

J.J.

FAITH FORWARD

Hebrews 12:1-2

Hebrews 12: 1 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, 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. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Pray

(Show video of marathon in Canberra crawling to the finish line.)

There were a lot of people finishing a marathon. You can even see a dad carrying his two kids to the finish line. But there was this man who was crawling to the finish line, barely even making it. The most important thing is they finished the race.

According to RunRepeat, Throughout the world, about 1.1 million runners finish a marathon each year. That equates to approximately 0.01% of the global population. So excited to be joining the 0.01%.

But to those who join a marathon and since you trained for it, around 87% to 97% finish the race.

And that's what we're going to continue today.

QUICK REVIEW.

For the past 2 Sundays, we've talked about how we can become part of the Hall of Faith.

Hebrews 12: 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses

As we all know, when we see the word, "therefore", it means, "there's something before" It was talking about Hebrews chapter 11.

Paul said *since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses*

The clouds "nephos" is obviously a metaphor. It means, if you look into the heavens, there are many people who has gone before you based on Chapter 11 that has shown their faith in God EVEN IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION, CHALLENGES, SUFFERINGS, UNCERTAINTIES OR CIRCUMSTANCES THAT THEY CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEY CONTINUED TO TRUST AND OBEY HIM.

Which brings us to how we can be part of the Hall of Faith.

THROW. RUN.SET

I. **THROW**

let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

What are the things that God is asking you to let go or you need to let go in your life?

Etymology : throw “apotithemi” apo “separate” tithemi “put”... This means “throw it away”...separate from it... hiwalayan mo nay an.

In KJV: “lay aside every weight”

It’s anything that hinders your relationship with God or anything that doesn’t please God.

Let’s not make any excuses about it. The sooner we let go and throw it away, the better for us.

Then we talked about

II. RUN

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

Obviously, this talks about a long distance race.

- Run with power.

Etymology : *run* trecho (trekrho) **it means run but it also means giving all your effort. Giving your very best to God.** Your best time, your best effort.

- Run with perseverance

with perseverance the race

Etymology: perseverance (patience in KJV); hupomone ; - to endure is the root word but the actual meaning is to be steadfast.

Continue to trust, follow and obey the Lord even if the going gets tough.

Etymology : race “agon” where we get the word “agony” “agonizing” ...there will be struggles in the Christian life.

- Run with purpose

the race marked out for us,

Etymology : marked out (set before) “prokeimai” pro “before” keimai “ something that is laid down”

So this is something that is appointed to you.

Find out what God’s purpose for you why you are here on earth?

I’m sure it’s not just about to get up in the morning, work, or make money and that’s it. That’s a waste of life.

Our Lord said,

Philippians 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

We have discussed this before, the prize is Jesus Christ!

THAT'S WHY?

III. SET

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.

Etymology : fixing, looking “aphorao” apo (separate), horao (to see with the eyes)... literally, to separate your eyes... it means to turn your eyes away from other things and fix them on something.

Illustration : If you go into a restaurant, you will immediately know if a couple has just started dating. Their eyes are just locked on each other even if they're not talking.

Who should we fix our eyes on?

fixing our eyes on Jesus

Remember, the purpose of the writer of Hebrews is to encourage the Christian Jews who was being persecuted at that time.

Application : If we fix our eyes on Jesus, we will be able to weather any storm.

Biblical Illustration: The story is in Matthew 14, Jesus told the disciples to get into the boat and go ahead without him. It was night time and the winds were strong and the waves were huge and then they saw Jesus walking on the water. Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid. It is I.” Then Peter said... let the Word of God tell us directly.

Matthew 14 : 28 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

29 “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

Why did Peter sink? It's because he took his eyes of Jesus.

Application : Faith has to do with always looking at Jesus.

If we take our eyes of Him, we will lose faith.

A lot of people, the reason why they either lose their faith or get discouraged even in church is because they are looking at situation, people and problems instead of looking at Jesus.

Why fix our eyes on Jesus? He is the pioneer, perfecter and pattern

- **He is the pioneer of our faith.**

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer

KJV, version says, “author”

Application : This means, faith comes from Him. We will never have faith in the Father without Jesus Christ.

That's why it's very important that we study His Word, listen to His Word. Look at what the Bible says.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

When we look at the Greek word

Etymology : *arkheygas* “author” where we get the word “arch”, the leader, and *ago* “to lead” The leader who leads.

The other verses in the Bible it was used as “Prince” or “captain”. The prince or the captain is the one who leads the army.

This means, He is the one in charge.

Faith means just continue to trust Him, follow Him and obey Him and surely YOU WILL BE VICTORIOUS IN THE END BECAUSE HE'S THE ONE LEADING YOU.

TO CONTINUE :

- **He is the perfecter of our faith.**

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith

Etymology : *finisher; perfecter “teleiotes” (te-le-ay-o-tes)* - only time used in the Bible; root word is “teleiio” (te-le-a-o) to make complete, to finish.

Teleiotes – finisher, perfecter, completer.

What does this mean?

If pioneer/author “arkheygas” means that our faith in Him comes from Him and He is the one leading us in our faith in Him, the meaning of finisher, perfecter, completer “teleiotes” means He will make sure that we will finish the race!

Philippians 1:6 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.

Why would our Lord do this? And this is what I love this.

We all very familiar with this part.

Ephesians 2: 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. (NIV)

But the one thing that has enchanted me ever since I read this is verse 10

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (NLT)

Illustration : David Sculpture in Florence

This is considered “THE GREATEST SCULPTURE IN THE WORLD”.

