

Faith's Focus

Living by Faith

By Pastor Pieter van der Hoek

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Hebrews 12:1-2
Preached on: Saturday, September 12, 2021

Heritage Reformed Congregation
685 Main Street South
Burgessville, Ontario N0J 1C0 Canada

Website: www.hnrc.ca
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/psalm27

As we come to the end of the series about Hebrews 11, we read the entire chapter of Hebrews 11 and the first six verses of the next chapter. This is God's word.

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report. 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. 5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. 7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had

opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. 28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. 32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

1 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. 3 For consider him that
endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied
and faint in your minds. 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving
against sin. 5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto
you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,
nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he
chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Dear congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Christian life, as we know, is a battle and we have heard from the previous chapter, Hebrews 11, that some conquered kingdoms and they conquered it through faith in ultimately Jesus Christ. We saw that also the picture of a pilgrim's road, someone looking for a city, that brings us all the way to the Promised Land when we walk this way by faith. It is, though, the highway to holiness. It is the way on which God strengthens us by his Holy Spirit to cast aside all those things that hinders, and tonight to understand that, we have in our text a wonderful picture as well, is the picture of a footrace, someone running, someone who is running for a race and wants to win a marathon. It's not just a sprint, just a little bit, quick. No, we are in there for endurance, for the long run, we should say. And as we are in there for the long run, some shorter, some longer, it depends on how many years the Lord gives us, we need one thing, we need focus. We need focus. Without the right focus, beloved, we will lose the race, and without focus we will not make such great progress, and without the right focus we either lose our way or for some perhaps it is we have never been placed in the racetracks, and if we continue in the racetracks in which we are, we will lose our way forever, we will be forever lost. And so these matters are matters of importance tonight, they are serious matters, and so let us listen to our text and with the Lord's help think about these words in Hebrews 12:1-2. Hebrews 1 where we read our text,

1 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.

So our theme is simply this, "Faith's Focus." First of all, we look at that cloud, what is that and what are they there for; and we then consider also the course, we are to run a race, what is this all about; then we consider especially concentrate on Jesus Christ, we look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

So this evening our text begins with the little word "wherefore," and we always need to answer the question wherefore is that there for? Why is the therefore at this spot? Well, it's to link what went before, chapter 11, it is there so that we continue to read with all these things in mind.

"Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." The apostles has in mind this great cloud of witnesses, these saints of the Old Testament who lived by faith, and that's what he calls this cloud of witnesses. Now this cloud of witnesses, the word "cloud" is a word picture here. It's a Greek word picture. We don't know this word picture, it doesn't necessarily make sense in our minds, but what it means is simply a great number of people, a great crowd, we could say, a large group assembled together and all these had one thing in common, they lived by faith in the promises of God, they lived looking for the future blessing of God, and they lived by faith looking forward to the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ. And they didn't receive the promise yet but we know that Christ has come and so we are to look to the same things, to the promise, we are to look to Jesus Christ ultimately.

And our text calls these people witnesses and we are surrounded by them. The picture here is someone who is running a race in a big amphitheater or something and is encircled by all these people. So these people of the Old Testament are there encircling us and they are there to encourage us to run the race. To run the race. There's Abel, he, by faith, offered a better sacrifice, a more pleasing sacrifice than Cain and it cost him his life. But he did so by faith. There's Noah, as we have mentioned before and as we have heard in the weeks past, an ark on dry ground, who is going to do that? He was condemning the evil world but he did so by faith. There's Abraham, his beloved son, the one he so loves God says, "Sacrifice him," and he trusts in the God who is able to raise the dead. And there's Moses, he says, "No, I don't like the wealth of Egypt. I don't like the status that comes with being Pharaoh's daughter. I want to belong to the people of God." Is there someone here tonight who says that, "I want to belong to that people that lives by faith and has such a glorious future awaiting them"?

