

Hebrews 12:1–2

#0318

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—July 22, 1977

And now, let's turn to Hebrews, the 12th chapter. I've been getting some wonderful blessings lately from these early verses of the 12th chapter of Hebrews:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, 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, 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” Hebrews 12:1–2.

This evening let us notice three things these lines tell us about Jesus and three things that you and I are to do. First, the three things about Jesus. In the second verse, He endured what? The cross. He despised what? The shame. And He is where? “Set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” He's arrived at the center of the universe, victor, triumphant over every foe. But He went by way of the cross. He “endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Now, these three things that tell us about Jesus are to inspire *us* to do three things. First, as Paul says in the third line of that first verse, we're to do what?

“...lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...” Hebrews 12:1.

And laying aside every weight and the sin which besets us, we're to do what? Run.

“...run with patience the race that is set before us” Hebrews 12:1.

And what are we to do while we run?

“Looking unto Jesus...” Hebrews 12:1.

It's looking to Jesus that inspires us to lay aside the weight; it's looking to Jesus that inspires us to run. And may I say right at the outset of our little study tonight, I hope if you get nothing else, you'll get this: that the place to look is not at your feet, but at Jesus. You may think that the way to keep from stumbling is to look at your feet, but that's the way to *sure* be stumbling. The way to run successfully this race is to look where? To look to Jesus, to look to Jesus.

Where are you looking tonight, my brother? What is your gaze fixed upon, my sister? Oh, look to Jesus.

Now, this says He is the Author and the what? Finisher of our faith. Faith is what enables us to see the invisible. We cannot, of course, behold Jesus with these eyes. A blind man can see Jesus just as well as you and I, with these eyes that we have because it's by faith, we see Him. By faith, we behold Him. And as we look with the eyes of faith, we see Jesus. And just as you cannot look north and south at the same time, so you cannot look at Jesus and yourself at the same time.

And faith comes by doing what? Looking to Jesus. He's the *Author* of our faith. Let's see how some of the other translations put that:

"...[He is] the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"
Hebrews 12:2 (*New Revised Standard Version*).

"...[He is] the source and the goal of our faith..."
Hebrews 12:2 (*J. B. Phillips New Testament*).

"...[He is the One] on whom faith depends from start to finish..." Hebrews 12:2 (*New English Bible*).

I like that. It's looking to Jesus that gives us what it takes to *start* the race. And if we keep looking to Jesus, we'll keep doing what? Running. And if we keep looking at Jesus, we're sure to finish. That's what this says. He's the One that got us going. He's the One that keeps us going. He's the One that's going to get us to the goal, the goal. Thank God.

"Looking unto Jesus..." Hebrews 12:2.

I want to repeat again what some of you have heard me echo from my dear friend, George Vandeman. He put it this way: "When I look at myself, I don't see how I could ever be saved. But when I look to Jesus, I don't see how I could possibly be lost." Isn't that precious?

What makes the difference? Where we look. When we look to man, trouble grows. When we look to God, trouble goes. Faith comes by looking to the Savior. Do you want to have faith? Look to Jesus. Do you want to have more faith? Look some more. Do you want to have still greater faith? Keep looking, keep looking.

Why is it that looking to Jesus inspires faith? Well, you notice Paul gives us three things about Jesus that looking to Him will inspire faith in us. First, He endured the cross, and He despised the shame, and He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Paul pictures the lowest point to which Jesus came and the highest point to which He's gone. And friends, you can't get any lower than where He went. No matter how low you are, He's there. And you can never get any higher than He *is*. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth [a paraphrase of Matthew 28:18].

So whichever way you look, your faith is inspired. Inspired first by the thought that He stooped so low to take your sin, to bear your burden of guilt. And then, as you look at His position now at the throne of God, you know that He has all the power necessary to lift you, to rescue you, to keep you going on that road to heaven.

“Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith...”
Hebrews 12:2.

So, he says:

“...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” Hebrews 12:1.

Paul is borrowing a figure here from the Greek athletes. Paul was an educated man. He knew many of the things that were going on, and he borrowed from time to time from the book of experience. He knew about these Greek runners that would run these long races to get a fleeting crown of laurel or ivy or myrtle. And he was acquainted with this practice that some of them had. A man who was going to go on a long-distance run, he would practice for weeks and months beforehand. And some of them would practice with weights hung around their ankles or strapped to their feet.

