

FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE US

(Heb. 12:1, 2)

Introduction:

1. What a powerful admonition the Hebrews writer has given to all Christians. In two short verses, he has given the means of overcoming this world unto salvation. And more than that, he also encouraged us in that overcoming.
2. Let us dig deep into this message and consider the examples given, the joys highlighted, and the challenges presented.

Discussion:

I. Our Example.

- A. Hebrews chapter 12 follows Hebrews chapter 11 (profound, right?).
 1. Those “heroes” of faith mentioned in Heb. 11 are the “great cloud of witnesses” of Heb. 12:1.
 2. These examples of faith are not to condemn us or belittle us, but to empower us and encourage us on to great faith.
 3. These examples faced very difficult circumstances and overcame them (Abel, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and others).
 4. Their overcoming was not always met with what we might call “worldly rewards”. Abel was killed by his brother; Abraham never owned land except that small plot where he buried his wife; Moses went from royalty in Egypt to homeless in the wilderness; Isaiah and Jeremiah were largely ignored and killed by their own people (Heb. 11:37). Yet in all these things they were more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37; Heb. 11:4, 5, 7, 16, 25, 31, 33-35).
- B. Jesus is our ultimate example. He for the joy set before Him (restoration of Himself and His people) endured all (Luke 9:51; 19:10; 22:42-44; 23:34, 43). And having endured all He has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- C. So too we, consider Phil. 2:1-16. If we share Jesus’ mind/attitude, we can share His reward.

II. Our Joy.

- A. The joy of being right with God.
 1. Sin separated us from God but we have blessed reconciliation “in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:18, 19; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rom. 6:10; Gal. 3:13).
 2. In Christ, we have a clean conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3:21; Heb. 9:14).
- B. The joy of a blessed life as God’s people (Ps. 1; 37:25; Phil. 4:4-9; 1 Pet. 1:8, 9).
- C. The joy of knowing your eternal dwelling (Rom. 8:31-39; 1 John 5:13-15).

III. Our Need for Endurance.

- A. As the people of God, we face many obstacles in this world.
 1. So many things can “weigh” us down and keep us from growing/serving God (Acts 22:16).
 2. So many sins can ensnare us and take us from the light (1 John 1:7).
 3. We can despise the shame of this world more than we desire the glory of God.
 4. So much time can come and go that we lose sight of the only thing that truly matters.
- B. Thus, we are urged to **run** (present active tense = “keep on running”) **with endurance** (*hupomeno* = stay under) **the race** that is **set before us** (knowing it is a marathon not a sprint; and that it is a marathon that has been finished by others-Heb.11 and our Lord Jesus).
- C. Remember, to be with God forever in heaven, we must be with God always here on earth.

Conclusion:

1. Such encouragement and guidance in two verses. What will we do with it?
2. Let us determine to: leave behind the things that would inhibit our salvation; let us deny the things that would detour our salvation; and instead, let us focus on Jesus and be saved!
3. Invitation.

MORE ON “FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE US”

1. The weights that must be left behind.
 - A. For the rich young ruler it was his wealth that had to be left behind (Matt. 19:16-26).
 - B. For some it was their devotion to their physical families (Luke 9:59-62).
 - C. For some it is the cares of the world (Matt. 13:22).
 - D. The root of this weight is self. Self must be denied (left behind) in order to fully serve the Lord (Luke 9:23). A man cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24).
 - E. A container must first be emptied before it can be filled. Dishes are washed.

2. The sin that can ensnare us.
 - A. Each person is susceptible to particular sins. The Christian must know himself and his weaknesses and ask God and brethren to help him in overcoming those weaknesses. To deny we have weaknesses is a weakness. To deny our need for help is a cry for help 😊
 - B. Just as an alcoholic must always be “on the wagon” so too a Christian must always be on guard and actively seeking to avoid temptation (note Jas. 1:13-15; 1 Cor. 10:13).
 - C. Confession is one of God’s gifts to help us overcome sin that seeks to ensnare us (Jas. 5:16; 1 Thess. 5:14).

3. The things that can sap our endurance.
 - A. Familiarity can produce contempt. The old can become invisible, like an old picture on the wall. Christians must always be pursuing the mind of Christ and this helps keep things new and exciting.
 - B. Mediocre, half-hearted faith will not last in the long run. We must be always fanning our faith into flames (2 Tim. 1:6).
 - C. Beware the deadly Lotus Flower. The numbing flow of ease and plenty can lull us to sleep spiritually. We must endeavor to remain awake (1 Thess. 5:1-11; Eph. 5:14ff).

4. The joys that can see us through it all.
 - A. Knowledge of how much God loves us.
 - B. Knowledge of how much Jesus loves us.
 - C. Knowledge of how much the Spirit loves us.
 - D. Knowledge of the need for, means of, and fulfillment of salvation.