

The Christian Pattern

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Robert P. Myers

Hebrews 12:1-3

These verses are about how to be a Christian. Chapter 11 which preceded this text tells the stories of dozens of heroes of the faith and makes mention of the testimony of thousands who faced challenges that would wither the courage of any who are not empowered by the infinite strength of the Holy Spirit of God. We read of well known Bible characters and the trials of faith they faced and how they overcame, and how God approved of their deeds of faith. We also read statements about the multitudes of the unnamed who fought and won; those who got a victory over trials and sin and obtained a good report. Now, the amazing thing about all these that are spoken of in Chapter 11 is that they were approved by the Lord for their perseverance in faith, never having seen the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They, without having observed the coming of the Lord and without a historical panel of witnesses who had seen it, nevertheless believed in the same Christ we do without the supporting evidence that we now have.

With that enormous example before us, we come to Chapter 12 and its opening words. And that is where I want to open this message. I pray that we can see:

1. The Provocation To Faithfulness Presented by the Cloud of Witnesses
2. The Necessary Things That Will Enable Us to Follow Their Example
3. The Vision That Empowers Our Task

I. The Provocation To Faithfulness Presented by the Cloud of Witnesses

- They all gave their allegiance to an invisible kingdom
 - > 11:27 - (Moses) “endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”
- They all viewed themselves as pilgrims and strangers on earth
 - > The testimony of God about the faithful was this: “(they)...confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”
- They all heard God’s message and obeyed
 - > Heb. 11:7 - “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, **moved with fear**, prepared an ark to the saving of his house....”
 - Heb 11:8 “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed....**”
- They all believed in a miracle-working God
 - > Sarah conceived a child after menopause
 - > Joshua and the warriors of Israel saw the walls of Jericho fall down without one stick of dynamite or mortar round
 - > Moses and Aaron saw a staff turn to a snake, saw rivers turned to blood

- > They saw the Red Sea part
- > They all faced extraordinary life-trials, of different sorts
 - Noah was preoccupied with shipbuilding for 120 years.
 - Noah saw the world destroyed by water and had to start a new house, modern conveniences, and a community and its industry from scratch
 - Abraham had his entire routine uprooted by a careless nephew whom he had to quit his business and go rescue when the kings raided Sodom
 - Moses and the believers among the children of Israel tramped around in the wilderness 40 years
 - David hid out in caves and isolated wilderness
- If we could detail the lives of these believers of the past, we could talk about hardship, sorrow, grief, trials of every sort, sickness, pain, death, dishonor, and every sort of challenging experience. If there was something to be suffered while living here as children of God, they could tell the story about it.
- These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but seeing them afar off. Because God intended that we should be partakers of the completeness of the heavenly hope, being believers in the age of grace.

II. The Necessary Things That Enable Us to Follow Their Example (“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....”)

- Lay aside every weight (Gr. Oikos = a bulging load)
 - > the beauty of inspired scripture is that it does not limit what the definition of a weight is by giving us a list. This admonition is about making a personal assessment and identifying what weights press us down, and dealing with those.
 - Weights that might fit this class of things are:
 - Worry
 - Distractions caused by earthly things
 - Erroneous doctrine that causes confusion and uncertainty
- Lay aside the sin (hamartia: a sin; singular) which so easily besets (euperistatos: Gr.= competitor thwarting a runner in a race) us
 - > That besetting sin is that competitor that crowds us off the track, gets in the way and makes us stumble; obstructs our clear path and slows us down
 - > That besetting sin is that intruder into our space who distracts us from the spiritual race
 - > The problem with the besetting sin is that it is always one that preys upon our internal weakness
 - > Scripture tells us that laying aside sin is suffering: (1Pet. 4:1) Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: **for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;**

■ Run with patience the race that is set before us
suggestion here that there may be a tendency in us to be impatient about weights and besetting sin

- > patience is essential because we are between the starting gate and the finish line, and we really don't know how long the track is
- > patience is essential because we need the endurance that patience brings
- > patience is essential because in our human condition we will find ourselves taking up other weights, discovering other besetting sins.

III. The Vision That Empowers Our Task (“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”)

■ Author (chief leader)

■ Finisher (completer)

■ The inspiration of the author and finisher:

- > His view of His service to God and His brethren: “...who for the joy that was set before him...”
 - James 1:2 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (Gr.= peirasmos = adversity, trial, testing)
 - Jas 1:3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”
 - Heb 10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

■ His inspirational behavior, sacrifice, and endurance of the harshness of His service (“...endured the cross, despising the shame...”)

- > Let's compare our worst adversity; our worst trial; our greatest burden with the experience of Christ on the cross
- > Let's compare the most shameful thing that happens to us with the shame of Christ charged with being a condemned felon, spit upon, mocked abused, denied footing on the earth, executed by a method that was declared to be cursed of God