

Let Us Run to Jesus, Part 2

Hebrews 12:1-3

July 14, 2024

Last week we started a two-part message out of Hebrews chapter 12, which I entitled *Let us run to Jesus. Let us run to Jesus*. And if you would turn in your Bibles back there to Hebrews chapter 12. And by way of introduction this morning, I just want to maybe take a snapshot from the book *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Many of you may be familiar with that, some of you may be less familiar, but *The Pilgrim's Progress* is about a Pilgrim named Christian who leaves the city of destruction and he begins his pilgrimage on the way to the Celestial City. It is a metaphor or an allegory of the Christian life, the race that we have to run on the way to eternal blessedness in heaven.

But in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian, the main character, after fleeing the city of destruction, he comes to the foot of the cross where he casts down his burden of guilt,

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and sin, and shame, before the cross; metaphor for his salvation. He sees the glory of the cross and what Christ has done, and he casts his burden down, recognizing his sin before the Lord. He moves on from there, and along the way he meets friends and foes on the road to the Celestial City.

And at one point in the story, Christian is with his friend Faithful, whom he has found along the way, and they come to the town of Vanity. And there in the town of Vanity is the Perpetual Fair, or the Perpetual Carnival you might think of, called Vanity Fair. This town must be passed through in order to get to the Celestial City by all pilgrims, and they come to the town of Vanity, which was placed there and the fair was placed there by enemies of the pilgrims in order to distract them, dissuade them from continuing their journey to the Celestial City.

At this fair, in this city, are all kinds of desirable goods. All kinds of desirable merchandise are sold, such as houses, lands, titles, jobs, positions, honors, lusts, achievements, entertainments, distractions, and all sorts of delights, everything you could imagine. And within this city,

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the residents of the city, they entice the pilgrims with promise of husbands, promise of harlots, wives, children, servants, silver, gold, precious stones, whatever else one Pilgrim might dream of attaining. And to put the icing on the cake, there's the promise that all of this comes with a relatively low cost.

And if you decide to stay for a while in the city of Vanity, there are rows of houses. You can pick which one you want to buy. Rows of houses for each kind of person. If you want to live on the block with a bunch of introverts, you live on that block. If you want to live on the block with everybody else who's like you, you just pick where you want to live, where you are comfortable, where everyone agrees with you in every way.

But the purpose of Vanity Fair was to distract the pilgrims with the promises of the world, to draw them away with seduction of comfort and ease so they're deterred from continuing on in their journey to the Celestial City. And John Bunyan writes this of the pilgrims going through the city, tempted by these things. He says, "If the pilgrims were called upon to buy their merchandise, they," that is, the pilgrims, "would put their

fingers in their ears and cry, 'Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.' And then they would look upwards signifying that their desires and concerns were in heaven. They would turn their eyes away from all the worldly things, back up to heaven."

Here in Hebrews chapter 12, if you're not there, turn there now. Hebrews chapter 12, the author is teaching us to do something very similar as to what the pilgrims would do in Vanity Fair. The author of Hebrews is teaching us, teaching us fellow pilgrims, how to navigate Vanity Fair, which we have, as Americans, we have to navigate every day. The author of Hebrews instructs us how to navigate this Vanity Fair and remain faithful, or really, how to navigate any life circumstances and remain faithful to run the race that is set before us.

So with that, let's read Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 to 3. "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the

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cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. "For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary, fainting in heart."

The author of Hebrews, here, he exhorts us to run, and he gives us several points on how to do that, with a final command to consider him; consider Jesus. So we have two points from this text to encourage us to live this life in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ: walking, running this race, and doing it in a manner worthy of the calling with which he has called us. And I know, you like me, we want to run this race well. We want to finish well.

And so we are exhorted by the author of Hebrews with two commands: Let us run and let us consider. Those are our two points for this morning. We began point one, last time: Let us run. That is his main point in verses 1 and 2. Let us run and then all the other phrases and participles tell us how to go about running this race of life well; the things that we need to do, in order to run well.

So we had four sub-points: Let us run by reminding ourselves, by unburdening ourselves, by exercising ourselves, and by focusing ourselves. We covered the first two last time, but let's just review them briefly. Many people here today who weren't here last week, but let us run by reminding ourselves, on burdening ourselves, exercising ourselves, and focusing ourselves. That first sub-point, let us run well by reminding ourselves, came from the first part of verse 1 in chapter 12. "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us."

