

1. The “great cloud of witnesses” was introduced to us in Hebrews 11. They are the heroes of the faith - spoken about in Hebrews 12:1.
2. The word “witnesses” does not mean “spectators.” Our English word “martyr” comes directly from the Greek word “martyrs” translated “witness.”

Note: a “witness,” at least in the Bible, is not just a passive “spectator” - but an active “witness to faith”, more specifically “people who have demonstrated their faith”

3. These people are not witnessing what we are doing; rather, they are bearing witness to us that God can see us through.
4. God bore witness (“martyreo”) to them (Heb. 11:2, 4-5, 39) and they are bearing witness now to us.
5. What are the “weights/encumbrance” that we should remove so that we might win the race? Anything that would hinder our growing progress.
6. Just as a winning athlete does not choose between the good and the bad; he removes anything that will hinder the progression of his training.
7. Next - we should also get rid of “the sin that so easily besets/entangles.”
8. Although the “sin” here is left undefined, one could contextually argue that the article and the context of Hebrews 11 indicate the sin of faithlessness.
9. Notice the last part of verse 1 - it literally means “through endurance let us run [present tense implying continuously] the race lying before us.”
10. The word patience/endurance actually speaks of an active endurance involving effort and struggle, not a passive patience.
11. The “race” is not a short sprint, where speed is important, but a distance race where endurance is necessary to passing the finish line.
12. Notice verse 2-3. “fixing our eyes on Jesus.”
13. Our attention now should be a focused attention in the sense of “to look away” from everything else and to focus on one object or person. (“Looking unto Jesus” or “fixing our eyes on Jesus”)
14. This action is connected with the main verb “let us run.” We are not to model our lives after the heroes of faith in chapter 11 - but after Jesus who is the “author/originator” and “finisher/perfecter” of our faith.

Note: Greek word is “archegos - ar kay gos” - author/originator/founder
“teleiotes - tele o tais” - one who finishes/perfecter

15. Jesus is the finisher and perfecter of faith in two ways: (1) He is the source of faith; and (2) He is the model of faith.
16. Jesus is the source of faith in that by His death and resurrection, He has become the “source of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9). He is the model of faith in that he trusted God as evidenced by his total obedience to the Father in the work of atonement.
17. We must look away to Jesus. Once again Christ’s human name, Jesus, is given a place of special emphasis.
18. Jesus - as a man - has known our experiences of trial and fierce adversity. When we feel that we cannot muster another ounce of energy for ‘the race that is set before us’, we must think of the race that was set before him.
19. The phrase “endured the cross” - the heinous and painful suffering which came with the cross - is why Jesus is both the source and the model of a faith that endures to the end.
20. Jesus willingly accepted the public crucifixion and did not let either its suffering or its shame to deter Him from the reason He came.
21. The words “is set down” are in the perfect tense in the Greek text, the idea being that He, after His work of providing a salvation was finished, sat down, and remains seated.
22. He need never repeat His work on the Cross for sinners. It is a finished work. He is not only seated, but He occupies the position of preeminence, at the right hand of God.