And you'd say, “Why on earth would they put weights on?”

Well, they were practicing. So, they would practice for days and weeks running with these weights. But when the day of the race, the real race came, what do you suppose they did? Took the weights off, of course, and they felt just as light as a deer with those weights off and away they would run to get the prize.

So, that's the picture that Paul is giving us. Since we are called to this race, let *us* lay aside every weight. This is no time to carry on our feet, or on our persons, anything that would slow us down or that would hold us back.

Now, he speaks also of laying aside “the sin which doth so easily beset us.” Another translation says, “The sin that clings to us.” Oh friends, doesn't sin cling to us? But bless God, by our choice, we can decide to lay it aside. Aren't you thankful? Decide to lay it aside. Where, I ask again, does the faith come to inspire us to do that? Looking to Jesus. He laid aside everything good so that we could be saved. Now, He asks us to lay aside everything bad so we can enter into His salvation for us. He inspires us with the motive to put away anything that would hinder.

Now, we're not only to lay aside sin but anything that would hinder. You know, the Germans have a proverb, “The good is the enemy of the best.” “The good is the enemy of the best.” Some people are going to be lost because they've gone to the depths in sin, in vileness. They just love the bad things, the wicked things. But there are going to be some people lost, outside the gates, not because of some terribly wicked things, but just they were satisfied with, shall I say, the good things of this world. They felt no need of Jesus. They lived for this earth, for its pleasure, its

riches. Not for its worst indulgences. They just wanted to do something good for themselves.

Of this type was the rich young ruler that came to Jesus sensing an emptiness in his life. And Jesus, in answer to his question “What lack I yet?” said, “My friend, you lack just one thing” [a paraphrase of Matthew 19:20–21]. Jesus invited him to lay aside the weight. What was it? Riches. Not bad things, but good things.

There may be somebody here tonight that Christ will speak to about something in your life that He wants to eliminate. He wants you to give up. And if He does, don’t argue with Him that it’s something good. It may *be* something good, friends. But I can tell you this. If Jesus points out something good in your life that He wants you to give up, it’s simply because He does not want that thing to hinder you in the race for the real prize, the glorious goal of eternal life. How often God has stripped men of their wealth, their fame, their position, in order that they might have this experience of running with Jesus a successful race.

The man who wrote these words was himself a wonderful example and illustration of this. Paul was a wealthy man, a member of the Sanhedrin, a leader in the Jewish nation. He was educated in the great languages of his time, a philosopher, an eloquent orator. But friends, when he met Jesus on the Damascus road, God began to show him what great things he must suffer for Jesus. And as Paul began to run that race, one by one, every weight was thrown aside. And he ended his life a poor man, leaving no legacy except the epistles he had written to the churches telling of the faith in Christ and the influence of his life that had transformed thousands through the grace of God.

Oh, my friends, what a race. That’s what he said at the end of his life:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I
have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me...”
2 Timothy 4:7–8.

Not a wreath of fading myrtle or ivy.

“...a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the
righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me
only, but unto all them also that love His appearing”
2 Timothy 4:7.

Do you love Jesus’ appearing? Then there’s a crown for you. Oh:

“Pilgrims on! the day is dawning;
Strike your tents, and homeward haste;
Sleep not while the blush of morning
Calls you on the desert waste.”
Old Adventist Church Hymnal (1941), #373, first stanza (partial).

Let’s be up and on our way to run the race for Jesus. What do you say? Let us gladly lay aside those things that would hinder.

Dear children and young people, God may point out things in your life which you've thought to do. You know, it's interesting the things that young people and children think of doing. I remember when I was just a little fellow. World War I was going on. I watched the soldiers in their uniforms.

I thought, "My, that's a wonderful life, to be a soldier."

I even got my mother, bless her heart, to make me some khaki pants that looked like khaki leggings. I thought it would be a great thing to be a soldier. I'm so glad I've enlisted in the army of Jesus. What do you say?

