

Looking to Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-3

The Great Reversal



"A Packed Amphitheatre"



"The Cloud of Witnesses"

- Those who have gone before us in faith
- Hebrews 11 – stories of faith
- They are witnesses reminding us to look to Jesus as the 'new and living way' (Hebrews 10:20)

Let us give this name to the coming year. Let us sign the cross of Jesus on brow, mind, and heart. Let us say with relief: our help is in the name of the Lord! And then stoutheartedly let us cross the threshold of the new year. If his name shines above it, even its darkest hour will be an hour of the year of the Lord and of his salvation.

Karl Rahner

As Christians We Have a Goal

(Hebrews 12:1)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:1

Run the Race of Faith

- 'run with perseverance the race' (v1)
'running ... in faith' (v2)
- An athletic image calling us to live with intentionality & purpose
- To establish goals/markers that speak to our faith walk

An Inspiration

- Consider those faithful witnesses (Hebrews 11) who have gone before – faithful mentors & witnesses of faith
- Parents, grandparents, friends – living and deceased

Handicaps in the Race

- We are called to shed the weights that hinder us (v1) - extra weight slows us down
- Athletes take off extra clothes before their event

The Handicap of Sin

- 'the sin that clings so closely' (v1)
- The sin that distracts us – whatever self indulgences we entertain that trip us up
- We need to name and address the compensations that hinder our faith journey

Endurance/Perseverance

- 'Run with perseverance (hupomone)' (v1)
- 'Jesus ... endured the cross' (v2)
- 'Who endured such hostility' (v3)
- Live our faith one day at a time –
"We live our life as we live our days." A. Dillard

Our Goal is Shaped by Looking to Jesus

(Hebrews 12:2)

looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

Our Great Example

- Jesus is both the pioneer (the source) and perfecter (the empowerment) of our faith (v2) – look to him
- In his humanity Jesus completely lived by faith – sharing the same challenges we face today in faithful living

Our Means

- Jesus endures the cross for us (v2) - to bring about our cleansing from sin – that we might complete our faithful journey
- ‘When he had made purification for our sins’ (Hebrews 1:3)

To die by crucifixion was to plumb the lowest depths of disgrace; it was a punishment reserved for those who were deemed of all men most unfit to live, a punishment for sub-men. From so degrading a death Roman citizens were exempt by ancient statute.

F. F. Bruce

Jesus Endured the Shame

- He endured the shame of the cross so we can enter into ‘his joy’ (v2)
- “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:11)
- Jesus does not simply live a comfortable life

Our Companion

- Looking to Jesus refers to experiencing his daily presence
- Jesus travels with us on our road – disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24)

Looking to Jesus Enables Us to Not Lose Heart

(Hebrews 12:3)

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

Hebrews 12:3

'Consider Jesus'

- Keep your eye on Jesus as you make your journey
- Do not lose awareness of Christ in your life

Losing Heart

- If we look away from Jesus we will become weary and lose heart (v3)
- "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)

- Prayer, praise, community are all ways to maintain our focus on Jesus
- These means act as spiritual disciplines - exercises which fuel the fire of faith

- As we launch in to 2019 may we all look to Jesus – it is essential if we are to run well