



# **A Cloud of Witnesses**

(Hebrews 12:1-16 ESV)

# Hebrews 12:1-16 ESV

- **12** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
- <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

# Hebrews 12:1-16 ESV

- <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. <sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?
- “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.  
<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” [Proverbs 3:11-12]

# Hebrews 12:1-16 ESV

- <sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
- <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.
- <sup>9</sup> Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.
- <sup>11</sup> For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

# Hebrews 12:1-16 ESV

- <sup>12</sup> Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.
- <sup>14</sup> Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; <sup>16</sup> that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

# I. The Spectators: So Great a Cloud of Witnesses (12:1a)



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# I. The Spectators:

## So Great a Cloud of Witnesses (12:1a)

- “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (12:1a)
- By faith **Abel** offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous (11:4)
- “By faith **Enoch** was taken up so that he should not see death” (11:5).
- “By faith **Noah**, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household” (11:7a).
- “By faith **he [Abraham]** went to live in the land of promise” (11:9a).
- “By faith **Sarah** herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised” (11:11).

# **I. The Spectators: So Great a Cloud of Witnesses (12:1a)**

Come, let us join our friends above  
Who have obtained the prize,  
And on the eagle wings of love  
To joys celestial rise.  
Let saints on earth unite to sing  
With those to glory gone,  
For all the servants of our King  
In earth and heaven are one.

--John Wesley (1703-1791)

**II. The Event: “let us also lay aside every weight . . . and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1b)**



## **II. The Event: Run Your Race of Faith (12:1b)**

- **“let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1b).**
- “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
- “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup> that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19-20).
- “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

### III. The Pacesetter



# III. The Pacesetter:

## Keep Your Eyes on Jesus (12:2)

- “looking to **Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith** (12:2)
- <sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because **he has given us of his Spirit. . . <sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us**” (1 John 4:13,19).
- “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, **according to the power at work within us**” (Ephesians 3:20).
- “And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

# III. The Pacesetter:

## Keep Your Eyes on Jesus (12:2)

- “who for **the joy** that was set before him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2).
- Jesus endured the cross for us, his “joy”
- <sup>24</sup> “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. **By his wounds you have been healed.** <sup>25</sup> For you were straying like sheep, but have **now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls**” (1 Peter 2:24-25).

## IV. The Cheers: It's Hard but You Can Do It!



## **IV. The Cheers: It's Hard but You Can Do It! (12:3-14)**

- <sup>3</sup> “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted” (12:3).

## **IV. The Cheers: It's Hard but You Can Do It! (12:3-14)**

- <sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.
- <sup>29</sup> He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.
- <sup>30</sup> Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
and young men shall fall exhausted;
- <sup>31</sup> but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:28-31)

# **Discipline (training) produces discipline (self-control and confidence)**

- “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.  
<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.  
<sup>11</sup> For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it  
yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”  
(Hebrews 12:5-6, 11)
- <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but let us also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering  
produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3-4)

Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet (12:12-13)



## V. The Prize



## V. The Prize: Spiritual Rewards (12:14-16)

- Peace with others (12:14a)
- Holiness (12:14b)
- Leading others to God (12:15a)
- Avoiding/resolving internal division (12:15b)
- <sup>14</sup> Strive for **peace with everyone**, and for the **holiness** without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain **the grace of God**; that no **“root of bitterness”** springs up and causes trouble (12:14-15)

## **V. The Prize: Spiritual Rewards (12:14-16)**

- **Placing spiritual pursuits above material/sensory/“worldly” pursuits**
- <sup>16</sup> that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. (Hebrews 12:16)
- **The “fruit of the flesh”:**
- <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness (Galatians 5:19-21)
- **The “fruit of the Spirit”:**
- <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-24).

## **V. The Prize: Spiritual Rewards**

- <sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup> Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

# The Celebration



# The Celebration:

## Worshipping the Lord (12:27-29)

- <sup>27</sup> This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.
- <sup>28</sup> Therefore **let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken,**
- and thus **let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,** <sup>29</sup> for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:27-29)



**Let Us Pray**

