Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

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Sunday School 9:45, Morning Worship 11 AM, Wednesday 6:30 PM

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928-425-8345 – 928-358-2612 / 34 Hebrews 12:1-3

**Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus**

Recently I received a note from a woman about how her husband was treating her. She included a letter he had written that was discourteous and mean, not vulgar, but unkind, unloving, rude and hurtful. She expected more from the man she loved and was at a loss as to how to proceed. “I can’t continue being treated like this,” she said. I didn’t answer her immediately; I wanted my response to bring honor and glory to God and, of course, point her in the right direction. After asking God for help, I answered like this,

“God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die for our sins. You can and must trust Him; not just with the salvation of your soul by faith in Jesus, you must trust Him with your husband and marriage as well. Trust God to save you by faith in Christ and to change your husband into a follower of Jesus. Take your eyes off your husband and look to Christ; call upon Him constantly, pray for yourself and your husband, pray without ceasing – Jesus can make you both love God and one another as you ought. Jesus is your only hope! Keep your eyes on Jesus!”

You and I both know that during great trials, it’s easy to take our eyes off Jesus; when we do, it won’t be long before we resemble the Christians addressed in the book of Hebrews. They were defeated, frightened, anxious, filled with doubt and unbelief; they were as helpless as newborn babes. Because of Hebrews 10:32-39, we know that they started out well, strong, and bold for Christ. But that new-born zeal had begun to fizzle. By the time this letter arrived, they were close to complete collapse, ready to abandon Jesus and return to the works-based faith of Judaism where they would find no Savior. Our author did not coddle them, as you might expect; instead he says, “get up; leave your infancy behind and press on to maturity!” (Hebrews 6)

Chapter 11 reminds them that their lot in life was no different than that of Christians in every age. Hundreds and thousands of their believing ancestors had experienced great trials, fought unending battles, endured persecution, and even death, but despite it all, they won the day by faith in God and His promise of a Messiah.

Today we come to the 12th chapter and I read,

**Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we** (the author, the Hebrews, and us) **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, 2 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. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

**1.** The word “*Therefore” –* used 903 times in the New American Standard translation of the Bible, always points back to statements made, history explained, a doctrine expounded or, in this case, to the definition of faith and the illustrations of how faith worked in the lives of the Hebrew’s ancestors. (chapter 11). He has already called them to the pursuit of maturity in the Lord. However, such growth in grace and knowledge comes only by the exercise of faith in God and Christ. The text that we look at this morning tells us how. First, they/we must,

**2.** *“lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangle us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” –* Our writer uses imagery from the Roman Olympic games; in this instance, endurance foot races. Common sense tells us that a runner could not be competitive if he carried a heavy sack or wore long flowing robes while trying to run a marathon. The weight would slow him down, and the floor-length clothing would trip him up. “Therefore,” he must put the heavy sack down and remove items of clothing that would impede his running. The same is true of the Christian life, we are in a spiritual endurance race and must lay aside, repent of, or turn from, everything that keeps us from running as we ought.

“Obviously, says Pastor Don Fortner, he is talking about those things that weigh heavily upon us, that press us down and hinder us from running the race. Lay aside the terrible burden of the law that you cannot bear. The Lord God has laid it aside. Let us lay it aside. Take the weight and burden of your sin and lay it down, lay it on Christ, and quit carrying it. Our God has laid it aside. Let us lay it aside (Romans 6:11). Literally, Paul says, ‘Having laid aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily bests us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us.’ Take all the weight and burden of your heart’s care and lay it upon His broad shoulders, ‘casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you’! It is both foolish and wrong for us to spend our energy and time carrying burdens that we can do nothing about. Therefore, with deliberate purpose, let us lay aside every earthly care that would keep us from running the race set before us.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Our Lord’s instruction in **Matthew 6:25** is relevant to our study,

**"For this reason, I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 "And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? 28 "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! 31 "Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.** (don’t be like the unbeliever) **33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”**