Last week we read the entirety of Chapter 11, because with this phrase, he's pointing back to the entirety of that chapter, which lists a whole bunch of Old Testament saints who ran the race faithfully, who exemplified Christian character, but more than that, revealed that God continues to be faithful throughout history to his saints who run. He reminds us by this that we stand shoulder to shoulder with all of these faithful men of old who bore witness to the truth.

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We stand shoulder to shoulder with them as we bear witness to the truth. And we ought to be encouraged, because we stand in the company of such men. And if you have ever gone running, you know that going with someone, even a seasoned runner, to spur you on, it is a huge encouragement. When you try to run and you run alone, you're, there's the constant temptation to stop, to give up. But when you run with someone, they only encourage you to keep going.

If you run with someone else, neither of you wants to be the first one to quit, right? So you keep going. Same thing here, just examples to us of fellow runners in this life of faithfulness to encourage us to continue to run. And as we run, as we regularly look to them as examples for encouragement, we can really rest and trust in God who was faithful to them. He is faithful now, and he will continue to be faithful to his people to the end. So we run well by reminding ourselves of all of those who have gone before us.

But second sub-point B: We run well by unburdening ourselves. The author of Hebrews tells us, "Laying aside every

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weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, let us run." So we run well by unburdening ourselves. As we, as Americans, as we navigate Vanity Fair, where there's all kinds of pleasures of the world to distract us from the race that we are running, we will inevitably buy some of the merchandise, so to speak. And the author of Hebrews reminds us that we are running a race that we need to cast off anything that we have picked up that weighs us down, that keeps us from running at our full potential. More than that, we are to throw off any sin that easily entangles.

All sin, entangles us and keeps us from running this race faithfully. But more than anything, the thing that will stop us in our tracks as runners is this specific sin of doubt and unbelief. We must believe as pilgrims on this road, running this race, that the Celestial City is far better than Vanity Fair. And if we doubt the existence of the Celestial City, we're going to be enticed to build a home in Vanity Fair and stay a while.

We will, if we doubt; stop running. We'll set up shop in Vanity Fair, if we believe the lie that there is no Celestial City. But there's really no reward at the end of the race. More

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than anything, that's going to stop us in our tracks. We are to cast off every weight that weighs us down in this race. We are to put off the thought that there is no reward. We are to trust what the Lord says, "that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him," who run to him. We are to unburden ourselves by these weights and doubts. We are to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness.

Now, thirdly, picking up where we left off last time, we are to run well by exercising ourselves. This comes from that little phrase after, let us run; Let us run with endurance. Let us run with endurance, "with," is not the typical translation of this Greek preposition. This Greek preposition is *dia*, which is usually translated as, through, but it indicates here a marker of the circumstances whereby something is accomplished. That is to say, the running of the race is going to be accomplished by endurance.

Some older translations use the word, patience, but patience often evokes the idea of passivity or non-resistance. That's not the idea with this word here. This is the idea of

persevering, to holding up under a burden, a severe strain. It's an active thing, actively enduring, actively straining, actively struggling. Throughout the book of Hebrews is the themes of endurance and falling away, play a central role. We talked about that last week.

These ideas are repeated throughout the book, and this same word, in noun form, is actually used two more times in our text there in verse 2, "Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross," and verse 3 as well, "He who has endured such hostility by sinners." It's a often repeated theme and word throughout Hebrews. And last week we read a portion of Hebrews chapter 10, because that began this final exhortation section of the book. But I want to return there for a moment just to make this point on endurance.

So flip back just a page or two to chapter 10. Last week we read verses 19 to 31, which was really the warning section that ended with, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." But here I want to read the following section regarding his focus and exhortation to endure, which is leading

up to the text that we have. It's, it's, important for the context. So let's just begin in chapter 10, verse 32, we'll read through 39.

But the author of Hebrews says, "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and afflictions, and partly by becoming shares with those who are so treated. For you also showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted with joy the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you have for yourselves a better and lasting possession.

"Therefore, do not throw away that confidence of yours which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." It's that same idea of running with endurance to receive the prize. "For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure

in Him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.”

So let me just summarize this by saying, and you can flip back to chapter 12. The author of Hebrews is exhorting the reader to run by exercising him or herself or you might say, he tells us to run by exercising our faith. We run well by continuing to run in exercising our faith, by continuing to run in faith. That's how we endure. We run by not stopping. And if we think about it, how do we prepare to run a marathon? Does one to prepare, does one prepare to run a marathon just by resting and eating or is it by exercising oneself? A spiritual life is the same. We run by exercising our faith every day, by continuing to run every day.

We run by exercising our faith every day. Just as he wrote to the people here, they had endured much hardship in the past. Great persecution, seized, their property seized. He exhorts them to keep on running. Beloved, even when we want to stop, lay down in the flowery bed of ease on the side of the path, we must push ourselves to continue to run. As I mentioned earlier, if

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you have ever gone running, you know there's a constant temptation to stop, to slow down, to stop altogether. For some of us, like me, that happens about 10 seconds after I start running. Maybe for some of us before we even start.

But I think as we run this Christian life, we are too prone to give ourselves excuses for not persisting in faithfulness. We persist in spiritual faithfulness for a while, whether that's in devotions or prayer, service, stewardship and then we often think we deserve a reprieve. I'm not talking about physical rest. Our bodies need physical rest and reprieve; talking about spiritual faithfulness, spiritual disciplines. And I think many tend to reward themselves with wares from Vanity Fair. And they justify their reprieve pointing to a season of faithfulness.

I've run faithfully for the last 10 miles. I can take a break for a while. For example, one might think that because they've been faithful in prayer or reading or even going to church for a season, that, that they need a break. I deserve a reprieve from these things. My beloved, we will not run well if

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we constantly reward ourselves with rest and reprieve from faithfulness. We'll run well, if we keep running well, if we keep exercising our faith every day.

So beloved, the author of Hebrews here writes to us, and by extension us, as he writes to his fellow believers back then. But he writes to us to let us know that we will run well by persisting in running. Let us run with endurance, actively struggling and bearing up under the temptation too slow or to stop. So we run well by reminding ourselves of those faithful saints who came before, of God's faithfulness to them, his faithfulness to us, that we run shoulder to shoulder with them.

We'll run well by unburdening ourselves. We'll run well by continually, daily, regularly exercising ourselves. And finally, sub-point D, we will run well by focusing ourselves. Look at Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2. So he exhorts his reader, "Let us run 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."

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Beloved, we will run well by fixing our eyes on Jesus. Fixing our eyes on Jesus is the main modifier here of this verb, to run, the command to run, the exhortation to run. But then the rest of this verse here modifies this participial phrase, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus." But let's start with the phrase itself, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." The word order here in the Greek is actually, I think it involves a bit of literary genius on the part of the author.

Let me explain what I mean by that. The original text reads "Fixing our eyes on the Jesus," but fixing our eyes on, the Jesus, but he separates the, "the," there and, Jesus, and it's tied together. We don't, we don't have the things in English to make this make sense in English because they have case, number, gender, to tie things together. But it's fixing your eyes on Jesus, on the Jesus, and in the Greek, he separates the article, the, and, Jesus, and he puts, Jesus, at the very end of the sentence and in between there he inserts, "the author and perfecter of the faith" Jesus.

So if you're writing in your notes, it might be best to write it this way, "fixing our eyes on the," and then put a long EM Dash in there, "the author and perfecter of faith," and then another long EM Dash, "Jesus." And the reason that I think this is a bit of literary genius is the author has put with the article there. He's put Jesus up front and at the end, splitting those things up. He puts Jesus at the end and inserts, in between there, this long sentence of, "the author and perfecter of the faith." Separates, it puts, Jesus, way at the end, as if we're running this long race of faith and Jesus is at the very end and we're to keep our eyes fixed on him.

And the verb, fixing our eyes, it's an intensified form of the verb, to see. It means here to direct one's attention without distraction, to look with undivided attention by looking away from everything else and looking to Jesus. It's also a durative present participle, meaning we are to ever look away to Jesus. We are constantly looking to him, focusing our eyes on him.

