

This morning we finish the everyday people, extraordinary faith-
chapter 12:1-3-

All like stories of endurance

Be here thinking you can't endure

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This is what god's word says- **Heb. 12:1-3**- reading those verses, the first word is critically important- says therefore- I hope you have learned through the years the importance of transitional words- therefore is one of those words- it is if you are interested is a conjunctive adverb- I should know- I looked it up- it is typically placed right before the conclusion of an argument- the transition from Heb. 11 to 12 demonstrates this perfectly- Hebrews 11 by faith Abel, by faith Enoch, by faith Noah, by faith Abraham, by faith Sarah- then describes their faith actions- made a sacrifice, walked with God, built an ark, left a homeland, had a child- the question we ask is why are those stories and others recorded- fantastic stories- are they documented just so we would know them- to an extent yes- not the real reason- the actual reason is found in Hebrews 12- therefore since everyone mentioned in chapter 11 lived by faith and endured to the end- speaking for us specifically under hardships and trials we have not faced- if everyday people of OT can endure to the end- we can too- that's why God recorded Hebrews 11 for us- notice the sermon title- I placed you in it- You faith that endures- how do we have faith that endures- reading this passage 4 words came to mind- first word is

1. Remember- we are told we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses- the words used indicate far more than just the 18 names and unnamed people of Hebrews 11- surrounding us today is great, uncountable cloud- think of yourself standing in morning fog- it surrounds you on all sides- the same is true with believers you lived before us- now many read this verses- especially in light of the words run the race this way- we are on a track in stands around us are all these witnesses who died before us- there they are sitting in the bleachers cheering us on- go you can do it- keep running- as a heartwarming and touching image that is- don't think it is correct- they are not witnessing us run- instead they are witnessing to us today- after all it says about Abel **through his faith though he died he still speaks-** I think a much better analogy would be the planetarium at UNC- you walk in it, take your seat- above you is a screen- it is a semi-circle- it surrounds you- the presentation starts, the stars and galaxies start to move, you are there in the middle of it all observing and noticing the movements- the same is true here- though you are running the race you are the one remembering the witness of those who ran the race before you- here you are in your race- start to grow weary- you remember Abel and his faith to sacrifice- you remember Moses and his faith to choose- you remember Rahab and her faith to believe- you remember Joshua and his courageous faith- you pick up your bible and read story after story of the faithful who endured- not just- not just surrounded by people in the Bible- you are surrounded by the witness of people you know as well- I thought about the faithful believers that surround me- think of Dr. Harris one of my professors- think of friends like Nathan and Russ- think of my mother-in-law, Su- think of women like Lucille and Donna and Allana- think of you- as I remember their lives and the faith they displayed- remember the faith you have displayed- I am motivated

to endure in the faith- the first word is remember- the second word is

2. Discard- the discipline to run focuses specifically on what we must discard if we want to run with endurance- I know right now one of the big fitness trends is rucking- it is walking or jogging with a weighted backpack- or a rucksack hence the name- when they get finished exercising they take the rucksack off- if they go and run the exact route they ran before, they would run it with greater ease- they have laid aside the weight which slowed them down- like wise as we run our spiritual race we too must lay aside every weight and sin that would cause us not to finish the race- eventually we would collapse under the all the extra weight before we reached the finish line- told to lay aside- read that note the person responsible for removal- I am, you are- we must have spiritual recognition to know what is weighing us down- then we must willing choose to take it off rather than keeping it on- if we don't take it off, we can't blame God that we are struggling to run the race- I understand weight and sin to be two different categories- first we lay aside every weight that hinders- weight might not be a sin rather it is a hinderance as we run- it can be something good that would otherwise weigh you down spiritually- it could be a friendship, a hobby, a sport, social media, the pull of popularity or prestige- those things in and of themselves are not bad- until we spend more time on social media than with God or neglect family- at that point we must get rid of it-

Second we cast off any sin- all sins must be rejected over and over again if we want to run well and for a long time- the KJV translates it the sin which besets us- giving us the phrase besetting sin- making this a much more personal issue- again all sin is to be

avoided- hatred, pride, immorality, lying, gossip- all are sins- the personal aspect here is some sins ensnare us more than others- what has the ability to ensnare me might not ensnare you and vice versa- used this analogy before- lock me in a room which as many drugs as you can fit, the next day none would be gone- lock me in a room filled with boxes of kripsy kreme doughnuts and I'm going to play the odds you won't find the box or boxes I opened and ate a doughnut or doughnuts- this particular sin is more dangerous to us for it grabs us quicker than we would like or realize- like walking into a spider web, start failing your arms, twisting and turning before you know it, the web is clinging so closely to you- whatever sin it is hate, pride, immorality, lysing, gossip, envy it must be stripped off and left behind- it is easy to miss the promise in this verse- the fact we are told to lay aside the weight and the sin means it can be done- we can get rid of our sins- we don't have to be enslaved to them-