Worry about earthly things steals our peace and hinders our growth in grace and knowledge – this is the sin of unbelief that entangles our feet so we cannot run as we ought. “Unbelief caused the disciples to cry, ‘Master, don’t you care that we are about to perish?’ Unbelief caused Martha and Mary to question the Lord’s goodness. Unbelief caused Peter to sink as he walked across the stormy sea. Unbelief keeps us from seeing the glory of God in the work of His grace and in the works of His providence (John 11:40). Unbelief causes our hands to hang down, makes our knees weak, and turns our feet off course!”[[2]](#footnote-2) Then there are specific acts of disobedience, intentional sin;

Jesus says, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with drunkenness, sexual immorality, and the anxieties of life” (Luke 21:34). Paul adds, “But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips” (Col. 3:8; James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1).[[3]](#footnote-3)3[[4]](#footnote-4)

Christians in every age must “**lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us!”**

The race that is ours is lifelong; it’s an endurance race that has no equal as concerns it’s difficulty. Therefore, we require patient endurance which demands that we look away from every distraction and,

**3.** *Fix our eyes on Jesus the Author and Perfecter of our faith –* The idea is found in a hymn that you might know,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in His wonderful face;

And the things of earth *(the distractions and worries of life)* will grow strangely dim

In the light of His glory and grace.

Jesus is “the author and perfecter of our faith.” It was the Spirit of Christ who raised us from the dead and caused to believe in Him for salvation. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of our faith. Hear the beautiful words of **Philippians 1:3-6** where Paul says this,

**3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** (See also Ephesians 2:8-10) Jesus raised us from the dead and gave us faith for salvation and does all things necessary for the increase and preservation of our faith to the end. Therefore, “turn your eyes upon Jesus.”

Yes, we will be encouraged by looking back to faithful men and women who have gone to Heaven before us, but they are imperfect examples. Not so our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If ever there was a man who could have curled up in a heap of self-pity and fear, it was Jesus who was persecuted and suffered as no man ever has or will. He experienced the limitless outpouring of God’s wrath for the sins of God’s lost sheep, and how did He do it? He looked away from His circumstances, pain, and approaching death, to God and the promised reward! It was,

**4.** *Hebrews 12:2 “for the joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame” –* Jesus had no home in this world, no place to lay his head, and the things of earth had no place in His heart. That which caused Him to endure patiently was His desire to do the will of His Father. Therefore, He pressed forward to death on the cross for sinners like you and me, and he did it all by faith in God! Having accomplished our redemption by the shedding of his blood, He went back to Heaven to, “*Sit down at the right hand of the throne of God!”* Therefore, says our writer in,

**6.** Hebrews 12:3, *“Consider Jesus, (fix your eyes on Jesus) who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself” –* These trembling Hebrews must look away from themselves, the trials and tribulations of life, and consider Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith. To “consider” Jesus is to think deeply, carefully, and biblically about Him. Jesus Christ is our Prophet, Priest, King, Savior, Lord and God! Examine Him closely and you will find that He is sufficient to save and keep us, all the way to Glory!

**7.** *“Consider Jesus, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” –* Read the inspired record of Him as found in the Gospels! See your virgin born and sinless Savior attacked at birth by Satan and his human servants! See Him beaten, bruised, lied about, and see Him give His life for you on the cross of Calvary. Consider that He knew what his life and end would be and marched headlong into that storm, that horrible storm of Divine wrath that was due us; He did it out of love for God, for you, and me. Consider Jesus! He showed us clearly that faith in God will sustain you through hardship, persecution and even death; faith in Him will see you all the way to Heaven. See, in the scriptures, His example and follow Him to Heaven, run the race that is before you with your eyes fixed on Jesus who blazed the trail and burst through the temple veil into the throne room of God; this was the joy set before Him!

**Hebrews 12:1-4 Therefore, since we** (the author, the Hebrews, and us) **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, 2 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. 3 For consider Him who has taken such hostility by sinners against Himself so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

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In the light of His glory and grace.

1. Fortner, D. S. (2007). *Discovering Christ in Hebrews* (pp. 476–477). Durham, England: Go Publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Fortner, D. S. (2007). *Discovering Christ in Hebrews* (p. 477). Durham, England: Go Publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3 That the impediment hindering the athlete has general significance is evident from the wording “*everything* that hinders” (italics added). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of Hebrews* (Vol. 15, p. 366). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)