But this participle here, it gives us the supreme motivation for running. We run with endurance; we shed every weight; we lay aside every entangling sin for the certainty of attaining that goal, Jesus. This is our motivation for running. We lay aside every weight, we put off every sin, and we keep our eyes on Jesus as the ultimate prize. As we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we will be reminded that he is the author and perfecter of our faith. We will be reminded that he has marked out our course from before time began. He's marked out our race.

And particularly as we think about this today, this one who marked out our course, everyone's course, he is the Good Shepherd, who is faithful to lead his sheep home to himself. That this Jesus, who we keep our eyes fixed on, he is the sustainer of life, who'll uphold you to the end of your race. We are reminded that when we keep our eyes on him, we have the most glorious prize awaiting us.

Many commentators at this point argue that the main point here of the author is to put Jesus forward as a perfect example for us. They argue that Chapter 11 was for the same purpose, to

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give us many examples of faith and here Jesus is the ultimate example, the perfect example of faith that we should follow. And I do agree with that. But I agree, also, with one other commentator who points out that we must not reduce this reference to Jesus as a mere example to follow.

This is not a, strictly a case of Jesus lived perfectly and bore up under his trial. He ran his life faithfully. So you can follow his example, too. That kind of thing can actually be terribly discouraging at some point in life. Sometimes in life it can feel a bit like someone coming to you and saying, hey, look, Superman can do this. You can do it too. You can follow his example, too.

This is not just, Jesus endured, so follow his example. It is that, but the author of Hebrews here, tells us how Jesus endured, that we might follow him in his footsteps. And I think that's where the, the, focus was first, how Jesus endured; it was for the joy set before him.

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Look at that in verse 2, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross." The author of Hebrews has over and over exhorted his audience, his readers to endure. Now he tells us here how Jesus endured such a horrendous treatment of the cross. It was for the joy set before him. Jesus endured the horrors of the cross for the joy set before him.

It is our example, but it is more than that. What was the joy Jesus focused on in enduring the cross? Many people, many commentators point to the fact that he was trying to glorify God in all of this. Yes, that is true. Many people point to the fact that Jesus wanted to return to glory with the Father, to return to the joy he had with him in eternity, as it's mentioned in John.

But I would argue, Jesus had all those things from eternity past, the thing that he had yet to accomplish was the redemption of his people. And it might sound a bit sappy to say that while Jesus hung on the cross, he had you on his mind. But it is true. The joy that was set before Jesus, the chief joy that he had,

yes, was to glorify God, but he died to save you and me. That was the joy that was set before him, that he did not have from eternity past.

Immediately in his humanity on earth, that was a joy that was set before him, to accomplish our redemption. Beloved, saving you and me, this is the prize that the son won by taking God's wrath. He won a people for himself. He received men as gifts to which the Father gifted back to him as his prize. He won a redeemed people for himself, for all eternity, to the glory of the father. But with Jesus here, his humanity, pointing us to Jesus the man, not Christ, his title, not his divinity, but his humanity. It's intensely personal.

You are to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus because that's how Jesus endured, keeping his eyes fixed on you, his prize. So in that sense, Jesus is our perfect example. We run well by keeping our focus on Jesus, who kept his focus on his prize, which was us. And if you look back at Hebrews Chapter 11, that's also what marked some of the faithful saints of old.

Last week we noted the importance of 11 verse 6. Chapter 11, verse 6, where it says, "For he who draws near to God must believe that He is and He is a rewarder of those who seek him." That is to say, if you're going to run to Jesus, you have to believe that he exists and that he will reward those who run to him. This is what characterized all the men on the pages or on the lines that follow that text.

But look particularly at Chapter 11, verse 24 to 26. Moses is an example of this. It says in verse 24, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, regarding the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." How did Moses endure? He kept his eyes focused on the reward. He looked away from everything else to the reward.

And in kind of summary fashion, the author of Hebrews indicates that this is true of all the Old Testament saints. Look at verse 32. Read this section from 32 to 39, "And what

more shall I say? For time will fail me if I recount Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, as well as David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, performed righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong from weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

“Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and floggings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with a sword. They went about in sheepskin, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, mistreated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in desolate places and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised.”

None of these Old Testament saints received what was promised, namely, the promise of a Messiah, of a king who would rule in righteousness, ultimately to save them from their sin. But they all endured by keeping their eyes focused on that promise that they had yet received. We have the benefit and the clarity of the revelation of Jesus Christ, but we stand shoulder to shoulder with these Old Testament saints, when we run to Jesus, keeping our eyes fixed on him. That's how we will endure. That's how we will run well.

So these men are examples of this, and Jesus is the perfect example of this. But I don't think this is the primary emphasis of the author putting Jesus before us to keep our eyes fixed on him. The author of Hebrews puts Jesus before us. We're to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, not because he is our perfect example, not only because he's our perfect example, but because he is our reward.

We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus because at the end of our race, when our faith has been perfected and we are glorified, we get to spend eternity with him in eternal blessedness, eternal

happiness, eternal joy, as we commune with our savior. We can't even really imagine the depth of peace and pleasure that we will have in perfect fellowship with Him.

But Paul does say that marriage points to this mystery. And I think in part for this reason, in Ephesians 5:32, there have been many people, even seminary professors, who have just, this is to help explain the pleasures that we'll have in heaven. But there have been many people who have tried to argue that there will be marital physical intimacy in heaven that a husband and wife enjoy on this earth because some people just can't imagine life without such physical intimacy. Our entire country is, is, fixated on this.

But Paul says that the marital bond and the blessings and the pleasures of marriage, God gave them to point us to the mystery of Christ and the church. So just like Jesus is God's son, he is so without any physical connotations, because God is spirit. But Jesus being God's son points to the intimacy of the relationship that they have, like a father and a son. So too we are likened to the bride of Christ, who will one day be united

to him perfectly in heaven in the marriage supper of the Lamb. But again, this is without any connotations of a physical relationship.

But it does point to the fact that the pleasures we will enjoy in perfect fellowship with Christ, they will far surpass any pleasures that we enjoy in our marital relationship now, in every respect. So if you enjoy your marriage and you can't really imagine the life without your spouse, well, there is a greater, a fuller reality in heaven in perfect communion with Christ. And whatever you do enjoy in your marriage now, pales in comparison to what you will enjoy in eternity with Christ.

Marriage is a blessing with many pleasures, but they are nothing, beloved, nothing in comparison to what we will enjoy in heaven. And just as many young couples who are looking toward marriage, we have a couple of those young couples here looking toward marriage. And in anticipation of that, they grow in anticipation as the day draws near, longing for it to come, keeping their eyes fixed on it, trying to make sure everything is ready for it and prepared.

So too, beloved, we are to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, our goal, our prize, awaiting his return and we ought not to settle for the lesser pleasures of this life. So for the joy of receiving Christ as our reward, let us run, beloved, enduring whatever we must to win Christ, for there is no greater prize than Christ himself. So Jesus is the perfect example for how we are to endure, but he is also our prize and our perfect prize. We endure by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, just as he kept his eyes fixed on his prize.

But the author of Hebrews goes on also to tell us something else of Jesus's endurance that is instructive for us. Verse 2, it says that he was despising the shame. Despising can do, and I think this is often how I thought about it, referred to looking down on something with contempt. But here it actually means, to consider something not important enough to be an object of concern when evaluated against something else. That is to say, when Jesus looked at the pain and the shame of the cross, he evaluated the shame of the cross in light of his reward, and he considered the shame of the cross nothing.

Jesus, when he considered the reward of redeeming his people from slavery to sin, he scoffed at the shame of the cross, laughing, so to speak, as if it was nothing in comparison to what he would gain. This is like if someone came to you and they said, I've got this mansion. You can have this mansion of mine, but you have to pay a dollar for it. Is that a hard decision? We would despise that dollar very quickly, cast that dollar aside to this person in comparison for what we would gain for it.

And again, this is right in line with what the Old Testament saints did. Again, Moses in verse 26, "he regarded the reproaches of Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Or the summary statement in verse 35, "Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection." The Old Testament saints were willing to be tortured for a greater reward. They despised their torture, considering it as nothing in comparison to the reward of resurrection and eternal life. So they endured.

This is precisely how Paul encouraged several churches to think, to despise mistreatment and trials for the reward that we have in heaven. But just as an example of this; turn, turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and we're going to read just a, a, section out of the end of 2 Corinthians 4. We already read Romans 8, where Paul encouraged them by saying, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." He wrote to the Church of Rome with that. Paul despised his suffering and taught churches to do the same.

