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Fixing Your Eyes on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-4

The Great Cloud of Witnesses

Hebrews 12:1 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,..."

- Hebrews 12 is a continuation of Hebrews 11
- The *great cloud of witnesses* are those heroes of faith mentioned Hebrews 11 and so many others that were *committed* to God, *endured* trials and challenges and *stayed focused* on Jesus
- The cloud of witnesses have run and finished their race
- They endured to the end and won their race
- The great cloud of witnesses are both participants and *spectators*
- We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses; believers who ran and finished the Christian race
- Their great faith, endurance, commitment, and focus should stir us up.

What's Weighing You Down?

Vs. 1 "....let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,..."

- Running the Christian race calls for *personal examination*
- The runner examines him or herself and removes anything that could potentially slow them down
- Just as a runner trains rigorously and sheds unnecessary weight for peak performance, as believers we must get rid of anything hindering our walk with Jesus
- We must lay aside every weight *and* the sin that can so easily beset us
- To run the Christian race effectively, we must *intentionally and deliberately* lay aside every weight *and* sin

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- Lay aside every weight...
- A weight is *not* a sin, but it is *something* in your life that's weighing you down and slowing you down spiritually
- These weights may be "legitimate and innocent" in and of themselves, but they can hinder our progress in God, they sap our strength, dampen our enthusiasm toward the things of God
- Weights are things in our lives that have no spiritual value
- All of our choices are not always between right and wrong or good and bad, but between is it *a weight* in my life or not?
- It takes discipline *and* courage to lay aside some things
- The key to laying aside weights in our lives is by accurately calling them as spiritual weights and removing them
- Therefore we can't rationalize as no harm things because they are not sin, but honestly say they are affecting me spiritually

- And the sin "...and the sin which doth so easily beset us, ..."
- Weights *slow* us down spiritually, but sin can *ensnare* us, *entangle* us, and *trip* us up spiritually
- Sin in our lives can *easily* cling, distract, entangle, or trip us up and keep us from finishing the race
- We must lay aside *all* sin
- If we try to run our race with sin in our lives, sin will eventually trip us up
- What sin? The sin that *affects* you
- This text is saying very strongly to every one of us to lay aside the ***specific sin*** that attracts, distracts, entangles, or trips you up

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- You must throw away, strip off, and repent of every sin that keeps you from fully following God
- Don't stay in an environment that is tempting you to sin, ask God to help you break free

Running with Endurance

Vs. 1 "...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,..."

- God has set before each of us a race to run
- Each of us must run our race with *effort and commitment*
- God wants each of us to run the race and finish it right
- The Christian race is an *endurance* race, it is a race of *patience*
- Endurance is not about sprinting but about pacing ourselves to be able to go the distance and finish the race
- Endurance is developed when we *patiently and faithfully* withstand trials, temptations, and opposition
- If you are being opposed for your stand for God, be glad because that means you are running the *right race*
James 1:2-3 (KJV) 2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
- There are hills and mountainous portions of this Christian race, but if you are prepared *and* determined you can conquer them
- We develop *and* maintain our endurance by daily seeking Christ through prayer, daily Bible devotions, worship, church attendance, and fellowship with other believers

Focus on Jesus; The Ultimate Example

[2] Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the

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right hand of the throne of God. [3] For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. [4] Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

- We are thankful for the lives of the heroes of faith in the Bible and the lives fellow believers who have impacted our lives
- But the *ultimate example* of discipline, training, faith and endurance, and focus is Jesus Christ
- To successfully run and complete this Christian race, we must stay *focused* on Jesus
- Looking unto Jesus literally means focusing *only* on Jesus and *looking away* from other things
- To look to Jesus means you are looking away from *everything else*
- We be looking unto Jesus from start to finish
- Focus on Jesus' because:
 1. He is the **author** or creator and the **finisher** of the Christian race
 2. Jesus had a great inspiration: the *joy* that was set before Him; the joy of joining other believers throughout the ages
 3. Jesus is our supreme example of discipline; He did whatever was necessary to *start and finish* the race.
 4. Jesus' faith was rewarded because right now He is exalted and seated at the right hand of the throne of God
- Jesus possessed the endurance to start *and* finish the race
- Many you are saying in your minds, that was Jesus, the Son of God, He could do it, but no one else can

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- The text says compare Jesus' life to your own and you will find that He endured *much more* than we will ever have to endure
- It keeps us from ***fainting in our minds***; that is losing heart, becoming discouraged and despondent; drawing back and giving up

How to Refocus on Jesus

Vs. 1 "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,..."

- What can believers do to *refocus* on Jesus?
 - *Repent, renounce and lay aside all weights and sin, vs. 1*
 - *Develop your spiritual endurance, vs. 1-2*
 - *Consider Jesus' endurance, vs. 3*
 - *Stay in the Word and Prayer, **Psalm 119:105 (KJV) 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.***
 - Daily time in the Word and prayer strengthens your connection to Jesus
 - *Stay in community and be accountable, **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT) 24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.***
 - Being an active part of a church that encourages, challenges and holds each other accountable is critical to keeping you focus on Jesus
 - *Intentional Worship and Reflection, **Colossians 3:16-17 (KJV) 16 Let the word of Christ dwell***

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in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

- Regular times of worship individually *and* corporately helps direct our attention back to Jesus