So these are they, some of those are encircling us. We have considered that, haven't we. And what also is striking about most of these, many of them stood alone. They stood alone. Maybe you're sometimes tempted to think, "Am I alone in this?" Maybe, young people, if you go to university of college or if you are starting school or if you are in the workforce, you are the only Christian and then we are tempted to feel alone perhaps, maybe a little sorry for ourselves. It's difficult, it's challenging to stand alone as the only Christian. And our culture is not becoming more friendly to Christians generally speaking. Do we then pity ourselves? No, that's not what our text says. There's no room to pity ourselves but there is something that encourages us and that is all those people who went before us and have experienced that God by faith did things beyond what is possible in their own strength, that God was the God who is there with them, that God is the God who keeps his promises so that there's no reason to be sorry for ourselves. Yes, it is challenging in the world but we have to endure. We have to run the race.

We need to consider for a moment how large a crowd has gone before us, all these Old Testament saints, a great number, and we can multiply them. Through church history there have been those who have gone before us. Think about Augustine, for instance, or Chrysostom or Bernard of Clairvaux or Luther or Calvin or Reformers or the Puritans, or whoever they were, Spurgeon, or even more recent men of faith who have run this race

before us. They are there to encourage us, run this race with endurance. Some died for their faith, some lived and some saw the grace of God. Who do you have tonight in your stands? Who are the ones who encourage you, when you look to them, you are encouraged by their example, by their godliness? Maybe there is someone who says, "My parents. Yes, my parents. They were an example to me of what it meant to live by faith." Or maybe there is some pastor that has been greatly used by the Lord in your life, or a Catechism teacher perhaps. Or maybe there is someone who just someone maybe hidden who prayed for you and who spoke a kind word and who cheered you on and God used it, God used it to make you run this race and to put you onto the racetrack. He uses weakest means, they fulfill his will, and then people are made alive and they start walking on the racetrack to heaven.

How glorious that is and if you have such examples and such people in your life, thank the Lord for them. Thank the Lord for them. They should cheer you on, encourage you in the race. Not trip you up, that's sometimes will happen with some of us. They say, "Well, you know, my parents, they were so godly, I'm not that godly." And that's how they are tripped up and they start to compare. That's not what they are for, we shouldn't be starting to compare but we should start to look at them differently. How does the Bible teach us to look at these saints who have gone before? As encouragements to stir us up. Just as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, what does he say? "Be ye followers of me," imitators of me, do the same thing, yes, and then he adds this, "even as I also am of Christ." So if you see something in a godly person that is Christlike, yes, imitate that but think about it in terms that is because Christ with his Holy Spirit worked in this person and what he can do for that person, he can do by the grace of God for me, and let it encourage you to run this race and not discourage you. Look at them for just a moment but don't concentrate there. Don't concentrate there, for as soon as you start to look up to examples, then it can get unclear, it can trip you up.

There's two options that are very prone, our hearts are very prone to see. Either we despair, "I'm not that good," well, that's not the issue. Are you trusting in Christ? That's the issue. Or, "Well, look in that life, okay, that is not such a beautiful life in many ways. There's so many sins," and we are a little proud, "I'm a little better." No, that's not what it should do, neither one of them. No, they encourage us to walk by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and so this crowd encourages us and it encourages us to run the race that is set before us.

So that brings us to our second thought here. Our text continues to say this to us, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." So no pride, no self-pity. Endurance by the grace of God in the power of the Lord. Not in your own strength. Perseverance, that's what the Bible calls us to. Self-denial. Discipline, being self-controlled which is actually being Spirit-controlled, and killing our besetting sins, the sins that so easily beset us, as our text says. And this, beloved, is only possible if we are put on the racetracks because this is the race set before us, and let us notice, then, that God puts us on the racetrack and he says, "This is how you ought to race. This is how you ought to run." He sets it before each one of his children and perseverance, beloved, is not the root of faith, no, the work of Christ

is the root of faith, it's only the fruit when we persevere. It's all the grace of God if we persevere and God sets this race before us, this highway of holiness, he sets it before us and he says, "This is the way to heaven. This is the way to glory. This is the way to joy, everlasting joy, everlasting bliss."

Run. Run this race. And this word "race" means "struggle or fight or conflict or contest." So it's not easy. No, it's not going to be easy but it's worth it. All these Old Testament saints cry out to us, as it were, they're witnesses, they're testifying, "It's worth it. It's worth it." Run this race, this race of faith, and everyone who is put on this racetrack has this in common too, they battle against sin. Do you battle against sin? Sin has become something in your life that you want to get rid of and you live trusting in Jesus Christ and his blood and his righteousness alone and that keeps you going. That keeps you going.