Boys and girls, what's your goal? What are you seeking to be? There's only one thing that counts, and that's to let Jesus have your life and let Him make you what He wants you to be. He will if you let Him. If you lay aside the weights and run with patience, the race that is set before you, Jesus will help you to reach a goal far higher and more wonderful than anything you've ever dreamed of. But it will cut across the natural inclination, for this is a race of love as well as of faith.

Now, Jesus says we're to run with something. What is it? With patience. You might wonder how we could run with patience. You might *sit* with patience, but this says do what? "Run with patience." The picture is not us sitting in a rocking chair, waiting for something. The word translated here "patience" really means patient endurance. In other words, keeping at it, perseverance, that's the idea, never stopping.

I like to think of a human heart, while we sit here pumping away, pumping away. Does it rest? Ever so slightly between the beats. But friends, if anybody's heart here tonight should take even a half-hour rest, you know what would happen, don't you? Ah, that's a picture of the Christian life. Resting? Yes, resting as we run. Never off duty, in a sense. We can never lie down and say, "Well, there's no temptation where I am."

If wonder if there's anybody here tonight came here to get away from temptation. Well, you brought yourself along, didn't you? Yes. And man's greatest temptations come from himself, not from other people. But thank God, while we're never off duty in a sense, we can run with patience. Not with impatience, not restlessly, not desperately, not feeling, "Oh my, I wonder if I'm going to make it."

While we have no time to waste, we have all the time we need, friends. We don't have to wear ourselves out. This is not a rat race. No, no. No, no. This is the Christian race, and we have all the time we need to get where we're going. But remember, not a moment to lose. So, we keep at it, resting as we go, day by day and hour by hour receiving the grace of God, the strength of Jesus.

And remember, what is the magnetic picture that keeps drawing us onward and upward? What is it?

"Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith..."
Hebrews 12:2.

“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it...” Philippians 1:6 (marginal reading).

Yes. We look to Him, and we say, “Yes, Lord, you did something for me. You died for me. You rose for me. You ascended for me. You’re pleading for me. I know that You love me. Lord, You’ve done something in my life. You’ve called me. You’ve helped me to respond in some measure. I’m sorry I’ve been so slow. But Lord, if you started it, I know you’re going to finish it.”

How many believe He will? May I see your hands? I want this to be very practical. You know what troubles some people? They’re afraid if they actually started to run very fast up this road, they might fall down. So, they either stop still, thinking that’s the way to be sure not to fall down, or else they move very slowly. I suppose a person could keep from falling down if he went about like this.

Makes me think of a turtle I saw going across the road in front of our car the day before yesterday. Donna slowed down to give the right of way to the turtle. He made it across.

But our text says, “Let us” what? “*Run* with patience the race.” Not just crawling, run. Of course, sometimes we have to walk before we run, and we have to crawl before we walk. We’ve all done that as children, babies, haven’t we? But dear ones, isn’t it time to quicken our pace a bit? And again, it comes by looking unto Jesus.

But somebody says (I mentioned it; I want to repeat it), somebody says, “I’m afraid I’ll fall.”

Well dear one, suppose you would. Suppose you *would* happen to fall. I’ve fallen more than once. Even since I’m a grown man, I’ve fallen. I mean literally, walking. Up here on one of the trails on the hill, I fell one day. I was running along the trail, stumbled on a root, and fell down. Hurt myself too. But I didn’t quit. I got up. Isn’t that what you’d do? Isn’t that what you’d recommend to other people? This is what Jesus is encouraging us to do.

Oh, my dear ones, what a foolish thing to lie in bed to be sure that we don’t fall in running the race. What a foolish thing. What a foolish thing to just sit in a rocking chair and watch while other people run. Perhaps cheer them along while we say, “No, I don’t think I’d better do it. I might fall.”

Well, you *might* fall. You don’t *need* to. Jesus doesn’t want you to. But dear ones, it’s far better to run the race if you fall a hundred times and finally get there than it is to just sit or stand to keep from falling and never get there. Agreed? Yes. And this is not making provision for failure. This is making provision for what to do in case you *should* fail.

I sometimes illustrate it with a spare tire. I carry a spare tire in my car. Do you carry one in yours? Now, that doesn’t mean you’re planning to have a flat

tonight or next week. It doesn't mean that you deliberately go out and run over a nail so that you can use your spare tire. No, no. But it just means that after you've done your very best, in case there should be a failure, a flat tire, why you're not held up out there on the desert or on one of these freeways. You've got what? A spare tire.

