

“Looking Unto Jesus”
Hebrews 12:1-2

INTRO:

The writer to the Hebrews wrote chapter eleven to encourage us to hold fast to our faith. We noted that the folks who originally received this letter were going through a very difficult time. The writer exhorted them in **Hebrews 10:35-36**, *“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”* To show us it pays to trust the Lord and persist in our obedience to Him in the face of opposition, the writer gave us many examples of people through whom God had done great things by their faith.

Now we come to **chapter 12** and to the application that flows from this example. In view of all these who have gone before us, how are we to live? The writer answers the question with two exhortations. We are to recognize that there is a race to run and a Savior to please. These then are the two divisions to our study.

I. A Race to Run (v. 1)

II. A Savior to Emulate (v. 2)

I. A Race to Run (v. 1)

A. There really should not be a chapter division here. **Hebrews 12:1-2** is the application to all that the writer has been saying in **chapter 11**. He reminded us that like those who went before us, we too need to live by faith.

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

1. The words *“we also”* are significant. With these two words, the writer puts us in the same long line of those who have served God so long and so well. Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the others were not superheroes of the faith who had super powered faith we cannot emulate. We too must, like them, believe in God, trust Him, and live to glorify Him.

2. Since, *“we also”* like the men and women of **Hebrews 11** must trust in difficult situations and serve God, what must we do?

B. First, we must recognize the testimony that has been given to us. It says there is a great cloud of witnesses who surround us. This phraseology makes some see the image of an amphitheater here and that all the saints of the past who have run

before are all sitting in heaven watching us as we run the race. The problem is the Greek word witness does not mean the same thing as the English word.

1. If there is an accident we ask if anyone was a witness. Another words did anyone see the accident. For the Greeks seeing and witnessing were two separate ideas. A person sees. A witness tells forth what he sees. In the context are Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and etc., these give their testimony to the faithfulness of God in response to their faith. These witnesses by their lives exhort us to actively trust the Lord in our lives.

2. What do these witnesses tell us? First, they certainly underline the truth of **1 Corinthians 10:13**.

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

No matter the temptation or trial that comes into our lives, it is not unique to us. Others have gone this way before and have succeeded in being faithful to God in the face of much greater trouble than we have had to face.

3. Second, they also bear eloquent testimony to God’s great faithfulness that His kindness and steadfast love is new every morning. It is worth it to remain faithful to the eternal God. He never fails His children.

C. Next, we must get rid of the hindrances in our lives.

v.1 ***“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us.”***

The writer is talking about a race, and if we are going to run as we should, all those things that will keep us from doing our very best in the race must be set aside.

1. Weights are those things which keep us from excelling. They may not be bad in themselves. They simply distract. Remember Paul’s statement in **Philippians 3:13-14**?

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

This means that we need to sort out our priorities in this present life. We must throw away that which does not help us grow in grace and excel in our walk with our Lord.

2. It isn’t just weights that cause us problems. There is also our on-going struggle with sin. We need to mortify, that is treat as dead our sin that so easily entangles our feet and makes us stumble as we seek to **“take hold of that for which the Lord Jesus took hold of us.” (Philippians 3:12)**

D. Third, we must recognize that a course is laid before us.

v.1 “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

A race is run over a specific course. The course of our race is the life the Lord laid before us to live. The race has many obstacles. There are bumps in the road. God has laid out a course for us. The Apostle Paul spoke of this in his valedictory address in **2 Timothy 4:6-7**;

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

E. Finally, we must run the race with hupomone. This race is not a sprint. It is a marathon. The quality that we will most need in this race is spiritual tenacity. The race will not be easy, but it will be worth it.

II. A Savior to Emulate (v. 2)

A. We are to run this race **“looking unto Jesus.”** The Greek here means to fix our eyes upon Jesus. We are to look at Him and not at anything else. If we take our eyes off Jesus we will be like Peter while walking on the water. We will see the circumstances and we will fear.

B. Why should we be looking unto Jesus?

1. We must focus on Jesus because of Who He is;

v.2 “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

He is the source of our faith. Our faith comes from Him and finds its beginning in Him. More than that, it finds its end in Him also. He is the completion of our faith. Our faith is focused on spending eternity with Him!

2. Second, we must fix our eyes upon Jesus because of what He has done.

v.2 “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The joy is the joy of finishing His race.

Applications:

What does the witness of those who have gone before do for us? Are we aware that God expects no less from us than He did from them? The Isaac Watts hymn comes to mind,

“Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas? / Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to

God? / Sure I must fight, if I would reign; increase my courage, Lord. I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by thy word."

How well do we recognize that God has a course laid out for us to run? Are we shunning the stuff that holds us back and are we having victory over the sins that entangle us? Are we running with spiritual tenacity? Persisting even when the going gets rough?

Are we looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith? He endured much more than we will ever endure. He did it for the joy promised to Him. We also must serve Him for the joy before us.