferings of Jesus. Or, as I have put it, ...

1. Consider His Sufferings (verse 3)

Look there in verse 3, ...

Hebrews 12:3

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

We are to think much upon the sufferings of Jesus. In some way, doing so will help us not to lose heart in our own sufferings. Rather, we will be strengthened to endure. So, how did Jesus suffer? Let us spend a few moments considering His suffering.

Just after His baptism, Jesus was immediately impelled by the Spirit to go out to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Mark 1:12-13). I trust that you remember a bit of what that was like. Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, fasting. And then, He faced the hostility of Satan, himself, who tempted Jesus during His weakness. "Make this stone bread!" "Show yourself to be the Messiah by jumping from the pinnacle of the temple." "Worship Me and I'll give you the kingdom." That's hostility! At the moment of weakness, the strongest of temptations came to tempt him in his very point of vulnerability.

Near the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus was accused of blasphemy by the scribes (Mark. 2:1-12). That's hostility!

The Pharisees questioned Jesus about His practices. "Why do you eat with sinners?" (Mark 2:15-17) "Why don't You and Your disciples fast?" (Mark 2:18-22) "Why are you picking grain on the Sabbath?" (Mark 2:23-28). "Why are you healing on the Sabbath?" (Mark 3:1-5). These questions weren't genuine questions. These questions were questions of accusation. They were hostile questions. They were questions that sought to take Jesus down. And when Jesus answered all of these questions well, "the Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him as to how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6). They set up hostility for the rest of His earthly ministry.

And those attacks upon Jesus kept coming and coming and coming and coming. They accused Jesus of being demon possessed (Mark 3:20-27). The people of the country of the Gerasenes implored him to leave their region (Mark 5:17). Those in His hometown of Nazareth rejected Him (Mark 6:1-6) and even attempted to throw Him down the cliff in preparations of stoning Him (Luke 4:29). They questioned Him regarding the tradition of the elders (Mark 7:1-5). They argued with Him and tested Him, demanding a sign from Him (Mark 8:11-12). After entering Jerusalem, the religious authorities questioned His own authority (Mark 11:27-33). They brought the Herodians "in order to trap Him in a statement" (Mark 12:13). They brought the Sadducees to trap Him with His words (Mark 12:18-27).

When it came time for the Passover, "the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him" (Mark 14:1). Eventually, they were able to bribe Judas, his close friend, to betray Him (Mark 14:10-11). And Judas led the mob with swords and clubs to the garden of Gethsemane, where they laid their hands on Jesus in the cover of darkness (Mark. 14:43-50). During the unjust trial, "many were giving false testimony against Him" (Mark 14:55). Eventually, they induce Jesus to confess that He, indeed, in the Messiah (Mark

14:62), which the high priests interpret as blasphemy (Mark 14:64).

And then begins the physical suffering of Christ. They spit at Jesus (Mark 14:65) They blindfold him and begin to beat Him with their fists (Mark 14:65). Finally, they bring Jesus before Pilate, who tries every means to release Him. However, the political pressure became too great, and Pilate ordered Jesus to be scourged and handed over to be crucified (Mark 15:15). At that point, the Roman soldiers dressed Jesus in purple (Mark 15:17), placed crown of thorns on His head (Mark 15:17), and mocked Him as a king (Mark 15:18). All the while they "kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him" (Mark 15:19).

Then they led him out to be crucified (Mark 15:20), which means that they nailed Him to a cross, lifted Him high for all to see, and waited for Him to die. But, His sufferings didn't end there.

But, while hanging helpless upon the cross, the abuse continued. "Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying 'Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself and come down from the cross!'" (Mark 15:29-30). The chief priests and the scribes were mocking Him saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. ... Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" (Mark 15:31-32). The two robbers who were crucified with him on the cross were insulting Him as well (Mark 15:32).

Such was the hostility that Jesus "endured ... by sinners against Himself" (Heb. 12:3). And how did He respond? "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; While suffering He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter. 2:23). In so doing, the suffering of Jesus at the hand of sinful men, has become "an example for [us] to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Jesus said, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you, ... 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. ... All these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me." (John 15:18-21).

So, Consider His Sufferings. When you are persecuted for your faith, know that Jesus was persecuted first. When you are insulted, know that Jesus was insulted first. When you are ridiculed, know that Jesus was ridiculed first. When your property is taken from you, know that the garments of Jesus were ripped from Him and divided among the Roman Soldiers (Mark 15:24). When you are beaten for your faith, when you are thrown in prison for your faith, when you are killed for your faith, remember that Jesus bore all of those sorrows first.