And thank God, Jesus has made full provision for two things: for victory so that we don't *need* to fall, and for saving grace if we *do* fall.

“...If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous...” 1 John 2:1–2.

My friends, Jesus has done everything to encourage us. What do you say?
Can you think of anything that should hinder us, friends?

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so
great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight,
and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run
with patient endurance the race that is set before us,
Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith...”
Hebrews 12:1–2 (marginal reading).

He died for me, He rose for me, He pleads for me, He's coming for me, and
looking to Him inspires faith and courage and hope and assurance. Let us thank
Him for it. What do you say, friends?

“My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, My Savior art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus 'tis now.”
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, #321, first stanza.

Now, this evening we're going to have some brief testimonies. “Well,” you
say, “Brother Frazee, how do you know they're going to be brief?”

Well, I'm going to ask you to be brief, and you'll do that, won't you? Yes. I'm
going to ask you to be brief so as many of us as would like (just you can begin
coming up right now and sit here on this front seat), and why not try to limit your
testimonies to one sentence tonight. You aim at that, and we'll see if you make it.

Can't you put into one sentence your love for Jesus, your response to His
grace and your determination to run the race? You put it in your words as the Holy
Spirit may lead. All right. Others may come while these are speaking.

[Man from congregation] I'm thankful tonight that Jesus has made the way to
heaven and to Himself so easy that the most ignorant among us can make it.

[Elder Frazee] Good.

[Man from congregation] Trials patiently borne, blessings gratefully received,
meekness, kindness, mercy and love habitually exhibited are the lights that shine

forth in the character before the world, revealing the contrast with the darkness that comes of the selfishness of the natural heart.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you.

[Man from congregation] I want to praise the Lord tonight for giving me the confidence of taking the patience that He gives us in our daily trials in our work.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you.

[Woman from congregation] For a good many years, this has been one of my favorite texts but I like it better than ever tonight. I want to keep on looking to Jesus. I plan to.

[Woman from congregation] I want to share this promise the Lord showed me this morning in Proverbs 1:23:

“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” Proverbs 1:23.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you.

[Woman from congregation] I’m just very glad for this message tonight, and in my studying this week I came across Proverbs 24:16:

“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again...”
Proverbs 24:16.

[Elder Frazee] Is that what it says? Read it again.

[Same woman continuing]

“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again...”
Proverbs 24:16.

I’m glad that when Solomon wrote this that he didn’t just end it with the just man falling but that he riseth again.

[Elder Frazee] Amen. Now, what’s that reference again?

[Same woman continuing] Proverbs 24:16.

[Elder Frazee] Proverbs 24:16. Put it in your notes. That’s the spare tire.

[Woman from congregation] I just want to say that I want to praise the Lord with all my heart for what He’s done for me. When I came here, I wasn’t even able to walk, and I was in horrible shape, and I can walk almost as good as the rest of you now, and praise the Lord I’ve accepted Him, and I just want to live His way for the rest of my life and my two children with me.

[Elder Frazee] God bless you, sister. We appreciate that ringing note of victory. God bless you.

[Man from congregation] Elder Frazee, for a number of weeks now, our windows in our little trailer have been getting a constant coating of dust from the cars of our friends who drive by, and for a number of weeks, I had it in my mind that, "Well, the rain's going to come and the dust is going to continue to come so I think I'll just let it go. I won't go out and wash those windows."

But finally, it began to sink into my mind, "Well now, that's just not the right way to think. Those windows should be cleaned by principle. I shouldn't wait until the rain comes. I should get out there so that I can have clean windows."

And it came to me tonight that too often I'm content to have a misty view of Jesus because of dust, the dust of ignorance, or the dust of discontent, or just wanting to have a lazy type of relationship with Christ. I want to clean the windows of my faith, my eyes, by a more concentrated view of Jesus through the Word of God so that I can run with patience the race that's set before me.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

[Man from congregation] Well, we all have enemies. We've got a multitude of them in the spirit world even if we don't know of any on this earth, and a verse that has been very precious to me from my youth is one in Micah 7 verse 8. It says:

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me" Micah 7:8.

This verse has encouraged me sometimes when I needed something to encourage me.

