
Words of Truth

Hebrews 12:1-3

By: Brian A. Yeager

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, 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, 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 right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

The great cloud [“...a large dense multitude...”; Strong’s # 3509] of witnesses ties to the people of faith we studied about in the previous chapter (Hebrews 11:1-40). If you spend some time looking at the Greek word translated “witnesses” [μάρτυς], part of the definition of that word is this: “an historical sense, one who is a spectator of anything, e.g. of a contest” (Strong’s # 3144). Think about that. Paul illustrated his efforts in preaching and faithfully living the Gospel of Christ by likening such to running a race, striving for the mastery, and fighting a fight (I Corinthians 9:16-27). The first verse in this chapter says we are running a race. Therefore, it is as though we are competing in a sporting event and the audience is the champions who have lived before us.

Running this race as though those who served in the past with unwavering faith are observing us, we need to step up our game. One way in which we can compete better is to cast off anything that might weigh us down. As we should have done before conversion, we need to make sure nothing has a grip on us to cause us to look backwards (Luke 9:57-62). We need to make sure that the cares [anxieties] of this life are not weighing us down (Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:19, Luke 10:38-42, Luke 21:34, Philippians 4:6-8, and II Timothy 2:1-4). We need to make sure that fleshly desires are not weighing us down (Romans 13:12-14, I Corinthians 3:1-3, II Corinthians 7:1, Galatians 5:16-24, I Peter 2:11, and I Peter 4:1-2). Individually, we are all running our own race. Therefore, examine your life (II Corinthians 13:5). If there is something that is weighing you down, deal with it in a manner pleasing to our Lord.

Think about how sin will “beset” a person. The term translated “beset” [εὐπερίστατος] is defined as: “well standing around, i.e. (a competitor) thwarting (a racer) in every direction (figuratively, of sin in genitive case): — which doth so easily beset. Skillfully surrounding i.e. besetting” (Strong’s # 2139). Obviously, we know that sin will cause us to lose our reward in Heaven (John 5:28-29, Romans 6:23, I Corinthians 6:9-10, Hebrews 10:26-39, and James

1:13-16). Sin will only earn us a place in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8). This text however addresses sin [transgression of the law; I John 3:4] in another manner. That is, that sin will surround you. Sin will get in your way (Galatians 5:17). The fact is, you either serve sin or obedience (Romans 6:16).

The first verse in the text we are examining also deals with the subject matter of patience [endurance]. We have to have a patient continuance in well doing wherein we seek eternal life (Romans 2:7). Earlier in this letter the text said “*ye have need of patience*” (Hebrews 10:36). So, as Paul taught Timothy, flee the things that hold you back and follow after that which saves. That includes patience (I Timothy 6:3-12).

When you’re running distance it is wise to have your face set towards a finish. In this text, that is looking unto Jesus (Titus 2:11-14 and Hebrews 9:27-28). Forget all that which is behind you, the goal is ahead. That’s how the faithful get through this life (Philippians 3:1-21).

The eleventh chapter of this letter gave us great examples of faith. Yet, there is no example that is greater than our Lord Jesus Christ. He chose to come to this world and chose to go through all that He did for our salvation (John 10:1-18). He is the author [source] of our salvation (Hebrews 5:5-9). His example is before us to follow (I Peter 2:21-24). He is the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:12-18). What that means is, He is the first one to fully experience death, being buried, raised from the dead, and ascending into Heaven. He is where we seek to be for all eternity (Hebrews 1:1-3 and Hebrews 8:1). He won the fight, the race, etc. He then gives unto us the pattern of victory (I Corinthians 15:20-23; 15:54-57).

Before Jesus came into this world He knew that He would be despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3). Shame did not weigh down our Lord. He faced contradiction [dispute; disobedience; strife] from sinners (Matthew 12:22-30, Mark 12:13-17, Mark 14:65, Luke 4:16-30, Luke 9:22, John 6:60-71, etc.). The horrible things our Lord faced did not cause Him to quit. He could have chosen not to go through with more suffering. He could have called legions of angels to protect Himself. He chose not to (Matthew 26:47-56).

It is wise to look to Jesus. To see His example (I John 2:3-6). To see that we too can be victorious lest we get tired and faint mentally. There is a reward before us if we do not get tired and give up (Galatians 6:9). Our labor is not and will not be in vain (I Corinthians 15:58 and Hebrews 6:10-12). Faithfully living in this world is not easy. There are times, like the faithful of the past had to endure, wherein we can be “*troubled on every side*” (II Corinthians 4:8). If you go back and read that context, you see that Paul was able to press through those difficult times he faced by keeping his focus on things eternal (II Corinthians 4:9-5:11). Staying goal minded is the key. Jesus stayed focused (John 4:31-34). Jesus steadfastly set His face on where He was supposed to go to do our Father’s will (i.e. Luke 9:51). Brethren, look unto Jesus!