Consider His Sufferings (verse 3). Consider them long and hard. They will help you not to "grow weary and lose heart." That's the promise of this text, ...

Hebrews 12:3

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

When you see what Jesus suffered for you, it will give you strength to suffer for Him.

It works like this: When John Huss, the Czech reformer, was accused of heresy and tied to the stake with a chain before being burned, he looked at the chain and told his executioners, "My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this for my sake, and why then should I be ashamed of this rusty one?" ^[4] And quickly afterwards, he was burned at the stake. But, notice how it was Huss' meditation upon the sufferings of Christ that strengthened him to endure in his faith.

When the Inquisitors had found a Bible while inspecting the house of the Mayor of Brugge, in the 16th century, nobody claimed to know anything about it. But, the young maid-servant, Wrunken, boldly declared, "I am reading it!" Though the mayor tried to defend her, by saying that she owned it but that she never read it, she maintained her stance: "This book is mine. I am reading from it, and it is more precious to me than anything!" Her sentence -- to die by suffocation. "A place would be hollowed in the city wall, she would be tied in it, and the opening would be bricked over.

When the day of her execution came, a city official tried to persuade her to recant. Wrunken replied, "My Savior died for me. I will also die for Him." So, she was tied into an opening in the city wall. Finally, the brick layer closed the hole and she suffocated to death. Her bones were removed several years later. ^[5] Notice, it was meditation upon the sufferings of Christ that strengthened Wrunken, the young maid, in the day of trial.

Paul said it like this: "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2 Cor. 5:15). The sufferings of Jesus at the hands of sinners is our strength to help us when we are growing weary and losing heart. So, Consider His Sufferings (verse 3). And don't lose heart.

Let's now look at my second point. We will go through these verses more quickly. When you are tempted to grow weary and lose heart, ...
2. Consider Your Sufferings (verses 4-13)

The reason why you might grow weary and lose heart is because of the troubles that you experience in following Christ. They are discouraging and they are seeking to pull you away. But, in verses 4-13, we are called to look at our sufferings. And when we think rightly about our own sufferings, you will be strengthened to endure.

He begins in verse 4 by saying, "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin." In other words -- It could be worse! When you think about the sufferings of the Messiah, His sufferings were unto death. But, your suffering hasn't gone this far now, has it?

The argument here is a little bit like what takes place at many dinner tables across America. A child is sitting in front of a full plate of food, but refuses to eat it. The mother then tells the child, "Be thankful that you aren't a poor child in Africa." The argument here is much the same: "Be thankful that you haven't yet suffered unto death, like Jesus did." I don't care what your sufferings are like, they still haven't taken you to the point of death. For this, you can be thankful. You haven't yet died!

In some ways, this is a soft rebuke to those who are losing courage in their sufferings. When we sign up to follow Jesus, we sign up to take on His sufferings as well. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (Luke 9:23-24). When we follow the Messiah, we sign on for suffering. Feel fortunate that you haven't yet died in following Him.

So, what sort of sufferings have you had? I know that your suffering hasn't been to the point of shedding of blood. The fact that you are listening to me this morning shows that this is the case. Consider Your Sufferings (verses 4-13). It could be worse.

Also, it could be God's discipline. This is where he starts going in verse 5.

Hebrews 12:5-6

and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD, nor faith when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.

Again, we see another minor rebuke to the original hearers. Do you remember when Jesus would talk with the religious leaders of His day and ask them, "Have you not read? ..." (Matt. 19:4; Mark 12:26)? Of course they had read the Scriptures. They were the teachers of Israel. But, in asking them, "Have you not read?", Jesus is rebuking them for a lack of understanding what they should have known of what they had read.

This statement has a similar punch. "You have forgotten the exhortation." They should have known this exhortation.

Back in chapter 5, the writer talked about how the readers had become "dull of hearing" and needed "milk" and not "solid food" (5:11, 12). This was the case here. They had forgotten the exhortation from the Scriptures. Verses 5 and 6 are a quote from Proverbs 3:11 and 12. They were well-known verses for the Jews. Every Jew knew what they said. When God disciplines you, don't faint. Don't grow weary. Know that there is a purpose behind it. God is refining us, making us more like Him. And the sufferings and the difficulties that we might experience could very well be the hand of the Lord in our lives to refine us.