Recognize the patterns that cause you to sin

Place safeguards around you

Enlist a believer to hold you accountable

Walk in step with the Holy Spirit

Finally if you do sin, know we have a savior who is faithful and just- who will forgive our sins- and cleans us from all

unrighteousness- Jesus will remove the strands of the spider web of sin that entangled you- first is remember, second discipline, third-

3. Fixate- vs. 2 instructs us where to fix our vision- looking to Jesus- look is much more forceful than looking- it is to look at and only at- not looking at anything other than Jesus- the world is full of distractions today- it is easy to not see Jesus- the original audience is suffering as being a Christian- considering to look other places for salvation- read fix our gaze on Jesus- it is talking

about salvation- there is nowhere else to go to be saved- why then after looking for Jesus for salvation would you during the middle of the race look somewhere else- to drive the point home the author says look what Jesus did-

notice he says Jesus- the author deliberately changes between using the title Christ, messiah, and earthly name, Jesus- because the author directs their attention and ours to how Jesus physically endured during his earthly life- yes the race before us can be difficult at times- however Jesus race was much more difficult than ours- Jesus knew the cross was in his future- **Luke 9:51 Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem**- never stopped- Jesus endured the physical pain of the cross for you and me to be saved- crucifixion horrible and painful way to die- compare to capital punishment?- also the shame- hard to image more shame attached to one method of execution than another- crucifixion reserved for the worse criminals- it brought shame not just on the criminal but the family also- at no time did Jesus stop running his race- knowing what was ahead for him- Jesus was willing to bear the shame for you to the point of death, are you not willing to bear the shame of being identified with Jesus-

moreover he counted this as joy- why would Jesus consider that type of abuse and death joy- Jesus faith perfects our faith- told Jesus is the source and finisher of our faith- read he is the founder or pioneer- Jesus goes before us- and all the OT saints as well- **Jude 5 says Jesus who saved a people out of the land of Egypt**- Jesus always goes before his people- the reason we can be glorified is Jesus went before us- in his perfect obedience to the Father Jesus was commended by the father and glorified by the Father- Jesus glorification makes it possible for us to be glorified- He was the

first the pioneer- he is also the perfecter- brings our faith to a successful conclusion- Jesus did this on the enduring the cross, despising the shame then after his victory there he sits down at God's right hand- faith is now complete- watch this- in Hebrews Jesus is both the great high priest and the perfect, final sacrifice- here the founder and finisher join together- before Jesus to be accepted by God you go to the temple, take a lamb, priest makes the offering- now the way to be accepted by God is through Jesus death, burial, and resurrection- again for us today and the OT saints- Jesus brought faith to its ultimate goal- Jesus is the new and living and the only way to approach the Father- while the faith of everyone in chapter 11 was awesome- the faith of the people you thought of early was incredible- Jesus faith is supremely and infinitely more powerful for his faith, not theirs, perfects our faith because he endured to the point of death for you and for me- we remember, discard, fixate, finally

4. Consider- told to consider Jesus- specifically consider the hostility he endured- Jesus' life was not one big everyone rejoice the Messiah is here- patted on the back wherever he went- people saying we believe every time he passed by- no Jesus was mocked, laughed at, beaten, accused of being possessed, betrayed, ridiculed- now you know I don't like the comparison game- you are both better and worse than someone else- this is the one time we can- it we can do that because this is God's word- his word is true- have an instruction in this verse- Consider Jesus- consider all that he went through- now consider your life- not downplaying any trial or difficulty you are facing- in comparison to Jesus is it that hard- Jesus is the par excellence of endurance- all the way in obedience- all the way to the cross- all the way to death- a British minister from the late 1600's put it this way- **We must consider him,**

meditate much upon him, and reason with ourselves from his case to our own. We must compare Christ's sufferings and ours; and we shall find that as his sufferings far exceeded ours, in the nature and measure of them, so his patience far excels ours, and is a perfect pattern for us to imitate.- that is what we do- do it for the purpose of enduring- not grow weary nor fainthearted- look Jesus in **John 16:33** acknowledge we would have troubles in this world- now Jesus tells us when you experience this troubles look to me- consider me- consider how I endured, I made it- Jesus is pulling for you to make- he is pulling for you to make it because Jesus in that last part of the verse in **John 16:33 says but take heart I have overcome the world**- Jesus endured the race for you-

What are you facing this morning- Jesus says you can endure

Medical issue- you can endure

Finances- you can endure

Family issue- you can endure

You can endure because he endured for you- in just a moment we are going to pray and sing- during that time you can respond- perhaps you need to pray- come down front and pray- I can pray with you- perhaps you can't endure because you're not in the race- today is the day you can call on Jesus for salvation-