

**HEBREWS -12:1-3**  
**Eyes Fixed on Jesus**

One of the things that is beneath the surface of this letter to the Hebrews and other NT LETTERS is the reality that the original hearers were in real danger of being imprisoned or killed for their faith. Paul, who wrote much of the NT, is an example of what could happen. Christian history and tradition tells us that most of the apostles were killed for the cause of the gospel, as were many other under Roman rule.

Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century where even more people are facing imprisonment or death because of their faith in Christ. The call of Hebrews to hold fast to Christ is VERY relevant today. We may not feel it that much in Walker County, yet, but let's not be so naïve to think that it couldn't happen.

On that cherry note, we can admit that at some point in this series some of you have probably asked yourself, "Am I willing to take a stand for Christ to the point of imprisonment or death?" It is a sobering question. Odds are that we will not have to make that decision. But there is a decision before us that we must make, if we know Christ. We must answer this question, "Will I live for Christ?" Friends, if we don't live for Christ then there is little chance that we will have to die for Him.

Hebrews 11-12 raise these questions, "Will I live by faith? Will I run the loooong race with endurance? Will I live in community with others who are helping me live by faith? Will I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus above all else?"

By way of reminder of where we are in Hebrews, we've seen how the author has made the argument that Jesus is better than Moses, Angels, Aaron and line of OT priests since Jesus offers a better sacrifice, salvation, and promise.

THE AOH describes their days as "the last days" i.e. the age of the risen Christ. We are in the last days, but we've not yet seen THE LAST DAY.

We are in the in-between time of the first and second coming of Christ.

Let's not take for granted the moment in which we live. In all of human history we live in this era following the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

The fact that we live in "the last days" does NOT DIMINISH OUR NEED TO LIVE BY FAITH. Nor does it diminish the fact that we must still do battle against sin – within and without. It does not diminish the fact that we are called to RUN a Race with Endurance.

Heb 12:1-3

**1** Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also 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. **3** For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Why is it so easy to get entangled in sin? Because sin is not a punctual isolated act or thought.

**Dr. Richard Lovelace's definition of sin:**

*"In it's biblical definition, sin cannot be limited to isolated incidents or patterns of wrong-doing; it is something much more akin to the psychological term 'complex:' 'an organic network of compulsive attitudes, beliefs and behavior deeply rooted in our alienation from God.'*

Lovelace's definition shows why it so easily entangles us – it is a web or a network of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

If sin were merely a simple single stand-alone act then it would be easier to deal with it.

EX: Dan and the “entanglement exercise / drill” that firemen use in training

They get in full gear and then have to go through a maze blindfolded. The real trick is that the maze is designed to simulate a structure where infrastructure has collapsed so you have lots of loose wires that can easily get tangled on equipment. There is a certain way the fireman must respond, but it is not intuitive. Our initial response is to muscle our way through but that just makes things worse. The key is to slow down and think and carefully maneuver your way through the maze to avoid getting entangled.

How do we avoid sin or get untangled from sin?

NOTE: the verbs “run the race, lay aside the weights and sin that encumber us, and fix your eyes/ look at Jesus” are all in the plural form – LET US. Don't try this alone.

### Bonhoeffer- Confession and Communion

The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we are sinners!

**Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown.**

In confession the break-through to community takes place.

That is true in terms of relationship with Christ and with one another.

SEVEN deadly sins, , ONE HOPE

### CONSIDER HIM

**Laying aside sin is Someone we meet before it is Something we do**

Ex: the magic Brush

Oh, if only it were so easy to get rid of the tangled web of sin that we so easily weave in our own lives.

Jesus is the magic brush when we fix our eyes on him then tangles of sin begin to come undone.

It's surprisingly easy to lay aside our sin when we look to Jesus. But it is impossible unless our thoughts and affections are centered on Christ – unless we view him as our strength, joy and the true lover of our souls.

To get untangled we must lay aside whatever impedes our progress. It may be some obvious sin (7 deadly sins; censorious spirit) or it may be some sort of good thing that keeps you from the best thing. What is an encumbrance for one may not be so for another person. How do we know what hinders us?

Run the Race.

If you're not sensing any impediments, then it may be that you're not running the race of faith, the pursuit of holiness, the pursuit of fulfillment in God alone. If you are seeking Christ then impediments will come, but we are to continue to consider Him.

### FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS – Focus on the greatest of all runners

WE consider Him who was motivated by what was before Him – the joy set before Him. If Jesus endured by considering the joy set before Him, then shouldn't we do the same?

J. Edwards spent 20 minutes a day meditating on heaven. The spirit of this age is one that says, “This life is all there is”, or as a Schlitz beer commercial put it years ago, “you only go around once in life so grab for all the gusto you can get.”

We do go around ONCE IN THIS LIFE, but that is not the end, so keep your eye on eternity and there's no better way to do that than by fixing our eyes on Jesus.

Those who seek to be great in an area of music, sports, science, art, etc will study those who have achieved greatness in that area. If we want to grow in grace and faith, then let's keep our eyes on the author and perfecter of the faith. Let's study Him as He is revealed in the Word.

**“to Fix” = to view with undivided attention, by looking away from every other object; to regard fixedly and earnestly, Heb. 12:2;**

This is not a casual looking or an occasional glance. It is intentional. It is an active verb – “fixing our eyes, or looking at earnestly.”

