

## LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS

Hebrews 12:1 - 13:25

Key verses 12:1,2

„Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. “

The Letter to the Hebrews was written between 60 and 70 AD for the Jewish Christians. They endured suffering and abuse simply because they worshipped Jesus. Those who continued to worship only Jesus were persecuted. On the other hand, those who continued to offer sacrifices to the Jewish temple and made the Christian doctrine a minor matter were tolerated. Therefore, the addressees of the Letter to the Hebrews found themselves under great challenge to fall away from their faith in Jesus as the only sacrifice for their sins. The writer encouraged them to accept Jesus as their only true high priest and not to retreat in the midst of the temptation and affliction, but to walk patiently in the fight of faith.

Chapters 1 to 10 verse 18 deal with teaching about who Jesus is and what he has done: Jesus is the great salvation. He is the faithful apostle and high priest. Through his obedience to what he suffered, we were encouraged to follow his example and thus turn to the perfect. Jesus is the eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, living forever to intercede for us. He is the mediator of the new covenant so that we now have perfect redemption.

Chapter 10 verse 19 through chapter 13 describe the practical life of the new covenant. Through the last lesson, we learned that Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross became the new and living way into the Kingdom of

God for all believers. Because of this grace, the author encouraged the Jewish Christians to hold fast to the hope they professed, like the forefathers in chapter 11, and to move forward with patience on the new and living way of Jesus.

Today we want to hear God's comfort and encouragement to patiently run our race of faith to the end, looking up to Jesus, the beginner and perfecter of faith. Let us remember Jesus in this hour, who endured such great opposition from sinners. I pray to the Lord that through the patient struggle of faith, we may be used as high priests like Jesus in the midst of sufferings and afflictions and receive the glorious crown of victory.

### 1. **Let us run with perseverance (12:1-29)**

In 12:1-3, the author gives the Jewish Christians three encouragements for their victorious walk of faith:

1) Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles (12:1a).

Let us read 12:1a together, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us," The strict observance of

various Jewish temple ordinances hampered them in the struggle of faith they had begun. Again and again they were tempted to return to their old life, namely Judaism. When we read chapter 13, we can sense how strongly they were tempted to return to their old life, which was characterized by the sin of self-centeredness, carnal lust and greed for money. Because of sin, they had become sluggish in hearing the Word of God (5:11). Accordingly, the fact that they lived a burdensome life of faith was not due to persecution, nor to conditions or people, but to the sin that constantly ensnared them.

Certainly, it is not easy to lay aside everything burdensome and sin. But we can lay down any heavy burden because we have such a cloud of witnesses around us. All the ancestors of faith fought the great battle of faith and received God's testimony because they laid aside everything that weighed them down and sin. We may put away sin because Jesus has already made the perfect sacrifice for all our sins. God encouraged a young man through Hebrews 6:1 to put away his immaturity through fun and recognition addiction. Then God blessed him not only to learn better and better in school, but also to serve us with the Word of God from 1 and 2 Samuel and to cooperate for the disciple-making ministry. God will raise him to be an influential Bible teacher with Ezra 7:10. God help us to put away our early morning spiritual sluggishness and fear of man, so that we may continue to be the early morning prayer vessel and preach the word of God at the campus in all circumstances.

2) Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us (12:1b).

The writer encouraged the Jewish Christians to run victoriously with patience in the battle of faith in the midst of afflictions. They had made a faith decision to follow Jesus (10:32). Out of love for God, they formed a loving community of the Word of God (6:10; 13:7, 17). But the Romans persecuted them because they refused idolatry. In addition, there was the fiery persecution of Christians under Emperor Nero. In this hard time of temptation,

they were tempted to give up the fight of faith. But the writer encouraged them, "Run with patience in the battle!"

Many make a great decision of life to run the race of faith, no matter what the cost. But there are two kinds of runners: those who stop at some point and the others who run to the end. In fact, it takes patience to keep going until the end. Above all, sometimes one feels as if the path of faith is too lonely. But as 12:1a says, we have such a cloud of witnesses around us. We are not alone, but God has set many runners and patient fighters of faith as examples for us. Apostle Paul said before his death, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is prepared for me the crown of righteousness..." (2 Timothy 4:7, 8a) Revelation 2:10 says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." A missionary is celebrating the 50th anniversary of her missionary life in Germany this year. Instead of quitting, she continues to run with patience in the struggle for the establishment of 12 mothers of faith in each faculty and for the M-Mission. God bless you to run faithfully to death in the faith struggle and to receive the crown of victory from the hand of your Lord Jesus Christ.

3) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus (12:2, 3).

In the midst of tribulations and unexpected, painful incidents, the Jewish Christians desperately needed an example to learn from. Let's read again 12:2: "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The Jewish Christians were strongly tempted to look to those who had fallen away from the faith, or to the Gentiles who were enjoying themselves in the world. But they were not role models. Jesus is our role model. He is the beginner of faith, having taken the first step and run before us to fight against sin. He is the perfecter of faith, because until he died on the cross he renounced the joy he could have had. He endured the cross all the way

to Calvary. People passed by him and despised him. By being crucified between two criminals, all the world should see that he was the worst. But he respected this disgrace little until the end. Through patience he won the crown of victory. Because he ran his race of faith from the beginning to the end, he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now he waits for all believers who also run patiently on his path to give them the crown of righteousness.