Now we need to notice for a moment that some of us might not have been placed on the racetrack of holiness, the racetrack to heaven, and the sad thing is that if that is the case with you tonight, you are on the racetrack where? Yes, to hell. That's serious. The world around us on many occasions is racing and it's hurrying toward it. Oh, that our hearts would be stirred and say, "Lord, help us to be a light." But what about those in the church who have never tasted God's grace yet? Oh, that you tonight who are Christless, who has never trusted in Jesus Christ and only have your good deeds to cheer you on or your pleasures or that keep your eye away from Jesus Christ and the things here below, that fix on the things here below and the entertainments and the distractions, and the word is sown in your heart and it is choked by the things of this world, like a seed that cannot grow because there are weeds, oh, that you tonight would wake up and see your sad state. And Satan holds all kinds of rewards before you and says, "This is what you need, and this is what you need," and you go there and you have some pleasure temporarily and then it's gone. It's like a bubble. Oh, that you would cry out tonight and say, "Lord, place me on this racetrack on the narrow road to heaven rather than on the broad way to hell." But if you have been put on the racetrack to heaven, bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Then listen also to the encouragements tonight to fight sin. It says to us here "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Lay aside is that word that says take it off; stop doing something that hinders you in this race empowered by the gospel of God's grace. It is the believer and the believer only who can put off sins, who can say no to sins. Until we are regenerated, we are weak, we can't say no, but God can still make you say no even tonight.

Let us lay aside all the hindrances to faith and to holiness. What is it? There's two things in our text: first, every weight; and secondly, the sin that does so easily beset us. Now we have the picture in mind, maybe we should picture it in our minds, children, for a moment, there is this professional runner and he is putting his energy into the race and he's sweating and he is striving, and he is watching his diet, and he is watching his sleep, and he is exercising often, everything in his life is about running the race. Why? He wants to win. He wants to win the race. The Bible tells us so run that you may obtain, obtain the prize, win the prize.

How do we run? We run listening to the word of God, encouraged, empowered, corrected, strengthened by the word of God. It's the word of God that keeps us going and obedience to the word of God. We are serious and zealous on the racetrack and we are making progress. What is the progress? We grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and the salvation of Jesus Christ.

But there are also other runners who seem to not make progress. What is the problem? Well, can you imagine, children, when you are racing, you see maybe someone running who has clothes on that make them run as fast as possible, but there are people who have maybe the idea here is picture in your mind someone who has, for instance, who is trying to run and has a long, as in those days, a long flowing robe to the toes. Is that going to be easy to run with? And then there's all kinds of things that weigh this person down, all kinds of pockets filled with this and that and the other thing. It trips us up. That person falls. Little progress because the focus is on the things here below and the benefits and the enjoyments, what's in it for me, what are the circumstances. No, that's not how we should run. They should pay attention to the goal. We should pay attention looking to the author and finisher of our faith, as we hope to see in a moment. We should look to Jesus.

No wonder, if we fill our pockets, as it were, that we can be tempted to be discouraged and say, "Okay, it doesn't work for me and I want to turn back." But no, our text says to us we need in our lives this grace of ongoing repentance, this grace of humbling our souls before the Lord and laying our sins before him, and being serious in killing those sins and laying aside all those things that hinder us from seeing the beauty and the glory and the loveliness of Jesus Christ.

So that's what our text encourage us to, not to fill us up with weights. What are the weights? Maybe they're all things that are maybe legitimate but are not profitable for your soul because they distract you, they distract you from looking to Jesus. Those are the weights and the sins that so easily beset us, well, we know what sins are, they are against God's commandment, they are the sins that are close to our hearts. Just as that garment clings to your body, as it were, so these sins cling to us. They easily cling to us. They easily gain advantage over us and God says to us through his word tonight, "Put those to death. Throw them aside. Throw them off. Pluck out your right eye, however painful that is, that hinders you for running this race. Unbelief, battle against it. Ease and pleasure, battle against it if it keeps you from running this race. The desire to be esteemed or respected, battle against it. Fight against it, your bosom sins, the sins that so easily beset you that have a special place, you treasure them." Your secret sins nobody knows but God knows. The respectable sins of which people say, "Well, that's not that bad. Everyone does that. Don't worry." No, that's not what the Bible says. Let us lay aside the weight and the sin that so easily besets us. Crucify the flesh.