[Elder Frazee] Good. Now, that reference again?

[Same man continuing] Micah 7 verse 8.

[Elder Frazee] Put that in your notes. That's another one on what to do when you fall.

[Man from congregation] I love the book of Psalms, and the first message you find in the book of Psalms is in Psalm 1:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not..." Psalm 1:1.

Of course, it goes on to tell you what not to walk *in*, but this is a good text for those who want to run.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you, brother.

[Man from congregation] I'm thankful that this very week in times when I have fallen that as I looked to Jesus, He wasn't just looking back, but He was encouraging me to stand up and run with Him, and I'm thankful that when He looks, He does encourage us to walk with Him.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

[Woman from congregation] This verse tells us to lay aside every weight, and you know it isn't easy, and part of the problem is that we forget to read verse 4 that says:

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin"
Hebrews 12:4.

I pray that I will really resist *that* hard against the sin in my life.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you.

[Man from congregation] This morning as I was eating breakfast, I looked at the wall, and we have this little plaque about that big, and it says:

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" Isaiah 40:31.

And I really needed that, and tonight's message has brought that verse again to my mind to teach me patience, to help me to wait for the Lord's guidance and direction in all things. And tonight, I'm very thankful for that little plaque.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you, brother.

[Woman from congregation] Recently, I was running along one of our trails, and I stumbled, and I fell, but there's always something to be thankful about. I don't have very far to fall, so I don't get hurt very much, as much as anybody else would. And I'm thankful that the Lord, when we fall, we don't have to fall very far. The Lord's arms are right underneath us to catch us.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you, sister.

[Man from congregation] My prayer this evening is that God would quicken my steps, strengthen my muscles, keep my face toward Him because if I have my face toward Him, that's the only direction I can run.

[Elder Frazee] That's right.

[Man from congregation] I'm still watching children, and I see whenever they fall their parents sometimes pick them up like this. Do you think Jesus might do that to us?

[Elder Frazee] Thank you, brother.

“O, how I love Jesus, O, how I love Jesus,
O, how I love Jesus Because He first loved me.”
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, #248, chorus.

All right, dear ones. Now, as we close this service, we’re going to have prayer. And there may be somebody here tonight with a heavy heart. You’d like to run, but you’ve got a big weight. It may be a weight of sin, it may be a weight of guilt, it may be a weight of sorrow, of worry, concern. Jesus knows all about it. Would you like to bring that burden to Jesus? If so, just come. Come up here and kneel down. We’ll pray for you as you pray for yourself, and Jesus will pray for you.

Let’s all stand as we give this invitation.

“Come, every soul by sin oppressed,
There’s mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest,
By trusting in His Word.

Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now.

For Jesus shed His precious blood
Rich blessings to bestow;
Plunge now into the crimson flood
That washes white as snow.

Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now.”

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, #279, first and second stanzas.

Will He? Will He? Oh yes, my friends, He will. His arms of love are stretched out in tender invitation. Oh, how glad He is to see us come to Him with the burden.

“Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you”
1 Peter 5:7.

He loves you. He wants to take you, release you from that burden, and let you go forth with your heart at peace.

Now, you dear ones that are kneeling, we’re going to pray for you. The congregation is going to unite with us, and we’re going to ask Jesus to lift the burden. I know He’ll hear us. He loves you. He loves you with all His heart.

Will the congregation kneel with us, please?

Heavenly Father, we're so glad tonight Thou hast made the road plain and the directions simple, and we choose to look where you've told us to look and to walk and run the way of Thy commandments. We have no confidence in ourselves. Some of us have fallen a good many times, but we thank Thee Thou art ready and willing and anxious to lift us up and cheer us on our way.

Teach us tonight more than ever before that our hope, our security is in looking unto Jesus. Where we failed, forgive us. Just now, we pray especially for these who are seeking Thee because of some burden on their heart. Whatever the burden just now, may they feel the loving hand of Jesus as He cheers them, saying:

"...Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee"
Matthew 9:2.

"...Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" Luke 8:48.

May each one leave this little chapel tonight conscious of the forgiving, loving, saving grace of Jesus. We thank Thee in His wonderful name, amen.

Let's stand.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above all ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, #694.

A happy Sabbath to all of you! You're dismissed.

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