All through the race our eyes are to be fixed on Christ. This suggest an intensity and steadiness in our running.

EX: great runners keep focused on the end in mind, not on the other runners.

Ex: target shooting or deer hunting– you can see the guys looking intently at the target.

EX: the ballet – when doing multiple turns the key is to stay fixed on a spot on the wall. You keep coming back to that spot or else you'll get really dizzy.

If we try to get untangled from sin without spotting Jesus when we get turned around, then we'll get spiritually dizzy.

If we get preoccupied with our circumstances, the other runners or even ourselves, then we run the risk of getting dizzy. We need to keep our eyes focused on Christ. He never changes and is always calling us to Himself

A nod to Valentine's Day...A man staring at the woman he loves

Yentl – “look at how he looks at her, will someone ever look at me that way?”

**Why Focus on Jesus? – Because He is the author and perfecter of faith**

We can learn from the great cloud of witnesses, but none of them ran the race perfectly. Only one has run a perfect race – Jesus. He ran the race as a man who is the author and perfecter of the faith.

This title reveals him to be greater than any other runner in the race. He is the pioneer, the leader. He blazed the way for us. If we want to know what real faith looks like then we must give ourselves to the study of His life of faith.

To state the obvious, this means that we must spend time in His Word. Our regular reading or hearing of scripture should include the gospels where Jesus is most clearly presented.

As perfecter of our faith, his greatness is proclaimed even more. His life exhibited faith in its most perfect form. He shows us what the life of faith is to look like- in joys and trials.

Don't get your eyes turned to Christian celebrities; look to Jesus.

This is why in we seek to keep Christ in the center of our small groups, our worship, our singing, our preaching and even our sharing.

This is what we must put before our children – a glorious savior who is greater than anything else.

**Worthiness of Christ – v. 3-4**

See what He endured – “such hostility” FOR US – He ran his race against the greatest opposition. He faced the direct assault of Satan.

“consider” -= reflect upon and compare with. As we do this with Jesus, then we gain courage and strength.

He ran the race set out by his Father and he endured in the face of hostility. What He endured in our place is far greater than what we will face. To admit that does NOT minimize the trials we face, but as we consider Jesus we can gain strength.

By looking at Him we are to not grow weary and lose heart.  
He earned the place of honor at the right hand of the throne of God.

This is unique among all the religions. No other religious figure experienced such suffering and hostility on behalf of others, on behalf of sinners, on behalf of those who are His enemies.

Jesus of the Scars – E. Shillito

**The other gods were strong, but Thou wast weak;  
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;  
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,  
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.**

Every story of sacrifice and heroism mimics or reflects what Jesus did.

All heroic people are going to die sometime; they have to die because of sin and their humanity. BUT Jesus DID NOT HAVE TO DIE. He did not have to come and do this. That makes him an even greater champion.

Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne where he prays for us who are running our race. He is whispering to us by the Holy Spirit that we can trust God in the race that is set before us.

Seeing him as our great savior who gave Himself for us makes it easier to lay aside the sin that entangled us.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus does NOT mean that we ignore or deny our cares and our circumstances. But it DOES mean that we don't fix our gaze on them. It means that when we feel the weight of our cares, we cast them onto Jesus. 1 Peter 5:6

**for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**

**6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you**

To cast your anxieties you must first KNOW them.. To keep your anxieties from becoming an encumbrance in the race of faith, fix your eyes on Jesus and cast your cast on Him. HE CARES FOR YOU and He Can Take it. Jesus can handle them – your hurts, wounds, traumas, anxious thoughts and cares.

The same is true for the unwanted sinful desires and behaviors that entangle us – admit them and then cast them on Christ. He died to take and cover our sin and empower us to newness of life.

Col 3 1-4 Set your mind on things above and put to death the sins of the flesh.

**Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.**

**5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry**

**Calvin Miller**

At the Sea of Galilee, Christ called to the disciples to follow him. And they did so, leaving behind their boats and businesses. They were so taken with Christ that they never felt the cost of their renunciation. **They walked in the epicenter of a new adoration that had silently slain their old affections.**

The apostles came to Christ, having surrendered the possessions that stood between them and the will of God. Even so, we do not remember them because they chose poverty, but because they adored Christ. **If we too are spellbound by His excellence, relinquishment will be more a byproduct of devotion than a prerequisite of it.** True lovers of Christ can stand the pain of self-denial . . . The glory of the Spirit blinds them to the showy temporal treasures of earth. They see only the Christ. His hands are bruised and scarred; his once broken fingers now break the loaf that allows them to share in communion with the Holy.

–Calvin Miller A Hunger for the Holy

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face...and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. 🎵

WE WILL LOOK TO SOMETHING. Our hearts are not neutral.  
What is it that captures your attention?

**The trajectory of our Christian life is directly tied to our preoccupation with Christ.**

Always have the cross and the work of Christ for us front and center in our thoughts at ALL TIMES. If not, then we will lose heart. We will get dizzy and lose our way.

Jesus live a life of faith as one rooted in the love of the father. Through Him we too know that same love. In Christ we are co-heirs; we are beloved children. We can endure and not lose heart because we know that the same love that was on Christ the son is on us today.

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