When suffering comes upon us, and we complain and lose heart, we have missed the whole reason for the hardship.

Do you remember when Job was afflicted? He lost all of his wealth and all of his family in the span of a day. Then, he lost his health. Job's wife lost heart. She had a perspective that everything in life should go well for them. As a result of his troubles, she told Job to "Curse God and die!" (Job. 2:9). But, Job rightly said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10).

The reality of the way that God works in our life is this: He often brings hardships into our lives to refine us and conform us into the image of Jesus. When trials come, they produce endurance (James 1:3). When endurance has its perfect result, we become perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:4). But, we never achieve that perfection apart from the trials that come.

Jesus said it this way: "Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). Please notice here that it's not as a result of sin that trials come. Indeed, it wasn't the case with Job. He had a strong testimony of righteousness. Jesus said that the pruning takes place not on the bad and sickly tree, but upon the healthy tree that is already bearing fruit. That's the tree that gets pruned.

So, in the end, it really matters not whether you are walking rightly with the Lord or whether you are walking sinfully. God will bring suffering in our lives for our refinement. That's what is being described in the verses before us! He is defining the refining process of God in our lives.

So, when suffering comes, don't lose heart -- God may be refining your life. Instead, when suffering comes, be encouraged! God is working in your life. This is the thrust of verses 7-11. Look at verse 7, ...

Hebrews 12:7

It is for discipline that you endure;

Again, we see that word, "endurance" coming up again. It is the theme that holds chapter 10, 11, and 12 together. It's the reason why he is writing. The call is to "press on." The call is to "endure." Look at what he says, ...

Hebrews 12:7

... God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

This is a rhetorical question. Does not every father discipline his children? He sure does. Why? Because he loves his son. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently"

Every time that I have disciplined my children, I have come with strong affirmations of my love. I sit them down on my lap and say to them, "I love you. That's why I'm disciplining you. If I didn't love you, I would let you do your own thing. But, I do love you; that's why I disciplined you. I want for you to have wisdom. I want you to know the pains of foolishness."

And with God, it works the same way. We are God's children. As such, He will discipline us because He loves us.

This is what the Proverb in verse 6 says, "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines." The fact that we are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ is the very reason that the sufferings in life are coming upon us. So, Consider Your Sufferings (verses 4-13) -- It could be God's discipline.

Verse 8 continues the exposition of this Proverb by drawing the natural conclusion.

Hebrews 12:8

But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

In other words, if suffering is absent from your life, it may well be that you are not a child of God, because God disciplines ALL of His children. Parents, there is a difference between the way that you deal with your own children and the way that you deal with other children. You, naturally, will take much more of an active role in your own children's life than you will with others. When you see your child needing discipline, you will step in and administer it (as is appropriate). You see your child running through the halls of the church building, and you will take them by the arm and whisper the appropriate things in their ear to put a bit of fear in them.

But, when you see another child (not your own) needing discipline, you may step in, you may say some words, but there are some things that are inappropriate for you to do. You are not their parent. You can't whisper in their ear the same way that a loving parent can.

That's the point of verse 8. If you aren't experiencing the corrective discipline of God in your life, you may well not be His child. If God isn't bringing suffering into your life, you may be illegitimate.

So, the very fact that you are facing some suffering in your life, isn't an indication that you should stray from Christ. Rather, it's an indication that you are indeed His child. So, Consider Your Sufferings (verses 4-13) -- It could be God's discipline. Don't lose heart.

In verse 9, we see a parallel between heaven and earth.

Hebrews 12:9

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

This is the way that life works. Parents who discipline their children are not later alienated from their children. Rather, children respect them. You show me a parent who has lovingly disciplined his (or her) child, and I'll show you a parent who is respected by the child. You show me a parent who has refused to discipline his (or her) child, and I'll show you a parent who will not be respected by the child. Now, certainly there are exceptions, but the exceptions prove the rule.

But as with people, so with God. When God disciplines us by bringing some suffering upon our lives, it ought not to alienate us from God. It ought not to pull us away from God. Rather, it should draw us to God. It should generate a submission in our hearts to the will of God. Verse 10 tells us how much we can trust God to do the job.

Hebrews 12:10

For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Any parent knows that the administration of discipline often comes with doubts. Should I really step in at this moment? What sort of discipline should I administer? Should I discipline physically? Should I discipline verbally? How severe should be the discipline? Will my child receive it well? Is this really the right thing to do? We do what seems best.