Let us read 12:3 together, "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Instead of looking at themselves, people, circumstances, or difficulties, they were allowed to remember Jesus, who endured so much opposition to Himself from sinners. He endured all the false accusations, the death sentence, and the scorn and ridicule from men (Matthew 26:66, 67).

Jesus endured so much opposition to Himself from me. I lived as a hypocritical Christian, participating in church activities but secretly gambling away a lot of money in gambling halls and having unhealthy, sinful relationships with women. Jesus, however, fought the bloody battle to the death on the cross to free me from my shameful youthful lust. By remembering him, I may run daily in the battle of faith to fight like Jesus for the raising of an exceedingly great army among the young people of this generation and to experience God's mighty work. A young man remembered Jesus fighting against the sin of his rebellion and disobedience. Through Hebrews 5:8,9, he accepted Jesus who was obedient to the point of death on the cross to redeem him from the power of sin and give him a new life under the rule of God. Jesus' patience until death on the cross caused him to serve now as a fighter of faith to two friends with the Word of God and to cooperate for the spiritual mobilization of the Next Generation.

In the course and struggle of faith, it is very important to look up to Jesus and remember him. It is understandable that we know our own limitations, but it is crucial that we learn

from Jesus to live as fighters of faith. Hudson Taylor looked up to Jesus and remembered him by carrying his China Mission cross to the end, even though he lost his daughter, two sons and wife, became seriously ill himself, and evil rumors about him were spread throughout the world. He, like Jesus, fought the battle of faith with patience for the spread of the Kingdom of God to the interior of China. Charles Spurgeon preached in England three times on Sundays and five times a week, although he experienced public scorn, slander and physical suffering. But instead of quitting, he struggled like Jesus with patience to raise up numerous pastors through the seminary. Our struggle is not a struggle for better conditions or against people, but our God has set us up as fighters of faith for the salvation of the students in this continent. Our Lord has placed five baptized as fighters of faith for the spiritual war against the lies of the godless spirit of the times. God has placed one young man as a fighter of faith that he looked up to Jesus and proclaimed Jesus' cry of victory, "It is finished!" God encourage us daily to look up to Jesus and like Jesus be fighters of faith through whom God is bringing about spiritual renewal and revival in Europe. Let us struggle like Jesus with patience, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and in spite of the lies of the godless spirit of the age, to proclaim the name of Jesus in the 1700 colleges of Europe through disciple-making and 10,000 one-to-one Bible studies, and to fulfill the World Campus Mission to the end.

In 12:4-11 the author explains the sufferings and afflictions of the Jewish Christians. Although they had not yet fought to the death, they were already becoming discouraged and forgetting God's word of comfort in the midst of suffering. Let us read 12:4-6: "In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his

son." The author encouraged them to listen to God's comfort in the midst of afflictions and not to despair, but to understand chastening through suffering as God's education and love.

Consider 12:11: "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." There are many examples in the Bible and present day who accepted God's chastening love in the midst of suffering and thus became the influential leaders in God's history. Joseph experienced so much suffering because of the envy and hatred of his brothers that they sold him into Egypt. However, in the midst of injustice and pain, he trusted in the love of God who raised him to be a shepherd for his brothers, family and a whole nation. I know someone who has given instructive lectures on the history of Central Asia every Wednesday to Friday morning at the Leadership Seminar for the past three months. God will continue to raise him up to use him as one of the global spiritual leaders for the great saving work in Germany, Europe and North Korea according to Genesis 45:7. I can also see how God is educating our Josiah team in various ways because He has something special in mind with them, namely to make them main characters in His salvation history. Through afflictions, sufferings and chastenings, let us receive God's educating love gratefully and with prayer that we may be used by God. May God educate each of you in this summer term of 2022, like Jesus, to be warriors of faith for His work of salvation.

Let's look at 12:12-17. Here the writer gives clear direction to the Hebrews to make a fresh start in the midst of the temptations. Let us read 12:12-14: "Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." Because God raised them in the midst of sufferings and persecutions, they were allowed to strengthen the weary

hands and the tottering knees and pursue the healthy and sanctified life. They had come to know the truth and accepted Christ as their Lord (10:32). They should hold on to this grace and make sure that no one misses it. The author warned them not to reject, like Esau, all the grace and blessings of God (12:15-17).

The first Christians always experienced harsh persecution in the midst of God's mighty work. But they strengthened their hands by forming influential and devoted communities. God worked through their prayer vessel that they spoke the word of God more and more freely and Jesus' name was witnessed in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. God also helped us in the midst of challenge to strengthen our weary hands and pursue peace with everyone and sanctification through daily life fellowship. The Next Generation workers are growing up as an exceedingly great army for the world mission through testimony battle, discipleship evening, master class, GLEF and especially through holy and peaceful life fellowship. God help each of us to strengthen our hands for the campus mission that we may raise up the sheep to be a holy people through disciple making and life fellowship.