One Puritan, Thomas Watson, puts it like this, "If we do not throw off this weight of sin by sincere repentance, it will sink us into hell. A man cannot run a race with a heavy burden on his back." We have just finished or most of us have finished the Christian's "Pilgrim's Progress." Children, do you remember a heavy burden upon his back? Sin is

also such a burden. Then Watson says, "An immoral person cannot run the race of holiness, a proud person cannot run the race of humility, and a selfish man cannot run the race of obedience."

Run the race. Persevere. Persevere. That's what it says in our text, doesn't it? Let us run with patience, that's the word persevere, patience, the race that is set before us. Let us make progress. What is progress? We grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, as I said before, but we also grow in his likeness. We become less selfish by the power of God's Holy Spirit. We become focused on others and upon God and his word, and we become more gentle and loving and patient. The fruits of the Spirit are being seen in our lives. That is progress. That is progress.

And such a lifestyle requires patience, steady endurance. Go on. Keep on going. Don't stop. Don't give up. Don't be discouraged by hardships and circumstances. We learn to be content in whatever circumstances we are and why can we go on? Why can we persevere? It's not because we do such a good job. Absolutely, no. It is because God comes and he empowers us again and again in our weakness. Do we remember in our weakness we are made strong. In our weakness we are made strong and motivated to look away from ourselves again and again and again.

So that's how the true believer runs and steadfast and unmovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing it's not in vain. Why? Because Jesus Christ is risen and the power is living in us and that power is encouraging us. So what do we focus on? Our first point: we don't focus, we don't stay with people around us constantly focused, "What is this one doing? What is that one doing?" No, let them encourage us. Let them spur us on, yes. We don't focus on them. We consider them, yes. And let us not consider all the things that can hinder us. Our focus is not constantly on self, not on the hardships of life, not on our sinfulness. Yes, we need to consider those things, we need to repent of our sins. Let it not be on the circumstances of life. Let us not seek holiness to be found holy in the eyes of others. No. What is the focus? The focus needs to be one focus, concentrate all your attention on Jesus Christ and his salvation. Him alone. That's how we run the race.

Children, you are back in school, right, and there's math problems and perhaps you don't like it so much and you're distracted, you'd rather go and play and do something else, right? At times we have that, but what does your teacher say? Concentrate. Concentrate for a moment. Look here. Focus. Fix your eyes on the problems and fix your mind on the problem and get it done. Get it done. If you don't focus, it's difficult to do what you need to do, and don't fix your eyes and if you're constantly dreaming on this and that and the other thing and you're distracted, then the work doesn't get done, does it? No, we are to focus when we want the work to be done, and so it is in the life of the Christian too. We need to focus for the racetrack of faith. Not for a math problem. No, this is far more weighty than a math problem. This is the racetrack of faith. This is the way to heaven.

How much more important to focus and to concentrate? That's what our verse 2 tells 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." This verse tells us forget about everything else for a moment and fix your attention on Jesus Christ. Turn away your mind from the things that distract. Turn away your heart from the things that distract and turn it to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. It says here "our faith," but that word "our," as you can see in the Bible, it's in italics which means not necessarily "our faith," it's faith in more general. That doesn't mean that it doesn't include our faith, absolutely it does.

But Jesus is the author of faith. Now the word "author," we think immediately he gives us this faith and that's absolutely true, but the word here means more than that, it means that he has paved this glorious way to heaven for us. He is the trailblazer, if you will. He paved this way. The word that is sometimes used as well in other places in Acts, for instance, is "captain" who rallies on the troops, who says, "Keep on going, it's worth it! Don't give up, don't give in, don't go back, don't look away! Look to the reward." He's the leader, that, if you will, cheerleader who cheers us on. "This is the right way, walk in it. This is my way."

And more than that, this is the one who when this racetrack before us, he ran it and he made a glorious breakthrough through the cross and through the grave. He won. He won. He won the victory for all those who trust in him by faith. By faith.

