RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE

Hebrews 11:32-12:3

Key Verse 12:1

***Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,***

* Look at verses 32-35a.

**1. Look at 11:32-35a. Why does the author state that they do not have “time to tell about” all the other heroes of the faith?**

* Living by faith is not something new or something that began with the times of Jesus or even the times of the patriarchs. It goes all the way back to Abel as shown by the author. We could even say Adam, who by faith, named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of the living (Genesis 3:20) understood the way of faith.
* Since the path of faith is well worn and trodden upon and the number of forerunners that successfully came before us (and will come after us) is immense, we therefore should take heart because we are in no way any different from any of them.

**What verbs are used to describe these servants as they lived by faith; what common theme do their lives share?**

* “conquered”, “administered”, “gained”, “shut”, “quenched”, “escaped”, “turned”, “became”, “routed”

**What do these verses teach us about the life of faith?**

* A life of faith is often characterized by warfare. All the examples here (Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the prophets) are servants who engaged in great conflicts. The verbs used to describe their actions of faith (conquered, gained, escaped, routed, etc.) are all contextualized by the opposition they faced.
* A life of faith is often characterized by victory over opposition. Whether that opposition comes from people or circumstances, the life of faith is a life of supernatural empowering by God, in the midst of conflict.

**2. Look at 11:35b-38. These verses begin with “There were others…”. What do these servants have in common?**

* This second group of examples, endured suffering at the hands of the opposition, by faith.

**How are they different from the servants mentioned in verses 32-35a?**

* Like the first group (who was victorious) this group too faces opposition, but unlike the first group, they suffer and even die as a result of resisting evil. This group didn’t “conquer”, “quench”, “escape”, etc. Rather, they were “jeered”, “flogged”, “put to death”, “sawed in two”, “killed by the sword”. The theme of the second group is “enduring suffering by faith”.

**What does this teach us about the life of faith?**

* Everyone who lives by faith overcomes. Some servants will overcome through outward victories and others will overcome through enduring suffering. Though from the outside they look radically different, both groups overcome by faith.

**3. Look at 11:39-40. What had God “promised” these servants?**

* God promised a prophet, a redeemer, a savior and a messiah.

**God commended all these servants for their faith in His promise, yet why did they not receive Christ?**

* The time for God’s complete salvation had not yet arrived. The saints who lived before Jesus’ coming, “did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance” (Heb 11:13).
* It’s interesting to note that the forerunners of the faith, like the prophets, were looking forward to Jesus’ appearing with eager expectation.
* **1 Peter 1:10-12** *Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.*
* It should be understood, and taken to heart, that believers today live in a better state of revelation, access, and blessing than those of the OT times.

**What had God planned?**

* God’s plan was to make perfect all believers upon Jesus’ coming. Those who lived by faith before Jesus’ coming were not made perfect before “us”. They instead waited patiently for the time of perfection to come. It is understood that when Jesus died and rose again, when he ascended to heaven, he made perfect those who were patiently waiting, “he leads captives in his train”.
* Instead, they lived by faith in God’s promise to send the Messiah.

**What was the goal of His plan?**

* Perfection. God’s plan for all of us is that we might be brought together in Christ and be made perfect as one people, both believers from before Christ and after Christ, Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free.

**4. Look at 12:1. How does knowing that we are surrounded by such a “great cloud of witnesses” help us as fellow believers?**

* The “great cloud of witnesses” helps us to understand that we need to persevere. For, our ancestors of faith persevered with far less blessings than what we now have in terms of our knowledge and revelation. Our ancestors had but a shadow of Jesus and his coming, but now we have the fulfillment of all they looked forward to, by faith. We should not do less than those who came before us but at least just as much, if not more.

**What is the difference between things that “hinder” and “the sin that so easily entangles”?**

Things that “hinder” might seem harmless but produce an unwanted resistance to being able to run our spiritual race. The “sin that so easily entangles” are the things which trip us up and block us from running at all. When we get entangled by sin, we have to be untangled, which takes time to get out of. The time lost being untangled from sin is time lost where we could have been doing good and serving Jesus.

**What does it mean to “run with perseverance”?**

* Run with “perseverance” means to not take a break for rest and not to slow down.

**What is “the race marked out for us”?**

* The race market out is the way of the cross. We depend on Jesus’ work on the cross for our salvation. We depend on the Holy Spirit in ministry and for guidance. We produce fruit by keeping with repentance. We live by faith and not by sight.

**What does this analogy reveal about our life of faith?**

* As runners we need to run. We can’t sit. We shouldn’t play. We need to run and remove all the things from our life that keep us from running the spiritual race. When the going gets tough we need to persevere and not be weary but continue to do good in this world.

**5. Look at 12:2-3. What does the author insist we do while we “run”?**

* When running we need to “fix our eyes on Jesus”.

**Why is “fixing our eyes on Jesus” so critical?**

* Every runner has to have a focus in their race, something that they use to keep motivated. In physical running, some people use music to get pumped up before and during their run. Others use the thought of losing weight and how satisfied they will be when they are thinner. Still others who do competitive running use the goal of winning a prize to keep pushing themselves during training and during competition. In the same way, spiritual running requires motivation that comes from God’s Word that penetrates our soul, gives us encouragement, and keeps us focused on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.
* Jesus is the source of power that keeps us running the race and keeps us running according to the race marked out for us. If we don’t keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, and Jesus alone we quickly lose our endurance, our passion and dedication. However, if we do fix our eyes on Jesus we will run with unlimited thankfulness, passion and strength.

**As the “pioneer and perfecter of faith”, what can we learn about Jesus’ role in our life?**

* Since Jesus’ work was the catalyst for our faith (pioneer) and since he is the one who sustains it and matures it (perfector), Jesus is our all in all.

**What does it mean to “grow weary and lose heart”?**

* Growing weary and losing heart is what happens when we don’t keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. When this begins to happen we overheat, melt down, and become dysfunctional. In this condition we can’t keep running the spiritual race but are likely to stop persevering and might even give up.

**What solution does the author advocate so we might avoid this danger?**

* The author advocates that we “consider” Jesus who endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
* When we fix our eyes on Jesus we are motivated by His focus on eternal life while running His spiritual race on earth. Jesus was able to sacrifice and keep sacrificing because he saw the joy set before him—the joy of bringing eternal life to all mankind, the joy of loving others, and bringing life to those who were dead in their sins. This joy brought him strength to endure wicked people and even scorn the shame of the cross.

The end.