But 2 Corinthians chapter 4, let's pick it up in verse 13, Paul says, "But having the same spirit of faith, according to what was written, 'I believed therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of things to abound to the glory of God.

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"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light affliction is working out for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.

"For indeed while we are in this tent we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body," we are present, "we are absent from the Lord-- for we walk by faith, not by sight-- we are of good courage and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be present at home with the Lord.

"Therefore we also have our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Paul's afflictions, we know, were anything but light: Multiple shipwrecks, floggings, beatings, and the like. Yet like Christ, Paul looked at those with disdain, and he considered them light in comparison with the eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. And how did he do that? By looking at the things that are unseen, the things that are eternal, namely perfect fellowship, perfect peace, and blessing with Jesus Christ.

Let us run well, beloved, by fixing our eyes on Jesus, and we will endure if we compare him rightly, this prize that we have to win at the end of the race. If we compare him with our current trials or the pleasures of this world. Let us keep our eyes fixed on him. We will endure, if we keep our eyes fixed on him. Let us run to Jesus as our reward. And whatever we have to go through in this life, whatever temptations we flee, they will be nothing compared to our prize in Jesus Christ.

Finally, in verse 2, the author notes, that this Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. This is just to give us certainty of our future reward for the one who authored and perfected our faith, though we still wait for the perfection. If he authored our faith, if he was the pioneer in resurrection, well then, our reward is certain. Just as he most certainly is enjoying his reward now at the right hand of the throne in heaven, so will we. Beloved God is. He exists, and he rewards those who run to him, of this you can be certain.

That brings us to the end of point one: Let us run. We'll run well by reminding ourselves of the faithful men and women who have gone before us, the faithful God who carried them along. Let us run well by unburdening ourselves of every weight and sin that trips us up and drags us down. Let us run well by exercising our faith every day, bearing up under the strain and the stress of running. And we run well by focusing ourselves on Jesus, our prize, who endured and continued enduring his race, looking to the joy of his reward, despising the shame, considering his reward far superior to the shame of the cross.

And he most certainly received his reward. So we shall too beloved. And that brings us to point two: Let us consider, if you go back to Hebrews chapter 12 verse 3, says, "For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself so that you will not grow weary fainting in heart for," that little word, for, is a coordinating conjunction in Greek, that further explains. It indicates what's coming is further explaining what came before.

The previous point of the author was to exhort us to run, but with a heavy emphasis on focusing on Jesus, keeping our eyes on Jesus. And I think the author here, he makes this entirely separate point, just in case we missed the emphasis of the last section. He doesn't want us to miss that we are to look to Jesus. He tells us here, what he tells us here, further explains how we might keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. The author here commands the listener, consider him. Consider him: this word, consider, it's the only place that's used in Scripture, in this particular intensified form, and it means, to reason with careful deliberation.

This is a thoughtful, effective consideration. He commands us: Consider Jesus. If you are maybe wondering, how do I fix my eyes on Jesus? That's the metaphor. How do I fix my eyes on Jesus? Well, you engage in thoughtful consideration of him. This means that we are ever putting before our own eyes, Jesus; whether that's in the reading and studying of him in our prayers, but the reading and studying of him, first and foremost in the Gospels.

That's why the Gospels write, the authors wrote them, that we might see who Jesus is; keep our eyes fixed on him. So we're to look to him, we're to conform our life to him as we see him there on the pages of Scripture. But beyond that, we can read many other books that exegete further and elaborate on the truths of the Scriptures and Jesus' person and work. And one of the books that has aided me in this is that big white book we have in the, the bookstore called *Biblical Doctrine*.

I know many of you have this book, but if you have it, you should read the section on Soteriology, and Christology, on the

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Salvation in Christ. It's really, not a difficult read. It's very devotional actually, but it will put before you, the person and work of Jesus Christ, in a way that will evoke your worship. We ought always to be putting the Lord Jesus before us, keeping our eyes fixed on him, and I would commend that just as one resource to you on how to do that.

