

Hebrews 12:1-2

*Therefore,*

Any time we see “Therefore” we know we need to ask, “what is it there for?” What is the author of Hebrews drawing our attention to when he wrote therefore?

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,*

1. Or because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us
2. The word witnesses is the greek word that we get our word martyr from.
  - a. These are not people who are looking at us and our actions
  - b. These are people who have gone before us that we should be looking at.
3. There is a great cloud or company of witnesses and martyrs who’s lives and testimonies surround us.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,*

1. Therefore ties two thoughts together.
2. Therefore is tying Hebrews 11 to Hebrews 12 and this cloud of witnesses.
3. Verses 35-40

We have a great company of faithful men, women, martyrs, and sacrificial, suffering witnesses who have gone before us.

1. There are many more than those listed in Hebrews 11...many of whom we will never know until we get to heaven.
2. *In fact more people have died for Christ within the last 100 years than in all of the previous 1900 years of Christian history combined.*

So we could say, therefore since we have so great a company of martyrs and sacrificial, suffering witnesses who have gone before us...*let us...let us....do what?*

1. Let me run into dangerous territory for Jesus? Maybe
2. Let me move to Afghanistan and continue the work the Groenewalde’s started? Maybe
3. Let me prepare myself to suffer persecution and martyrdom? Maybe
4. Let us do something “big” for Jesus? Maybe.

The author of Hebrews clearly tells us what to do in response to those who have gone before us. The most honoring, God glorifying, powerful thing we can do in light of the great company of martyrs who have gone before us is...in response to their sacrifices...

*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.*

## I. Lay Aside

*lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us,*

This phrase gives a picture of someone who is laying something down while at the same time he is pushing it far away from himself.

1. It means to lay something down and to push it out of reach.
2. It implies a deliberate decision to make a permanent change.
3. This is more than just a Sunday morning feeling.
4. It is an attitude changing, behavior changing, life changing decision to lay aside...

### A. Encumbrances

1. Things that slow you down in your pursuit of Christ
2. Not forbidden by God, not sin in and of themselves...just things that distract you, bog you down, and slow you down in your pursuit of Christ.
3. The bible doesn't forbid it...don't be legalistic! Is it slowing you down in your race?
  - a. Lay it aside!
  - b. Unless you are not interested in winning.

*It is a most lamentable thing to see how most people spend their time and their energy for trifles, while God is cast aside. He who is all seems to them as nothing, and that which is nothing seems to them as good as all. It is lamentable indeed, knowing that God has set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, that they should sit down and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, forgetting the prize they should run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see this business as the all-seeing God does, and see what most men and women in the world are interested in and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight imaginable. Oh, how we should marvel at their madness and lament their self-delusion! Richard Baxter*

### B. Sin

*lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us,*

1. Sin is anything you think, say, or do that breaks God's law.
2. We need to make an attitude changing, behavior changing, life changing decision today to lay it aside...to push it out of reach
  - a. It is a threat to "us." He is writing believers.
  - b. It threatens to entangle us. How can you run if your legs are tangled up?
  - c. It threatens to "easily entangles us." It isn't a hard thing to get wrapped up in sin.
3. Throw it down and push it out of reach.
4. Romans 13:14 *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*
5. Push your sin and encumbrances out of reach!

We need to lay aside encumbrances and sin this morning. This is one way we can honor those who have suffered.

## II. Run

*and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

### A. Run Your Race

1. Run the race that is set before us...before you.
  - a. It isn't a one size fits all race
  - b. Yes, there is only one way, but we are all in different places. **God meets us where we are!**
  - c. Yes, there is only one finish-line, but we all have different personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. **God meets us how we are.**
  - d. He meets us where we are, how we are, and tailor-makes a race for us that will lead us to a singular goal: being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ.
2. Physical trainer will tailor-make a plan for you and your body
  - a. The Spirit of God will tailor-make a plan for you as well
  - b. You can't follow someone else's plan and improve physically like you could if you followed your plan....it is the same spiritually.'
3. Run the race that is set before YOU!
  - a. Go to **Scripture: READ**—Reading the NT through twice before ever picking up another book is a glorious idea.
  - b. With the Help of the **Spirit—PRAY**
  - c. **STAY**—With endurance stay in the Word until you hear from God
  - d. **OBEY**—submit, with the help of the Spirit, to what He has shown YOU in the Scripture one day at a time.
4. By doing so, you will position yourself to be on pace in the race set before you.

### B. Run with Endurance

1. Hebrews 10:36-11:1
2. Then we see example after example of faith-full endurance in Hebrews 11.
3. And then we come to the other book end here in Hebrews 12:1-2...run with endurance.

### C. Run to win

1. He doesn't say watch the race from the grandstand
2. He doesn't say cheer enthusiastically for the race
3. He doesn't say participate in the race.
4. He doesn't say walk in the race.
  - a. I did 1 5K in my life
  - b. I place first in my division. How?
  - c. Because I was the only guy my age who walked.
  - d. Everyone else my age ran.
5. Run! Run! Run to win.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the*

*air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

- b. Run in such a way that we intend to come in 1st place!

### **III. Look to Christ**

*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.*

Where we are looking makes all the difference in the race.

1. Field Day 1987 was lost because I was looking back instead of ahead.
2. Look to Christ...but don't just look to Christ...fix your eyes on Him!

Jesus did not come to serve as a jumping off place so that we can go farther.

1. He is Not just standing at the finish line. He is the finish line. He is the end goal!
2. We desperately need to fix our eyes on Him.

### **Conclusion:**

How can we honor those who have gone before us? Suffered? Died?

1. Lay aside our weights and our sin
2. Run the race of the Christian life with endurance and with an intent to win it!
3. Fix our eyes on Jesus Christ and don't take them off until we finish the race.

You can't fix your eyes upon Jesus if you have yet to look to Jesus in the first place. **The testimony of C.H. Spurgeon....**

"I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, when I was going to a place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a court and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there might be a dozen or fifteen people. The minister did not come that morning: snowed up, I suppose.

A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had nothing else to say. The text was, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter.

"There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in the text. He began thus: 'My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, "Look." Now that does not take a deal of effort. It ain't lifting your foot or your finger; it is just "look." Well, a man need not go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man need not be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; a child can look. But this is what the text says. Then it says, "Look unto Me." 'Ay,' said he, in broad Essex, 'many of ye are looking to yourselves. No use looking there. You'll never find comfort in yourselves.' Then the good man followed up his text in this way: 'Look unto Me: I am sweating great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hanging on the Cross. Look: I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. O, look to Me! Look to Me!' When he had got about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes, he was at the length of his tether.

"Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, 'Young man, you look very miserable.' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He

continued: 'And you will always be miserable — miserable in life and miserable in death — if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.'

"Then he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ.' There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ."

I say to you this morning what that laymen said that day. Look to Jesus. Look to Christ. GOSPEL