



Something Better For Us

A Survey of Hebrews, Lesson #7

11:30 – 12:3

Jim Hoffman



Hebrews 11:30-35

Great Triumphs of Faith

- Heb 11:33-35 who through faith
- subdued kingdoms,
- worked righteousness,
- obtained promises,
- stopped the mouths of lions,
- quenched the violence of fire,
- escaped the edge of the sword,
- out of weakness were made strong,
- became valiant in battle,
- turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
- Women received their dead raised to life again.



Hebrews 11:30-35

Great Triumphs of Faith

- As we read these verses that tell of such great triumphs through faith we are emboldened to attempt great things for God.
- For it is clear that great faith can bring about great things and give testimony to the victorious Christian life.
- These men and women were brave, they were bold, and God delivered them!
- How easy it is to forget this simple truth!



Hebrews 11:35b – 38

Great Triumphs in Disguise

■ Heb 11:35-38 Others

- were tortured, not accepting deliverance,
- others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.
- They were stoned,
- they were sawn in two,
- were tempted,
- were slain with the sword.
- They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented
- They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.



Hebrews 11:35b – 38

Great Triumphs in Disguise

- As we read these verses we must notice that while faith always pleases God it does not always have the storybook ending we think it should.
- Sometimes, God accomplishes more with what looks like defeat than He does with what looks like victory.
- In the end, it is not about what happens to us, it is about what God does with us.



Hebrews 11:35b – 38

Great Triumphs in Disguise

- We read about 'being tortured', 'being saw in two', and 'slain by the sword' and wonder how God could let that happen to His faithful servants.
- The real wonder is not that God would allow His people to suffer, but that He would be able to use their suffering to accomplish so much.
- If we checked with any of the martyred on this list today, how many do you suppose would have wanted it any other way?



Hebrews 11:35b – 38

Great Triumphs in Disguise

- God has not promised to keep us from suffering even if we are faithful to Him.
- In fact, Jesus told us to expect tribulation and sorrow.
- The (3) Hebrew children facing Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace understood that God might not deliver them, but if He didn't they would still stand firm because that was the way to blessing no matter what the course looked like. (Daniel 3:17-18)



Hebrews 11:35b – 38

Great Triumphs in Disguise

- Real faith always sees the big picture.
- Real faith understands that we just have to get through this life to get to the life that lasts forever.
- 100 years from now it will not matter to you how much you suffered, but it will matter why you suffered and how you handled it.

Heb 11:39-40

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. NKJV

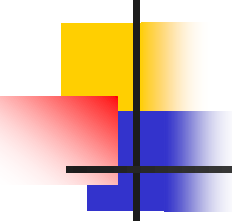
- All of the O.T. saints never counted on an immediate fulfillment of their faith, but they counted on God's promise coming to pass eventually.
- Sometimes their faith delivered them **from** death and sometimes it delivered them **to** death, but they understood that through faith something better was ahead.
- The O.T. saints never saw 'the promise' fulfilled, but they believed anyway and God counted it as righteousness to them. (Faith is believing what you have not seen)

Heb 11:39-40

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- The writer declares that the 'something better' that the O.T. saints looked forward to was now here and delivered to us by Jesus.
- In fact, their salvation (the O.T. saints) could not be complete without the time that is now upon us.
- The same faith that saved them by looking forward to a promise saves us by looking backward at a historical fact.

Heb 11:39-40



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- Please note that no matter how much faith they may have had, their salvation was not complete until Jesus Christ showed up in history and made atonement for their sins.
- They believed all of the Word of God that they had and that is what counts with God. How much more accountable are we who have the completed revelation?
- Better question; how much more effective could we be if really believed in our hearts what we know in our heads? At that point we could become 'something better for God'.

Heb 12:1-2

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, NKJV

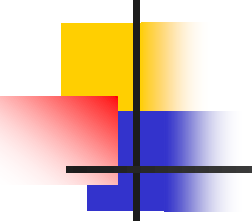
- Therefore; what is it there for? In this case it is there to emphasize all of the great examples of faith in action from the past.
- We are not surrounded by the O.T. saints *as onlookers*, but as examples *for us to look to*.
- God has not changed, so we can reasonably count on His grace and aid for us as we exercise our faith every bit as much as He honored the faith of those who went before us.

Heb 12:1-2

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- Here the Christian life is compared to running a race and we are to begin by laying aside any excess weight we may be carrying around.
- There is a reason why marathoners do not weigh 300 lbs. Excess weight slows us down and holds us back in a race.
- Excess weight is not bad in itself, but it still slows us down in a race. We need to lay it aside if we are to make good progress.

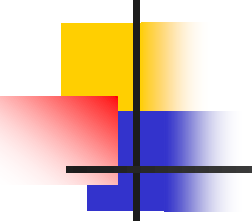
Heb 12:1-2



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- Of course the author was not giving running advice so much as he was painting a picture for us.
- What 'things' are we carrying around that slow us down in our spiritual life?
- The list of extra weights is all but endless, but common ones are preoccupation with money, possessions, and our appearance.
- It's not wrong to have money, possessions, or to look good, but it is wrong if they distract you from the main thing.