Another word that is sometimes used as well for this word "author" is "prince." He's the prince who empowers us, who gives us life, who encourages us to keep on going. He's the captain of our salvation, as we hope to hear in a moment at another place, captain of our salvation. And we must look to him as we run this race. We must focus on the salvation that he has finished, on the victory that he has finished, and that is the only way for us to persevere, to run this race to heaven, looking to him, receiving strength from him, motivated by him not to give up because here's another word for this word "author," he is the pioneer, he is the first one who lived by faith all the time.

That brings us to the second word here, he's the "finisher of our faith." The word is "perfecter." He perfected it. He always did the will of the Father. He is so pure and so spotless and so without blemish, and he walked by the word with perfection, and he is the one who stands, as it were, to cheer us on. "I am perfect. Trust in me. Trust in me." He shows what it means that when there are threats that are hurled or insults hurled at us, what it means to live by faith. He stood before Pilate. And he shows what it means to truly love your neighbor, love God above all and your neighbor as yourself. He shows what it means to seek God's honor and he did so all the time. He shows what it means to persevere when it's difficult, when you feel you can't pray. He came with strong cryings and tears before the Lord and he was heard. He persevered. He depended upon his Father every second of his life, his glorious life of dependence and prayer and faith.

He's faithful. Look at him. He shows what it means to live in obedience and he gives of his perfect obedience to his children and we receive by faith what he has perfected. He is our life, our sanctification. He is everything. He is our all and in all. Focus on him tonight. He shows what it means to run the race with one focus. One focus, the future, the

glories that await, heaven itself where God will be with his people forever and ever. He shows what it means to persevere in the greatest of trials and hardships and he shows us and he says through his word, as it were, to us tonight, "Look, my child, lay aside every weight of sin. I paid with my own blood. Lay it aside, every weight, every sin. My beloved child, don't faint when you suffer or when you are chastened. I chasten every son whom I love. That's a sign of love. I set this race before you. Continue. Run it in my strength. Persevere. I persevered. Look at my perseverance. I persevered in your place. I ran the race perfectly now do the same. I empower you. Follow me. Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Trust me. Look to me. Look away from everything else. Look at me. Endure. Run. Put aside everything that hinders."

"But oh, my child, you must lay it aside. You must learn to persevere." How is that possible, Lord Jesus? Well, he shows us. He shows how this is possible for us. He gives the example again, more than an example is he, of course. He's the Savior but what does he do? He looks at that glory that is going to follow and he fixes his attention on it, the joy that is set before him. Yes, he is that man of sorrows and acquainted with grief but Hebrews 1:9 shows us as well that he was anointed like oil running over him with joy. His heart, there was joy in his heart. There was a love for his Father in his heart which makes your heart leap. Hebrews 1:9 shows us, "Thou hast loved righteousness." You see, that's the racetrack, righteousness. "Hated iniquity," he laid aside iniquity and the sin, he was sinless, I should say. "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." A quote from Psalm 45:7.

He is the man who is full of joy and glory was in his heart as he looked for the day to come, that day that lay in the future, that promise. What is the promise? What is this all about? What was he looking at? What could fill his heart with joy? Well, Hebrews 2:10 tells us, "For it became him," it was fitting for him, it was appropriate, "for whom are all things," everything was made by him, "and by whom are all things," he's the Creator, the Creator. Think about it, the Creator. It was fitting for the Creator to come, what to do, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain," that's the same word as "author" here, "of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Think about this. The joy is that he was going to bring many sons to glory. Many sons. He's the captain of salvation and he was made perfect, how? By enduring. By persevering, suffering the deepest suffering ever endured.

And he is the one who comes to us and says, "Now come and run this race and endure." And he's the one who leads us. And he's the one who says to us, "I'm bringing many sons to glory. Come along. Come along. Take up your cross and follow me and don't forget, don't forget what I had constantly in my mind. You are on your way to heaven, to bliss, to glory, to be forever with me. So whatever happens or however difficult, however painful, even if you suffer, focus just like me on the joy that is set before you, that future glory."