But, God has no doubts. He is the perfect parent. We can have confidence that anything (and everything) that He brings into our lives is "for our good." And why does He discipline us? "So that we may share His holiness." That's the end of all discipline. It comes to direct us in the ways of holiness.

Proverbs 22:15 says it this way: "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will remove it far from him." Proverbs 29:15 says it this way: "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother." The shame comes because of the foolish behavior.

There you can see the sanctifying work of discipline. It removes foolishness, and it gives wisdom, so that the child will walk in the fear of the Lord. And as God brings discipline into our lives, it draws us to walk in holiness. Because, we learn that such is the most pleasant way to live.

Now, that's not to say that it is all easy. That's the point of verse 11,

Hebrews 12:11

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

The administration of discipline comes with sorrow. It is a painful process. Whenever I have disciplined my children, it has been sorrowful. Tears have flowed. It has not been pleasant. But, after the discipline, and after the explanation, and after the affirmations of love, and after the prayers, and after the hugs and kisses, there has been great joy. There has been great happiness. My children know that I love them. My children have become secure in my love for them. There has been a desire for righteousness.

These are the things that we should consider when we are facing the suffering in our own lives. Peter said it very well, ...

1 Peter 4:12-14

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

So, when the sufferings of life come crashing down upon you, don't lose heart. But, rather, understand well the perspective of discipline. God is working these things in our lives for our good.

I close with two observations. First of all, notice the sovereignty of God in these verses. Our comfort in our sufferings comes because we know that God is fully in control of them. We know that they are coming in our lives direct from the hand of God, with a purpose: to refine us and bring us to holiness. If you lose the sovereignty of God over all the details surrounding our lives, then you have lost all comfort in your sufferings. All you have is random acts of evil that have come upon you. The unfortunate circumstances of life can overwhelm you and discourage you; they may come again -- stronger than before -- with no purpose!

But, the comfort comes when you know (and are convinced) that God is intentionally bringing the evil into your life for your good. Thus, this gives you a reason to hope! God is at work in me! The discipline will come exactly as is appropriate to my life. It won't be too much. It won't be too little. It will be just right. Believing and trusting in the sovereignty of God will help you not to lose heart at the sufferings of life that you face.

My second observation: My message this morning isn't just for you and for your own little life. Notice the corporate dimension to these words. Look at verses 12 and 13, ...

Hebrews 12:12-13

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

He's not talking about how all of us need to be physical therapists, strengthening the weak hands and weak knees. He's not talking about how all of us need to be industrial engineers to make sure that the sidewalks outside are straight and smooth. No, this is metaphorical. It's a picture. It's a picture of how the body ought to care for one another. We all need to be spiritual therapists, who help the healing process. We all need to be spiritual engineers, who help make life easier for others. It's a call for each of us to be attentive to the weaknesses of others and help them in their weaknesses.

So, you may have been seated here this morning thinking, "I'm not suffering too much this morning. That's cool. I've not been tempted to lose heart. I guess this message isn't for me." No, that's not the case at all.

If any in our body is suffering, then this message is for you. God is calling each of us to be attentive to the sufferings of those around us, and help those who are weak. When you see others who are losing heart, pursue them. Strengthen their hands. Strengthen their knees. Smooth the path for them and direct them to what's going to help them.

Consider His Sufferings (verse 3). Tell them of the sufferings of Christ. Consider Your Sufferings (verses 4-13). Tell them of how God uses suffering. It could be worse (verse 4). It could be discipline (verses 5-11). Explain these things and so help others in their weakness (verses 12-13).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 8, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Here's a good video of the event: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqnqLrakxY8>

Here's another video with a few different camera angles: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cM5A1K6TxxM>

Here's an interview that Heather gave after winning a Big Ten award for courage:

http://www.gophersports.com/mediaPortal/player.dbml?&db_oem_id=8400&id=132717&DB_MENU_ID=&SPSID=38651&SPID=3300&DB_OEM_ID=8400

Here's a nice written interview: <http://downthebackstretch.blogspot.com/2008/03/heather-dornidens-big-ten-adventure-you.html>

[2] <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/103-never-give-in>

[3] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r36wikH36JM>

[4] Jesus Freaks, p. 233

[5] Jesus Freaks, pp. 41-42