Heb 12:1-2



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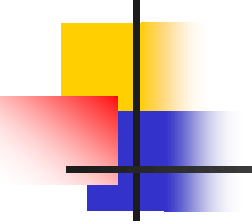
- Here is a quick test to check ourselves;
 - Do we think more about how much money we have now than about the richness of our treasures in heaven?
 - Do we place greater value on our current possessions than we do upon what we will one day possess?
 - Do we care more about what we look like to the world than we do about what we will look like to the Lord?

Heb 12:1-2

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- Within the context of this letter the 'weight' the author had in mind was probably the ceremonial routines of Judaism.
- Many were trying to have it both ways by trusting Jesus and also trying to keep up with temple practices.
- How many of us still carry around similar 'weights' that keep us from growing in Christ?
- I cannot identify your 'weights' but I must identify mine and lay them aside so that I can press toward the mark.

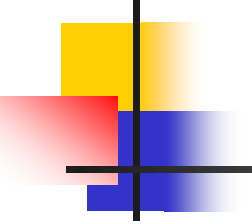
Heb 12:1-2



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- And then there is the problem of sin and it's continuing affect upon us.
- Sin in general is a problem for us, and sets up hurdles for us in the race before us, but the author uses the definite article 'the' indicating perhaps a special sin that slows us down.
- If I were to identify the one sin that has slowed me down more than any other it would have to be 'doubt'. (without faith it is impossible to please God)

Heb 12:1-2



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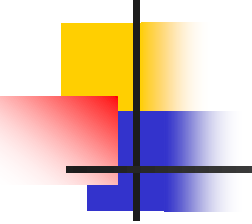
- The sin of doubt easily ensnares us and tangles up our feet so that we cannot run the race.
- We are easy prey for doubt because faith is believing what you have not seen and we are fleshly creatures.
- Doubt tends to creep into our lives when we stop doing the little things like praying and reading our Bibles. (Rom 10:17)

Heb 12:1-2

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- Of all the folks in the Hebrews 11 hall of faith how many would have chosen rightly had they doubted the promises of God?
- Would Moses have chosen identification with the people of God over being a ruler in Egypt if he doubted the promises of God?
- How many lion's mouths would have been stopped had Daniel doubted God?

Heb 12:1-2



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- There is a course laid out before us designed by God Himself. We need to find it and follow it.
- Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, **which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.** NKJV
- It seems to be so that God has laid opportunities for service in our way; we just need to keep our eyes open as we press on and be ready to participate.

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- So what about running with 'endurance'? In 1995 I ran the Harrisburg marathon, all 26.2 miles of it. Here are some of the things I learned.
 - **You must prepare for a long race, not a short sprint.**
 - **You must want to finish the course or you will not.**
 - **You must keep looking forward and envision the finish.**
 - **You cannot focus on those around you, it's just you and the finish line, nothing else.**
 - **There are up times and down times along the way, expect them.**
 - **Some that seem to rush ahead of you may be sitting along the curb later as you pass them.**
 - **In the end, there is a great celebration and a great sense of satisfaction!**

Heb 12:2

2 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

NKJV

- One of the 'no-nos' in running is looking down at your feet. It causes you to lose your balance and lose focus.
- Far better to keep your head up and your eyes trained on something ahead.
- When facing the cross, Jesus kept his focus on what was beyond the cross and the reward that awaited.

Heb 12:2

2 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

NKJV

- When we take our eyes off of Jesus we can easily lose focus and struggle.
- Frequently when we take our eyes off of Jesus we spend too much time examining ourselves. While self-examination is a good practice it cannot be our main practice.
- We will always need work, but the repairs that we need will not be accomplished by our dwelling upon them.

Heb 12:2

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NKJV

- We do better when we stay focused on Jesus and where we are going than when we focus on ourselves and where we are now.
- Running a good race has less to do with the mechanics of our movements than it does with allowing Jesus to freely move upon us.

Heb 12:3

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. NKJV

- When you become weary in running the race of life, if you ever wonder if the daily fight is worth it all, think about Jesus.
- If you think you are offended by the sin around you, think of how offended Jesus must have been.
- If Jesus endured this life and the painful end that He had, surely we can too with His help.
- One of the best ways to reach a goal, especially in a race, is to focus on the finish line where our friends and loved ones will greet us.



Truths that Transform

- Sometimes, God accomplishes more with what looks like defeat than He does with what looks like victory.
- 100 years from now it will not matter to you how much you suffered, but it will matter why you suffered and how you handled it.
- The same faith that saved them by looking forward to a promise saves us by looking backward at a historical fact.
- How many lion's mouths would have been stopped had Daniel doubted God?