And so Christ went through suffering to glory, to everlasting joy, and that's where he is, and that's where he calls us to as well when he says to us through his word, "Now lay aside and run and run, endure. Run in the way of my commandments. Abide in me and I in you, so will you bear much fruit. Abide in my commandments and your joy will be

full." He had full joy. He had full joy, joy that cannot be fathomed, joy inexpressible, full of glory, and yet, and yet our text says he is that greatest man of greatest sorrows and suffering and acquainted with the worst of griefs, persevering, patient to the death of the cross. He endured the cross with all the shame that came with it, with all the pain that came with it, with all the distress, with all the wrath, and with all the curse that was due to our sin. He took it upon him and he bore it for many sons, to bring them to glory, to bring them to everlasting bliss, everlasting joy. And so he became that Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, and so he becomes that priest that sacrifices his own body with one sacrifice forever perfected to them that are sanctified. He perfected us with one sacrifice once and for all.

And so he can save us to the uttermost. What is it that hinders you? He can save to the uttermost. He gave himself to the shame and the spitting and the dishonor and the curse of the cross and what did he do with that? It says in our text he despised the shame. He looked down upon it and he said, "That's nothing compared to the joy and the glory that is going to come." That's how he dealt with the hindrances that were, as it were, in his way. No, it was not a hindrance, the cross what God's glorious plan but it was a painful plan, but he said about the shame and the spitting and all those terrible things that happened to him, "They are not to be valued compared to the glory that will follow, that one day when I bring many sons to glory."

So he went, strong cryings and tears, and he set his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem and he run this race and he persevered and that's why he can come alongside tonight and say to you, "Run," as a sympathetic high priest, "I know what it means. It's not easy. I know the pain. I know the difficulty. I know the hardship but run nevertheless, endure, it's worth it. Despise the shame. Endure. Take up your cross and just like me look, look for the joy, for the glory."

That brings us to the last sentence here where it says he is set down at the right hand of the throne of glory. Oh, what a glorious sentence that is. We must look to him. He is seated above all things. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords who has already won the victory. We can't see him with our natural eye but nevertheless we believe it by faith and the fact that he is already there should give us courage and boldness and joy and endurance that the fact that he has put everything under his feet, he is victorious already should encourage us to go on and endure and to look for that joy. He is already in heaven. He is already in eternal bliss. He paved that way for me, that's what faith says. He's that author. He's that perfecter. He's that finisher. And he will not leave me behind. That's what faith says.

As I seek to humbly follow him, he's finished, finished the work, and he is there. What is he doing there? He's there sitting, he's resting because he knows at the cross and the open grave his work is finished. The devil is finished, will be finished. All his enemies will be subdued. And he knows one day they will all be in eternal flames and he can rest. He has authority there in heaven ruling the world, is this place, the throne is this place of judgment. He judges righteously. But oh, for the believer, this is being a place in which we have been invited in Hebrews, "Come to the throne of grace. Come into the glory and

taste of my love and know that I pray for you. You are graven in the palms of my hands. Nothing can happen to you. I intercede."

So believer, what can still go wrong in your life? What can go wrong? If you trust in Jesus Christ, if you look to Jesus Christ, nothing can go wrong. He has promised to bring many sons to glory and he will do so. He suffered. He encourages us to endure and to run the race. His blood and his resurrection is sufficient and he will bring us to that place where we will forever worship him as King of kings and Lord of lords in everlasting bliss when we hear with joy, "Come, enter into the joy of my Lord, in the joy of your Lord." Oh, what a glory that will be. What a glory will fill our hearts. And if you have never ever seen Jesus Christ yet by faith, oh, that you would see his glory today, that you would see Jesus a little lower than the angels, made, why? In order to suffer death and shame and spitting and all the terrible suffering to bring many sons to glory. Oh, that you would see him tonight for the first time and that you would hear his voice who says also to you, "Lay aside every sin that so easily besets you in the power that I have earned," in other words, "Repent of all your sin." And not only that but he says also to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, look unto Jesus and you shall be saved." And look for the greater reward, the better reward, the crown of life that will be given to all those who have come with empty hands, with a sinful life, to the blessed hands of Jesus Christ, those pierced hands, and have learned to trust him, to look away and see Jesus Christ crowned with glory in honor on the throne and who crown him Lord of all as he occupies the throne of your heart and you run that race in his strength. Amen.