

The Battle with Fear and Doubt

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We recently considered the struggle we face with self, or more accurately our self-will. Jesus taught that we must bear our own cross. Cross bearing involves the willful surrender of our will to God's will. Jesus said, "Not my will, but your will be done." Cross bearing is volunteer. We must "Take up our cross." To fulfill God's will, we must sometimes forfeit our perceived rights and privileges. We must be willing to serve unselfishly, and we must love with the love of God. All of this requires Christ! Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow Me." Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.

We must not deceive ourselves in thinking the road of faith is uncharted water. There are many who have traveled this way before us; men and women whom God called and chose for His purpose. I'm speaking now of men and women who lived before Jesus (the Old Testament). These did not have the advantages that we have today as the church. We look back to the cross and see the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. We see Jesus, His death, His resurrection, and the revelation of God's salvation. The Old Testament saints did not live to see these promises fulfilled, yet they were found faithful. Today, we have their witness. God has preserved their testimonies for us in His word.

The author of Hebrews is writing to members of the church whose faith is on trial. He calls the O.T. saints to the witness stand to convince the jury (the church) of God's faithfulness.

Hebrews 12:1–2 (NASB) —

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Here, we are exhorted to accept the testimony of these witnesses. We must presume that each of these witnesses, like us, experienced personal struggles in their faith. Therefore, the exhortation says, "Let us also." They too, had to lay aside the things in their life that proved to be a hindrance (encumbrance) to their faithfulness to God. Along with getting rid of these weights, we must also overcome "the sin" which can so easily entangle us and keep us from "running the race" which has been marked out for us to run. This race which has been marked out for us is God's purpose and will for our life. What is this particular sin? The answer lies in the context. The author has been dealing with the very important subject of faith.

Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

Without faith it is impossible to please Him (God).

What is Faith? Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Now consider...Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised.

However, "All these gained approval through their faith". - Hebrews 11:39

These died in their faith, but their faith did not die. They finished the course which God had marked out for them. They became God's witnesses to the world and to the church. They are God's witnesses because they endured faithfully.

The sin which so easily **entangles** us is doubt or faithlessness. This word entangle means to surround us and to keep us from moving forward in the race of faith. Other translations use the words beset, encompass, and cling closely to.

When faced with a trial, doubt can so easily overthrow our faith. Closely linked to doubt is fear. Fear is such a powerful weapon of the enemy. Fear can so quickly overcome us and surround us causing us to be filled with doubt. Here, God's word arms us for combatting and overcoming the sin of fear and doubt.

First, we must trust the witness of God's word; the witness of faith demonstrated in the lives of God's faithful servants. We serve the same God of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the prophets, and many other faithful men and women of God "Of whom the world was not worthy." -

Hebrews 11:38

Throughout the history of the church, they have been many faithful men, women, and servants of God.

Hebrews 13:7 (NASB)

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

The road of faith is not uncharted water. God has provided witnesses to His faithfulness. Unfortunately, some have injured the faith of others and the witness of the church through their unfaithfulness. We must not make the fatal mistake of putting our trust in man. We must "Fix our eyes upon Jesus." He is the author and the finisher of our faith.

In the onset of fear, call upon Christ! We can speak His authoritative name into our circumstances. There is power in His name when we fully trust in Him. He is the Son of God, He has all power to save those who believe in Him, and He will never leave or abandon us. He has conquered Satan, sin, death, Hell, and the grave. *"For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Fear is not from God.

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

"For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Most modern translations uses the English word "self-control" to translate the Greek word *sōphronismós* (so_frone_is_mose). In the KJV and NKJV it is translated "Sound mind". Both words are correct. When we combine the two, we can get a good understanding of their meaning.

According to scripture, we can exercise self-control over our mind by placing our faith in the truth and making the choice not to listen to the lies of the enemy. Fear is earthly and carnal. We must rely on Christ and tap into the divine nature given to us from God in Christ.

God has marked out a plan for our life. We must diligently get rid of anything that weighs us down and hinders God's work in us and God's work through us. We must not allow the enemy to encompass us with fear and doubt. We must take up the shield of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy.

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."