

A Great Contest

I.---Receive the Light

Hebrews 10:32-36 (NIV)

³² Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, **when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering.** ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. ³⁵ **So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.** ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

A. The Protection of Hope

Ephesians 6:13, 17-18 (NIV)

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. . . . ¹⁷ **Take the helmet of salvation** and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NIV)

⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the **hope of salvation as a helmet.**

Proverbs 3:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, ²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.

B. Endurance & Perseverance

Luke 21:17-19 (NASB)

¹⁷ and you will be hated by all because of My name. ¹⁸ "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ "By your endurance you will gain your lives.

2 Peter 1:3-8 (NIV)

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Enduring Well

A. Attitude of perseverance

1 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

Therefore, prepare your minds (gird the loins of your mind) for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

B. Hydration

John 7:37-39 (NIV)

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

C. Nutrition

Matthew 4:1-4 (NIV)

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

D. Self-discipline

1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NASB)

⁷ But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.

Hebrews 5:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

E. Encouragement

Matthew 4:11 (NASB)

¹¹ Then the devil *left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.

Hebrews 3:12-14 (NIV)

¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

F. Prayer

Ephesians 6:13, 18 (NIV)

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. . . .¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I choose to walk in the Light. Deliver me from the darkness. May your "living hope" protect my thoughts and my emotions. I lift my voice and my eyes to You today. I choose to fix my thoughts and attention on the majesty and power of my God. I give You glory and honor and praise. You are the creator and sustainer of all things. By your Word you brought forth all life. I rejoice today that I can rest in the shadow of your strength and provision. You are my hope and my reward. Amen.