

Enduring Faith

Pastor Gilbert Silva - 9/10/23

Hebrews 10:35-36 (NLT) So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! ³⁶ Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.

Have you ever experienced interior challenges that were so disheartening that you wanted to forsake the faith and return to your old habits of life? Have you ever endured problems that were so terrible that you began to doubt your faith in God?

Have you ever felt so hurt by the comments of others in the church that you wanted to leave and never return? Have you ever prayed for something and never received an answer, making you want to give up on prayer and confidence in God?

These kinds of difficulties are not unique to us. The scriptures are full with examples of people who had to endure and persevere in the face of some of life's most difficult interior and exterior challenges.

The one thing most of them have in common is that they refused to give up on God, regardless of the personal shortcomings or life difficulties they faced. Although their faith in God was tested, they never gave up.

How do we stay away from giving up or quitting when it comes to our faith? Where can we find the motivation to continue walking with God when everything around us seems to be going in the opposite direction?

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage believers facing a second cycle of persecution to reject the pressure to return to their old belief system and to persist in their new faith in Christ.

Hebrews 10:32-34 (NLT) Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. ³⁴ You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.

The writer reminds them that they made it through the first round of persecution and challenges and if they applied the same faith and perseverance they would make it through this second round.

Hebrews 10:36a (NLT) Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will.

Patient endurance – *hupomonē*

(Strong's concordance) (cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy, perseverance.

It is the word that describes a man or woman who is unmoved by even the most severe trials and afflictions in his or her commitment and devotion to God.

Where do we get this kind of cheerful, hopeful endurance?

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

1. Learn from those who have lived the life of faith

All of the heroes of faith listed in chapter 11 are now referred to as a great cloud of witnesses.

The writer's picture is that of an arena in which the Christians whom he addresses are contending in a race, while the cloud of witnesses, who have kept the faith and finished their journey on earth, watches the contest from the surrounding rows of the arena.

The witnesses are the heroes and heroines of the previous chapter and, changing the metaphor to more biblical terms, we are watching them for encouragement rather than them watching us in examination.

Witnesses does not mean spectators, but those who have borne witness to the truth.

What are the truths they bear witness to?

- **They bear witness the fact that their faith in God was not misplaced.**

They may have experienced times of personal failures and weaknesses but God never failed them.

- **They bear witness to the sufficiency of the grace of God.**

They were just as human as we are yet but the grace and strength of the Lord they remained faithful to the end. God was at work in them and through them. He was the author and finisher of their faith.

- **They bear witness to the faithfulness of God to His promises.**

These witnesses didn't quit but persevered to the very end, keeping the faith and remaining faithful to the one who called them to His service. They kept their eyes on God.

The challenge to the believers he writes to is for them to keep moving forward in their faith in Christ.

2. Strip off those things that slow you down

Using the picture of a runner the writer wants us to understand that we will not endure in the race unless there is a willingness to 'run light' and be rid of sins and useless ways that hinder progress.

Hebrews 12:2 ... let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.

3. Keep your eyes on Jesus our primary example

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV) 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.

- **He is THE AUTHOR OF FAITH**

The great object on which we are to fix our gaze, all through life is — Jesus.

How do we look to Jesus? By trusting in that which He has did for us. It is described in these words: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame."

He ran first to pave the way for us to get into the race. "Looking unto Jesus," we are to trust Him as our Savior.

Learn to live in the shadow of the cross. Never take your eyes off what it took for us to get into the race called the Christian life.

- **He is THE FINISHER OF FAITH.**

As Jesus is at the start of our course, so He is at the end of the course, the rewarder of those who endure to the end.

Those who would win in the great race must keep their eyes on Him all along the course, even till they cross the finish line.

We are helped to run to the end, not only by what Jesus has done for us, but by what Jesus is doing in us.

- **He strengthens us.** His grace and power are behind everything we do.
- **He inspires us.** When we look to what He endured and keep our sight on Him our hearts burn with passion and we are motivated to run like the deer.
- **He draws us by His love.**

What was this joy that Jesus anticipated? The excitement of man's reconciliation with the Heavenly Father. He knew that His sacrifice would clear the road to the Father.

Serving God is not easy, but what motivates me is His love for me, demonstrated by His willingness to provide His only Son as a ransom for my sins and a means of regaining my soul's freedom.

Conclusion: Hebrews 10:35-36 and Hebrews 12:1-2 remind us of the importance of enduring faith, especially in the face of challenges and adversity.

We are encouraged to learn from those who have gone before us, let go of the weights that hinder our progress and fix our gaze on Jesus as both the author and finisher of our faith.

Our faith is not just a one-time decision, but a continuous journey that requires perseverance, trust and reliance on God's grace. Looking at Jesus as the ultimate example and source of strength is the key to staying steadfast in our faith.

He is the one who not only paved the way but also sustains us throughout the race of life.