Don't be intimidated by the size. Just read, the, those sections out of that. But I seriously encourage you to do that. I read through that and it's just absolutely devotional and evoking of worship. If you haven't been at Grace, or even if you have been at Grace, since Travis got here, go back and listen through the sermons on Luke or listen to the Pillar of Truth podcast where we replay those.

Travis is, is, superb at drawing out of the text who Jesus is, drawing out his characteristics, how we need to imitate his character as our Lord. But we don't want to miss the point of the author here. Let us consider Jesus thoughtfully, contemplate him, his person, his work, him who endured such hostility by sinners. Maybe today and this point in time in particular, as we

are considering the events that happened yesterday, and maybe we're constantly looking at, it, news feeds to see any updates or more details. That's really how we ought to be considering our Lord far more important.

But let us, beloved, think deeply upon Jesus with careful deliberation to what he endured for us, what he did to secure our salvation. We can't pay anything for our salvation, but it did cost Jesus his life. We now owe him ours in return, out of love for the joy that we have, will have in eternity. For everything else compared to knowing Christ, Paul says, is rubbish. Philippians 3:8, "I count all things to be lost because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ."

Beloved, let us fix our eyes on him. Consider him that we might despise everything else in this world as rubbish. So the author says, consider him. And then he tells us the purpose of this at the end of verse 3, "so that you will not grow weary, fainting in heart." Maybe some of you in running your race, we

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all go through seasons where we feel like fainting. Maybe you're there now. You feel weary and you feel like fainting and giving up. You feel as if the road that the Lord has marked before you today cannot be traveled. You feel as if you cannot go on. Maybe you're fearful about the road ahead, anxious even.

Beloved, take your eyes off of your own despair, your eyes off of the road ahead, and fix your eyes on Jesus, "the author and perfecter of your faith," remembering that is he has given us the Spirit as a down payment. The same father who carried Jesus through all of his struggles and trials, through the greatest trial of the cross, it is the same father who carries you, sustains you. Turn your eyes to him.

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, study him, meditate upon him, endure long in your prayers to him. Keeping your eyes fixed on him, you will have the strength of heart to go on, and if and when you are weary, we can be encouraged by other men. But ultimately that's not where we're going to find our strength. Looking to other men, looking to mere examples, looking at the road ahead, focusing on the weights that we need to cast aside,

the sin that can really only discourage us more. Focusing on those things will only give us reason for fainting even more.

But beloved, if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, look to him as your reward. Be refreshed every day knowing that Jesus Christ is pleased with you. Every step of faithfulness, every step you take in this race of life and faithfulness, he's pleased by. Remember, that when you feel like fainting, he is pleased with every step, and eventually, step by step, keeping your eyes fixed on the prize, he will bring you home, and you will receive that crown of eternal life and blessedness with him.

So let us run, beloved, reminding ourselves, and burdening ourselves, exercising ourselves, focusing ourselves. Let us run, despising the pain and the shame of following Christ, considering Jesus infinitely more valuable, disdaining our present trials in light of eternity. Let us consider them as Paul did, light momentary afflictions in comparison to the eternal weight of glory and blessedness that we will experience with Christ for eternity. Beloved, let us run.

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Join me in a word of prayer. Father, we are as mere men without strength. We cannot run of our own strength, though we try. We end up fainting and falling, and then in the discouragement of stumbling, we only rise, looking to you, looking again to your forgiveness, looking again to our perfect blessedness, the reward that we have waiting for us. Lord, may we this day run with strength supplied by your Spirit. May we run with endurance, keeping our eyes fixed on you.

I pray in particular for those going through trials right now, Lord, that you give them extra grace, a double dose of grace today, and power and strength to continue on. That you would help them set everything else aside in their minds and keep their eyes fixed on you. Help them to consider the reality of their present circumstances, in light of eternity. Though they are significant trials here in this life, when we compare them to eternity, they are nothing; though they are still significant on this earth.

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Lord, we pray that you would help uphold them, endure them for those not going through trials. Lord, we pray that we would not give ourselves to the temptation of pleasures in this life, that we would keep our eyes fixed on you, the prize, and walk every day faithfully until we reach that celestial city, until we reach the end of our race to enter into your loving embrace for all eternity. Lord, we pray by the power of your Spirit that you help us do this in Jesus' name, Amen.