It is the statue of David. It shows his stance before his fight with Goliath.

- It was sculpted by Michelangelo.
- The statue is around 14 feet tall.
- What makes it breathtaking is the anatomical accuracy – the veins, the proportion.

Now what makes it amazing is that it was sculpted in a single block of marble. Yes, a single block of marble! It took almost 3 years (1501-1504) with Michelangelo working on it almost daily to create this sculpture.

WHAT MAKES IT MORE AMAZING is the story behind it.

- It was started in 1465 by one sculpture named Agustino di Duccio. He barely worked on it.
- Another sculpture tried in 1475 named Antonio Rosselino. He started but cannot work on it.

WHY? It's because this enormous block of marble that they chose had a lot of imperfections.

So for 25 years, this stone has not been worked on because of its imperfections, it was rejected!

Until Michelangelo worked on it!

FROM AN IMPERFECT, REJECTED BLOCK OF HARD MARBLE CAME OUT THE GREATEST SCULPTURE IN THE WORLD IN THE HANDS OF A SKILLED SCULPTURE.

It's the same with God when it comes to our lives!!!

Other people will look at you as imperfect, rejected and hard to work and there's no hope for us BUT IN THE EYES OF GOD, HE SEES AND WILL MAKE A MASTERPIECE OUT OF US!

Biblical Illustration : When Peter first encountered Jesus and realized who He is, He said, “*Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.*” (Luke 5:8)

Did the Lord leave him? Did the Lord reject him?

How did the Lord see him and the other would be disciples with Peter? James and John, the sons of Zebedee – who were considered zealots.

Did he see him as an imperfect, rejected block of hard marble?

No! Others only saw a dirty, smelly, hot headed fishermen.... *THE LORD SAW THEM AS FISHERS OF MEN.* (Matthew 4:19)

Application: This is how we should look at people too. Some people we see as a piece of garbage but God sees them as a masterpiece. Let us not look at people as a piece of garbage, see them as THE MASTER'S PIECE.

HOW DOES GOD CREATE A MASTERPIECE TO THOSE WHO ARE SAVED OR CHOSEN?

- **He is the pattern of our 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. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

We have to remember again the context of the letter to the Hebrews.

- It was written to Jews who became Christians who were experiencing sufferings and trials at that time because of their faith.
- Since they were Jews, the writer spoke to them in a way they will understand through the Old Testament sacrifices.

Now in Hebrews 5, it says :

Hebrews 5: 7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

Now it doesn't mean, Jesus was imperfect and has to be made perfect. That's not the context here. What the writer is saying, it is because of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ which COMPLETED (MADE PERFECT...TELEIO...FINISHED) the work of God when it comes to our salvation.

That's why on the cross our Lord said, "Tetelestai" It is finished!

Note : I've always explained before that the word "tetelestai" was found in scrolls that contain a list of debts, which means "Debt has been paid...completed...finished". **But it is also said that word "Tetelestai" or "Teleo" is said by an artist once he finishes a masterpiece...It means.... "Yes, finally..finished...done...completed."** It's not a cry of defeat BUT A CRY OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND VICTORY!

LISTEN CAREFULLY So what am I saying here by God's grace? Since Jesus is the pattern on how our faith is perfected and completed through His suffering and death. GOD COMPLETED HIS WORK THROUGH THE SUFFERING OF HIS SON! IT'S THE SAME WITH US... GOD PERFECTS US, GOD COMPLETES HIS WORK, GOD MAKES A MASTERPIECE OUT OF US THROUGH OUR PAINS, SUFFERINGS AND OUR TRIALS!!!

That's why if you read the whole of chapters of Hebrews 12, God talks about as a Father who disciplines His children... and that word discipline in Greek, is not an easy term... it's a term that involves pain.

Remember, the metaphor here is of an athlete, running.

Illustration : I remember when Zak was training to run for a full marathon. He had to train his body by running daily, increasing his kilometers from 5 to 10 to 15 to 30 kilometers and he had to have a strict diet...that's not easy!!! If he doesn't do that, he won't be able to "complete or finish" the marathon. His trainer and his coach have run the marathon several times.

So how does God create a masterpiece and complete and perfect His work in us?

THROUGH THE PAINS AND SUFFERINGS IN OUR LIFE.

Biblical Illustration : Paul knew this when there was tremendous suffering in his life and he asked God three times to take it away. But God did not take away the suffering... But through this suffering this is what he wrote.

2 Corinthians 12: 7 Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Perfect – teleioo – finished, completed

Quote: “The very worst sin that has ever been committed was the murder of the Son of God. The very best thing that has ever happened in this planet was the death of the Son of God. And if God can make the worst thing, the best thing, He can make your disappointment, even your sin, even your foolishness work together for good. God has granted you a unique road to heaven. There are turns in your road, mountaintops where you have a wonderful view. There’s dark, dark valley where it’s cold and awful. There’s unique journey just for you. It’s all decided by the same love which first loved you in the first place. Don’t grumble about the road he’s leading you down because that’s exactly the road designed by Him to bring you safely to heaven.” - Pastor Stuart Olyott.

Illustration : Remember, the statue of David? Before it became a masterpiece, it had to be chiseled away for many years before it was finished and completed.

Don’t grumble during the times of the “chiseling”. Remember, when we are undergoing trials and sufferings and persecutions, **he is chiseling us** in order to become His masterpiece.

Remember,
HE IS CHISELING YOU TO BE A MASTERPIECE.
YOU ARE THE MASTER’S PIECE.
FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS!

S.G.D.