

Joy in Jesus

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Text: Hebrews 12:1-3

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Introduction: Open your Bibles to **Hebrews 12:1-3**. Tonight we are looking at how we can battle the distractions of this life through brokenness so that we can have "Joy in Jesus".

Hebrews 12:1-3, "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, 2 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".

These words were written for Christians about the continuing need for daily faith and daily repentance. I have noticed in our congregation and in the Lord's churches at large, that with all the extra pressures of the economic downturn and the new political scene, that people are becoming burdened and distracted. We have the great temptation to turn to the "pleasures of sin for a season" and easily beset by sin and worldliness in our lives.

Paul paints life like an Olympic race. He would have been quite familiar with them. He tells us to live the Christian life like an Olympic race: "run with patience the race that is set before us" (**verse 1**).

I. The problem: **Distraction** from the goal. There are many weights that easily beset us aren't there?

A. The goal is **apparent**: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (**verse 2**). We are running the race and at the finish line is our Saviour waiting. He's there. So as we run who are we to be looking to?

Don't ever forget that it is Jesus who called you into this race. It was His idea. He put you at the starting line. He will bring you over to the finish line! He is the "author and finisher of our faith". The goal is simply to look to Him.

B. The goal is **achievable**. Paul tells us that there is a great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us: "seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight..." (**verse 1**).

C. The goal is **attacked** every moment. There are **sins that weigh** us down! There are worthless attractions that distract us so often!

Matthew 7:14, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it".

Remember what God told the people through Moses after giving them the Ten Commandments? **Deuteronomy 5:32**, "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left."

II. The panacea: **Debasement**. Brokenness. You must lay aside the weights. Put aside the less important things. Be totally at Christ's disposal.

A. Brokenness is the only **Way**. "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us" (**verse 1b**). Is Jesus Christ the ultimate goal of everything you love and want in life? Or do you love this world for this world's sake?

My dear friends, we know so much doctrine and application, but let me ask you about your affections! What do you love. You may live according to the Bible's principles, but the Bible is not just a map for life. It is a book that turns our hearts from loving idols to loving God.

David said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

James said, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:6, 10).

B. Are you **Willing** to be broken? "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" (**verse 1**). Are you willing to lay aside everything that hinders you from seeing Christ?

1. Are there areas of your life that are **Dead**? They may not be outright sinful, but are they wasting your time?

Ephesians 5:16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil". Are you willing to lay aside those things that waste your time? I watched the testimony of Rachel Barkey recently. Rachel is a wife and mom of two young kids. And she has terminal cancer, nearing the end of a five-year battle. She is living each day with the reality that it could be her last. How would you live if you had cancer? You ought to live that way!

Romans 13:11, says "knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed". Wake up! Get rid of that which is dead and wasteful in your life.

2. Are there areas of your life that are **Doubtful**? You must put away any doubtful habits. "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (**Romans 14:23**). If you do something without the full confidence that it is God's will, then you are sinning.

3. Are there areas of your life that are **Destructive**? Are there areas of your life that you know are sin? Media again is a sly culprit. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (**Psalm 66:18**).

Psalm 129:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." This searching is for our sake. Look verse 1, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with all my ways*. 4 For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it*".

Proverbs 15:3, "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

III. The promise: **Delight** in Jesus. There is fullness of joy in Him. He is the vine, we are the branches!

What was the joy that was set before Him? Reconciling sinners to God. Look at **verse 2**, "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". Jesus went to the Cross so that he could have the joy of reconciling you to God.

Are YOU willing to go to the Cross for Jesus? Are you willing to die to this world so that you can be undistracted and delighting in Him?

Who is it that will satisfy us? Who is it that will quench our insatiable desire for joy? This world cannot offer it. It can only make you forget the problems of your life.

Put your eyes on Jesus! Focus on Him! Look to Him!

Conclusion: How do you Focus on Jesus?

1. **Leave** sin. Set aside the sin that weighs you down!

Begin with a broken spirit.

Back in the late 1800s, Evan Roberts was an unknown son of a coal miner. Evan Roberts, at the age of 15, began praying for the Spirit of God to move in revival. Even as a young man, he had no time for worldly entertainment and pleasure.

One close friend writes of him: "*Day and night without ceasing, he prayed, wept and sighed for a great awakening.*" In his diary, Roberts writes, "*for ten or eleven years I have prayed for revival*".

After eleven years of prayer, Roberts entered a meeting in which the evangelist Seth Joshua closed his meeting in prayer, and he said, "Bend us, O Lord".

At that moment, Roberts, with tears streaming down his face began to cry: "BEND ME! BEND ME! BEND ME! BEND US, OH LORD." Then God came upon the congregation with power that shook the place with a mighty movement of God's Spirit. He began to have meetings. People began to confess sin, pride, their love for the world, and they would repent and trust and confess Jesus Christ.

How we need to have an attitude at all times that says "Bend ME"!

2. **Look** for Jesus. Study the Word. Do not study the Word for doctrine. The churches of Roberts time were filled with good doctrine and spiritually dead people. Sound doctrine is like the tracks for a train to go on. Practical Christian living is like the housing of the train. But the power of Christianity is BROKENNESS and WILLINGNESS to obey and be used of Christ. Do not simply look for doctrine in the Word. Look for Jesus.

Remember what Jesus told the two on the road to Emmaus in **Luke 24:44**, "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."

3. **Live** for Jesus. **Hebrews 12:1-2**, "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, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith". Jesus' joy was the cross, so that he could demonstrate His everlasting love and mercy and justice. He took your justice and punishment. Go to the cross. End your ambitions. Let your one aim be JOY in JESUS!

Psalm 16:11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore".