

Don't Give Up!

by Anton Bosch

This sermon from Hebrews chapter 12 emphasizes the importance of endurance in the Christian race, urging believers to lay aside every weight and sin that hinders them. It highlights the need to focus on Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him. The message encourages believers to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus, despise the shame, and run the race with endurance, knowing that He has already secured the victory for us.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 12:2, Hebrews 12:3, Hebrews 12:6, Hebrews 12:7

Topics: "Endurance in Faith", "Focus on Jesus"

Description

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Transcript

Hebrews chapter 12 and we're going to read verses 1 through 6. Hebrews chapter 12 reading verses 1 through 6. Hebrews 12 verse 1, therefore we also since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God for consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls you have not yet resisted to bloodshed striving against sin and you've forgotten the exaltation which speaks to you as to sons my son do not despise the chastening of the Lord nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him for whom the Lord loves he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives let's read verse 7 and if you endure chastening God deals with you as with sons for what son is there whom the Father does not chase so we're in verse 1 of chapter 12 one of the things that I need to remind you of again is that one of the biggest problems we have in reading the scriptures is chapter numbers and so I know how it goes we read chapter 11 and we get to the end of chapter 11 we say okay that's it close the book tomorrow we'll read chapter 12 but that's not how it works and so you see that verse 1 begins therefore so it's connected to what he has just said therefore we also so he has just spoken about the heroes of faith what we call the heroes of faith the great men of the Old

Testament of Abraham and beginning with with Abel of course and going through Abraham and Moses and all the others and the ones that aren't even mentioned and then he says we also so he is now connecting us to them remember we said at the right at the very beginning that the writer is a preacher he is not he is not an author in the sense that today there are Christian authors who can write very well but they don't preach too well there are others who can preach but they can't write this man is a preacher he happens to write very well but he is writing the way that he preaches and he preaches in an expository way so he does the Old Testament in chapter 11 and now he's going to bring the application so we've always got to be careful that we don't get so involved in the history and the grammatical context and everything else that the scripture says and we forget that there is an application and that that application has to do with how do I now live how do I apply this in my in my daily living one of the famous proponents of expository preaching in America says that it is not his job to bring application he says that's the work of the Holy Spirit all he has to do is say well that's what the text says that is the grammatical historical context that's what happened that's what it says no our job is to bring application and to say this is how it applies to us and that's what he is doing so he's setting us an example for those who aspire to be preachers he is setting us an example he's saying this is what the scripture says in the Old Testament in his case in our case Old Testament and New Testament and now this is how we apply it this is what it means to us so we also since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses so he's now using the picture of a race you'll see the end of the end of the verse let us run with endurance the race that is set before us obviously those days they had the old version of the modern Olympic Games they had these big stadiums in which they would run and there would be the audience the people who would watch the runners that is obviously the picture that he is drawing but we have to be careful in saying does do the witnesses and obviously the witnesses are the Old Testament Saints the ones that we've just spoken of in the Old Testament beginning with Abel going through the Old Testament do they watch us run because that seems to be the inference from the text because he's got the picture of the audience the witnesses and those who are running the race now the commentators and the theologians are divided on the issue some say that they do watch us and if we have to go by popular culture today they are watching us every unsaved celebrity is up there watching us now we don't form our theology based on popular culture we need to base our theology on the scripture it seems from the picture he's drawing that we can say they are watching the problem with that is that we have no other scripture that confirms that they are aware of us we don't fully understand the state of the departed what we do know is that they're in the presence of the Lord what we also know is that they are not omniscient in other words they don't know everything or see everything the way God knows and sees everything you with me we will know all things when will that happen at the resurrection not at death the scripture is very clear that at the resurrection we will know all things even as we are known until then it does the scripture gives no indication that the dead believers of course have the ability to see everything or to know everything there is as I said no scripture that other scripture other than this verse and this verse is not making a clear statement it's it's inferred if you if you're going to come to the conclusion that your dead ancestors and I'm using that in a positive sense my mother who I have loved dearly and who I miss still is watching me I don't believe she can see me I would love for her to see but I don't I cannot find support in scripture for that so what does he mean then why does he say that we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses and obviously the word cloud means a vast number many many many when you have two or three people you can identify the faces when you have as many as we have here we can see people as individuals and as faces when you look at large gatherings of people think for instance the inauguration of the president as the thousands gather on the mall you don't see faces you just see a mass of people you just see a crowd you just see a cloud so he's speaking about this large number of witnesses so what does it mean that they are witnesses if they are not watching us and cheering us on

then what are they doing well they are witnesses of God's goodness and of God's grace how did he use the names of those men in chapter 11 he used them as witnesses look at how Abel lived his life look at how Enoch looked look at how Moses looked look at all of these men how they endured how they continued to trust God and so one of the commentators says that this way and I think that that he is correct it's not that they are looking at us but we are looking at them we are looking at them and that's confirmed by the next verse because he then says and looking unto Jesus so how do I run the race I run the race by looking at Jesus but I also run the race by looking at those who have before and how did they run how did they endure how did they overcome and by looking at them I can be encouraged that I'm not alone in this race that I am not the only one who's having to endure the things that I have to endure that I'm not the only one whose face is being tested I'm not the only one who sometimes begins to doubt because when I look at the witnesses they're all saying yes we are weak we are men but God is faithful and God is true and so that's the sense in which they are witnesses I think that they are also witnesses in the sense that on the day of judgment they would be silent witnesses to the way that we have run the race you see because here's the problem it's easy to find excuses for failure now remember we said last week it's not all about success there are times of hardship there are times that we are discouraged there are times that we are defeated and there are times that we will suffer but when we have failed because of our own weakness it's easy to find excuses and say well you know nobody understands how hard I was pressed and nobody has endured what I have to endure do you know my situation but these men are witnesses and there is nothing that we have to deal with that these people did not endure a deal with and whatever situation you find yourself in today doesn't matter what it is there is someone else maybe alive today but certainly of those who've gone to be with the Lord who has been in exactly the same situation as you are I don't want to minimize the the difficulty that that you are dealing with and that each one of us deals with but one of the encouragements are and I know that may be not the kind of encouragement we want but is really you're not unique we tend to feel you know I'm the only one who has to deal with this kind of stuff I'm the only one who has to endure this pain I'm the only one has to deal with this alienation or whatever it is this temptation no others have dealt with it as well and their witnesses that you can overcome you can live victoriously in the midst not over your troubles but in the midst of your troubles and so they are witnesses to say it can be done it can be done and so we are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses let me warn you that the clock has been unstable so if we get to supper time and I'm still preaching just warn me I think I think it's good but all right so we surrounded by this cloud of witnesses so now I need to run the race in running the race he says we need to do two things well a number of things but immediately here two things lay aside every weight and lay aside the sin which is in snares us now notice that there are two things the weight and the sin he's not saying sin is the weight no there is the weight that needs to be laid aside and there is the sin that needs to be laid aside the Sun is easy to understand because Sun is Sun and hopefully we have some understanding of what that is Sun is not keeping the rules if you've never heard that definition before in the context of the race so if you take a shortcut and remember this race is not a sprint it's not a hundred meter a hundred yard dash it's not 440 yards of 400 meters this is a marathon and it's a marathon that can last 70 years and it's not a matter of whether you can get out of the starting blocks faster than anybody else it's a matter of whether you can make it to the end the Christian walk is hard and I shouldn't have used the walk word walk it's not a walk it's a race and it's not racing against everyone else we'll come back to that but it's a marathon I I read a couple of weeks ago maybe last week about a woman who and I've forgotten who she is and where she is but who ran a hundred and fifty marathons in a hundred and fifty days I can't imagine that I can't even imagine running one marathon let alone a hundred and fifty but that's the Christian race it's not just one day it's not just one week it's not one year it's not ten years it's year after year after year plodding on and making it to the end and so let's

get back to the sin sin is not abiding by the rules one of the things that you can do to cheat in a marathon is to take a shortcut because sometimes a marathon goes through the woods and through the fields and if you know the area maybe well you know you can take a shortcut over here and meet up with the guys on the other side well that disqualifies you and so there are sins we're going to come back to that sin again in a moment when we speak about that which easily ensnares us but what is the weight well the weight is simply things that are legitimate they are not sin but they hold you back as far as I know there are no rules against running a marathon with gum boots is that the word you use here military boots or combat boots there's no rules against that there's no rules that this says you can't have a backpack and five bricks in the backpack it's quite legitimate you can do it if you want to you can have a great coat on if you want you can have a helmet on if you want no rules against that but you're not going to get very far that way and for this is I believe he's concerned as he's writing to these Christians who are giving up many of the people in this church that he's writing to have already given up and others are seriously considering giving up and others are just saying well you know this is just too hard let me take on board this let me get involved in that let me get go over here do this do that and he's saying yeah those things may be quite legitimate but they're gonna hold you back and folks there are many many many things and I'm not going to get specific because if I get specific and I don't mention your issue then you think well you know you escaped you know the things that you do that you're involved with that take your time that take your energy that may be a hundred percent legitimate they're not sin but they're hindering your race they're hindering your walk with the Lord and he says let's lay those things aside one of the things about running the race and when you look at Olympic athletes is that they lay everything aside not just on the day of running but their whole life is geared to one thing and that is to run that race they won't take emotional things on board that's going to affect them they won't take on eating habits that's going to affect them they're not going to take on a lifestyle and yet as Paul says elsewhere they do that for an earthly crown we're running for an eternal reward and yet we will compromise and we will take on board all sorts of baggage that holds us back and that slows us down and that hamstring us so that we can't run the race effectively and so may I appeal to you this morning lay aside not just some because maybe this morning as I'm speaking to you that there are a number of issues there may be a whole bunch of things in your life that are quite legitimate but there are hindering your relationship with the Lord there are hindering your effectiveness in serving him it's okay I'll deal with this one thing no no he's saying lay aside every weight I don't know how long your list is but whatever is on that list lay it aside because it's going to hold you back it's going to affect you and it's going to prevent you from achieving what God has in mind for you and so let's lay aside notice let us remember he does the same thing in chapter 10 let us hold fast the profession of our faith he says there let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works and so let us as a make assembly as a congregation individually as families lay aside the weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us notice the sin that ensnares us that's the problem of sin sin ensnares entangles I think the King James may use the word entangles sin gets you in its web and gets you all tied up in knots and entangled you see that's the nature of sin soon as not it's not a thing that you can you know it's just it's not a singular thing so yeah do this thing end of the story no the moment we engage in sin it becomes entangling it becomes it invades us and it begins to suck us in begins to control our thinking begins to control our actions he says lay aside the sin that so easily ensnares us how long does it take to develop a bad habit couple of days couple of days it's so easy we know some of the street drugs they say if you have the right kind of disposition just one shot and you're hooked there are those here who've experienced the entrapment that comes as a result of that but it's not just street drugs there are so many other things that we get hooked on and you can get hooked just like that but you get off it to give up that addiction and I'm not just talking about chemical addictions that emotional addiction that psychological addiction the many ways in which we

become entangled in sin become so hard so the answer is don't get entangled to begin with in South Africa we have a a bush and if we if I have to translate the name into English it's a hook and stick or hook and prick bush because the thorns have hooks and others have points and you get stuck in that you you get near that thing and it grabs you and the harder you fight you try to get out of it the more entangled you become that is sin now I know that there's a there's a way in which we can interpret this to say that there is a particular sin so when we use this word or when it's this word is what this phrase is normally used the sin which is so easily ensnares or the King James says that so easily besets us people talk about a besetting sin so they say well what's your besetting sin what is that one sin that hooks you that grabs you now that that may be true and each one of us have our areas of weakness for some it's this and some it's that and there are certain areas in which each one of us is particularly vulnerable to getting back into the same bad habits over and over again but I don't want us to get sidetracked by that because while that may be true it's not the whole story because you say well you know I have a problem with pornography so I've dealt with that I've overcome that that's my besetting sin so I'm good no you don't understand sin you don't understand the devil because you can get victory over that pornography but he'll get you on gaming or he'll get you on shopping yeah shopping's a problem I said I wasn't gonna mention name sorry you see it's my besetting sin had to go there you know you know I've overcome my besetting sin no sin by definition is besetting in snares and it doesn't matter you can get victory in one area he'll get you on another and so let's lay aside those and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us so here's the key word endurance perseverance King James says with patience remember that word patience has changed its meaning over the years so endurance it's no good starting well and ending badly there's no good running for 60 years and giving up one year before the end we must endure and endurance speaks of hardship you see you don't have to endure a good meal you don't have to endure a vacation I guess there's some people who have that problem but but you have to endure hardship and folk the reality is and of course we've spoken so much about the the many errors that have come from the prosperity message which seems to say well you know it's it's easy it's great just become a Christian all your problems will go away it's gonna never you it's a it's a cakewalk it's a cruise it's wonderful no it's hard it was hard for the witnesses in the Old Testament it was hard for Jesus and it's going to be hard for us yeah you can have a you can you can do a marathon on a motorbike and just ride along but that's not how it works endurance don't give up remember this is this is really the message while the book of Hebrews focuses on Jesus on one end and he's going to come back to Jesus in in the next verse the whole background is don't give up don't go back to Judaism he's saying to these people who want to go back to Judaism don't go back to the world don't give up endure hold on see it through a folk we've spoken about the great falling away many many times and as the days go on and as the years go on for these last few years we're seeing more and more people going back in many many ways churches closing down Christians going back to the world or simply just sitting by the wayside and watching the race go by don't give up don't give in excuse the other South African saying but when I was in the military we had a saying which translate to bite fast referring to the old days when someone was operated on without anesthetic they would give him something to to bite on to a piece of wood and it became a saying in the military when things are hard bite on grit your teeth it's hard but hold on run with endurance the race that is set before us you see I can't run your race and you can't run my race each one of us has a different race to run the goal is the same but the race is different some of us have to battle this thing others have to battle something else the temptations one faces is not the same as what the other faces each one of us has his own race for the thief on the cross the race lasted a few hours for others the race will last for our beloved brother Henry the race lasted something like 80 years from when he got saved until the Lord took him home you need to run your race the race that is set before you that God has asked you to run and you need to run that race don't try and live my life don't

try and live your husband or your wife's life or trying to try and run their race you run yours and you run it faithfully and run it with endurance now time looking unto Jesus looking unto Jesus now remember and it's interesting that it's how many years since the beginning of kovat so this is my first time I'm going back to Australia since I came back from Australia I came back and the church was churches were closed down what video was that 21 hmm 20 21 22 3 years and remember when I came back from Australia one of the first messages I preached and one of the messages that I kept bringing into all the many of the other messages is let's get our eyes on Jesus forget about covert forget about the government forget about the world let's get our eyes on Jesus and folk the message is still the same today it has not changed and and of course the message didn't start three years ago it was when the Lord laid that on my heart and I do believe that that was essential for us individually and as a congregation to survive these last three years but this is a 2,000 year old message in fact it's not a 2,000 year old message it's a 6,000 year old message going back to Abel at the beginning let's get our eyes on Jesus look it's easy to look at the pain when you're running that race and so on my muscles all cramping up and my feet are sore and I've got a headache and and everything is just no get your eyes on the on the on the leader you see because he has gone before he is the pioneer he is setting the pace and when we get our eyes off him that's when we get into discouragement when we get into temptation and when everything begins to fall apart and folk more than ever before more than three years ago today we need to get our eyes on Jesus don't look at me don't look at other Christian leaders don't look at the church look at Jesus that doesn't mean that leaders don't have to set an example of course we have to do that but folk let's have let's have our eyes on Jesus I need to move on because I could spend another 40 minutes on that but he is the author and the finisher of our faith the initiator the designer the beginner he started it all at Calvary and he's going to finish it all remember the book of Hebrews speaks about him over and over as the Alpha and the Omega the first letter last letter of the Greek alphabet the beginning and the end and that which he has begun in us he will complete but we need to have our eyes on him and and what he is saying to us here is of course this there's this twofold responsibility that we always speak about there's the part that he does and there's the part we have to do the part we have to do is to have our eyes on him and to run that race and the part he does as he finishes the work that he's begun but it's a cooperation you can't do it without him and he's not going to do it for you in the sense that you can say well I'm going to sit here on the side of the road and he's going to pick me up and take me to the goalpost now he's expecting you to run the race but he'll be there with you he'll lead the way and he'll finish the work that he has begun Paul says I am persuaded that he is able to complete that which he has begun in me and so he is the author and the finisher you see the problem and one of the things I believe that the author is trying to do here is he's trying to remind us don't get swallowed up in your immediate circumstances you see because when we lose perspective when we spoken about this for the last few weeks in chapter 11 when we lose perspective it's easy to look at my problems right now and say well it's insurmountable it's never going to get better this seems to be the end no get our eyes off now and get our eyes on Jesus and let's get our eyes on the goal because he's going to come back to that in in a second and so looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith so that's why he's saying remember it's not about today it's about where it began at Calvary and it's about where it's going to end at the day of the resurrection and so the author and the finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross it's the goal it's not the now it's not that marathon runner who's cramping up focusing on his cramps he's focusing on the line he's focusing on the reward on the medal at the end of the race and Jesus obviously speaking about the cross for the joy that was set before him how was he able to endure what he did now remember we've spoken about this before but it wasn't just the physical suffering it was the suffering that we cannot even begin to understand of him who knew no sin taking upon himself the sin of the world we don't we don't have a clue what that means one day we

will but now we don't so how was he able to endure that and remember the Gethsemane and we'll come back to Gethsemane in verse 3 which we obviously won't get you today how was he able to endure because he was reminded of the joy set before him remember the angel came and encouraged him in Gethsemane what did the angel do what the angel say well I don't know what the angel said but I can imagine based on this verse what the angel said is reminded him as he stands before the cross on the other side at the beginning of the cross that night as he would be crucified the next day the angel saying look beyond yes tomorrow is going to be a terrible day as they nail you to that cross as they spit on you speaks about the shame and as the sins of the world are laid upon you but look beyond at the joy that set before you what is that joy the joy is you and I you see when I read the the authors they they speak about the joy is being that name that he received which is above every name no he had that to begin with that he receded the right hand of the majesty no he had that to begin with he got nothing out of the cross that he didn't have before except a bride that's his joy now I just I just prayed that I would be that joy to him that it's worth it I'm speaking from a human perspective but that is it's work when he looks at me when he looks at you he says it was worth it sometimes when I look at me I don't think it was but we know that he's going to finish what he's begun and so for the joy bringing many brethren into salvation gaining for himself a bride the church that was the joy that was set before him and so he looked to the reward and he despised the shame as they hung him naked don't be fooled by the pictures you see of him hanging on the cross with a loin cloth as they spat him as they cursed him as they mocked him hanging in between two thieves the word despised means he disregarded it you know when you despise something you say nothing folk here's a great lesson for us great lesson for me it's hard when people impugn us when people attack us personally call us names heretic whatever it's hard but learn from Jesus nothing not that it was nothing but it was nothing in comparison to the reward remember Paul uses this device several times in his writings and he says speaks about our our struggles our suffering which is but for a season in comparison to eternity that is light in comparison to an eternal weight of glory and so if there are those who have turned their backs against you if there are those who have said things about you because you become a Christian not because you did something else but because of serving the Lord don't worry about it despise it it's nothing in comparison to those words well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of your Lord despising the shame and he has sat down remember right through Hebrews he's used this example of the priest in the Old Testament who had to stand daily they could never sit down because the work was never done but Jesus has sat down having made one sacrifice for all time done the work sat down the works finished not only is the work finished but he has sat in the position of authority at the right hand of the majesty on high and so he has sat down at the right hand of the threat I remember that the Lord Jesus in speaking to the church in Revelation promises that we will sit with him in his throne even as he has overcome and sat down in the father's throne and so let's get our eyes on Jesus nothing that you are dealing with today or that you will ever deal with can compare with what Jesus dealt with and he dealt with it as a man God in the flesh but as a man and he overcame and God has given them in that name which is above every name and he's saying keep your eyes on me keep your eyes fixed on Jesus if he could overcome you can overcome if the Saints in the Old Testament could endure you can endure and I can endure father we pray that you'd help us that we may be a continuation of chapter 11 or that we may be those who if another book of Hebrews would be written our names may be amongst those who have endured who've overcome who've obeyed who've been faithful because you are faithful and so Lord we've said many many things Lord this morning there's so much in these few verses I pray Lord that you would speak to us that you'd give us time Lord that we may meditate on these verses and on these thoughts and Lord that the message may change our lives Lord I know at any time when the word is preached there are those who are considering giving up maybe not consciously but I'm just getting tired and all there may be

those here present this morning there may be those watching on video who just had enough it's just become too hard thank you Jesus that you are praying for us you said to Peter I'm praying for you that you're living ever living to intercede for us and that right now you're praying that we don't give up that we will endure that we will see it through and Lord that would not just that we will see it through but that we will thrive and come out on the other end victorious and Lord I pray for each one who is hearing this message who's struggling right now help us Lord to overcome I pray Lord for those who have been ensnared by sin and who disqualified in a sense of running the race because they've become ensnared with sin Lord I pray that you'd help them to break free through the victory that is ours through the cross and Lord I pray for each one of us Lord there is not one of us who's excluded who is not in one way or the other being hampered and held down and held back by legitimate things but that rob us of our victory help us Lord to lay those things aside to focus single-mindedly on Jesus and to run that race with absolute endurance and single-mindedness that we may finish well that we may together with Paul be able to say henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give to me and not only to me but to all those who love his appearing make these things real to us I pray Lord in Jesus name I pray that you'd go with us keep us protect us bring us together again safely in the week I ask this in Jesus name amen

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