In 12:18-29 the author gives the Jewish Christians another exhortation, namely, out of gratitude with their new life to serve God with timidity and fear. He reminds them that they had not come to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, namely the heavenly Jerusalem. At Mount Sinai the holy God showed Himself in a fearful way. But to Mount Zion they had come by grace alone. Through this grace, they not only received cleansing from their sins, but also an unshakable kingdom awaited them. Let us read 12:28, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe," Here we learn something about the goal of our faith walk, which is to receive the unshakable kingdom of God. Because of this grace and

hope, the Hebrews were allowed to be thankful even in tribulation and to serve God with timidity and fear. I see God's work among the Next Generation in New Jersey, Moscow and Istanbul UBF that they hold on to God's grace and serve the Lord with timidity and fear with the hope of the unshakable kingdom of God. Some of them live in the land of the current Russia-Ukraine war. But God's grace and the unshakable kingdom of God makes them be thankful and serve God with timidity and fear. God bless you to be all the more thankful to God in the midst of the turbulent times of the current war and to serve Him with timidity and fear.

Thanks be to the Lord that in chapter 12 we were allowed to learn to walk with patience in our struggle of faith like our Lord Jesus, putting away sin and everything that weighs us down, and through God's education grow into the fighters of faith for the revival work in Europe. Let us strengthen our hands so that Germany will be used as a shepherd nation and Europe as a kingdom of priests. God bless you to fight the good fight of faith like Jesus in the midst of suffering as high priests for the salvation of the Next Generation and students.

## II. Let us bear the disgrace he bore (13:1-25)

In 13:1-18, the author gives final exhortations for their practical life of faith in the new covenant.

1) Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. (13:1-3). In the temptation, some had become cold and selfish that they stopped loving and admonishing one another (10:24, 25). But through brotherly love, they would form the beautiful vessel of love and prayer for the world mission. They were also allowed to practice the brotherly love by hospitality and sharing in the suffering of the captive Christians.

2) Marriage should be honored by all (13:4). Already in chapter 12, the author warned the

Jewish Christians not to be apostates, i.e. fornicators like Esau.

3) Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have (13:5, 6). The Jewish Christians, after coming to faith, had endured the robbery of their earthly goods with joy, trusting in God and placing their hope in His kingdom (10:34). But in the temptation, greed for money again became a stumbling block in their course of faith.

4) Remember your leaders (13:7). Let's read 13:7: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." The addressees were next-generation Jewish Christians who had heard about the gospel through witnesses and Bible teachers (2:3). The Next Generation co-workers also have witnesses and Bible teachers, namely their parents and many UBF missionaries who have given their lives for the world campus mission. Dr. Lee, Dr. Paul Chung and many more fulfilled their mission until the end of their lives by preaching the word of God with all their might through disciple making and world mission. May God give the Next Generation the inner desire to faithfully follow the faith of their parents and Bible teachers and learn from them how to imitate Jesus and feed Jesus' sheep. Students in Germany also have faith models like Martin Luther, who stood on the side of truth and challenged the spiritual revival of our continent as a reformer.

5) Follow Jesus' example of faith (8-14). Consider 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." This verse teaches us about Jesus' faithfulness and patience. He was the same from beginning to end, remaining patient to obey God's will even though he was beaten, martyred, and forsaken by God through no fault of his own. He remained faithful until death on the cross, although at any moment he could have asked his Father to save him from all the suffering and pain. He was patient to shed His blood for the cleansing of our sins. Jesus is and will be patient for eternity to give you and

me, because we patiently run our race of faith to the end, the crown of the victor. Let us read 13:13 together, "Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore." Again, the writer directs the reader's attention to Jesus by referring to his eternal priesthood. The bodies of the animals whose blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin were burned outside the camp. In the same way, Jesus, the high priest for eternity, was crucified outside the holy city of Jerusalem at Golgotha. Thus he was shamefully excluded from the holy community. But because he bore such shame, we are now free from all transgressions and sins. Because Jesus bore the disgrace, numerous men and women of faith also bore the disgrace of Jesus, patiently bearing the hatred of the world in order to proclaim the name of Jesus. William Carey, the father of modern missions, belonged to a group of religious separatists in his childhood and youth. Through this verse 13, he received Jesus and decided to take upon himself the shame of being a separatist. When he served the India Mission, he experienced opposition and hatred from the entire government. But he resolutely bore the disgrace of Jesus by fighting idolatry in India and bringing God's hope to the country through his translation of the Bible. Let us bear the disgrace of Jesus at the campus as Bible teachers and disciple makers that the revival work is being prepared in Europe.

Today we have come to know Jesus as the beginner and perfecter of faith. He endured the cross and fought against our sin to the death. In our struggle of faith, we may look to this Jesus. Let us follow him, struggling patiently after his example, bearing the shame and the cross of God's mission. God lead you to fight like Jesus as high priest for the spiritual revival in Europe and to receive the crown of victory from the hand of our Lord Jesus.