

# (Hebrews) ch.11:23-12:4

by Zac Poonen

---

*Faith is the key to overcoming obstacles and achieving great things, and it is the result of obedience to God's revelation.*

**Duration:** 1:24:01

**Scripture:** Genesis 4:4, Genesis 5:24, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 5:12, Hebrews 6:1, Hebrews 11:32, Hebrews 12:1-4

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Christian Perfection"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of relying on God's power rather than human ability. He highlights the need to come to an end of ourselves and have total confidence in God's power to accomplish all things. The preacher also warns against remaining stagnant in the Christian life and encourages believers to press on to perfection. He emphasizes the concepts of 'better' and 'perfect' that are mentioned multiple times in the book of Hebrews. The sermon concludes with the reminder that faith can only be exercised by those who are willing to lose their lives for the sake of Jesus and the gospel.

---

## Transcript

we turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 23. by faith Moses when he was born was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw he was a beautiful child and they were not afraid of the king's edict. here we read of the fate of parents and how it can affect the children.

this is a great truth that we find in the New Testament that parents have an influence over their children even where one parent is a believer. we are told in 1 Corinthians and chapter 7 and verse 14 that the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. this doesn't mean that the unbeliever, the unbelieving partner becomes a child of God but there's a sense in which God's sanctifying grace has an influence upon that partner because of the faith of the other partner and not only on the other partner but also on the children for it says otherwise your children are unclean but now they are holy in the sense of being set apart.

not that those children have become children of God. they need to grow up and put their trust in God themselves and be born again but the fact that one of the parents is a believer, one of the parents is a child of God receiving God's grace makes a tremendous difference to what that child can receive and so we find here in the example of Moses' parents also. it's true that all parents would like their children to be protected and even in Egypt when there was this order given by the king that we read off in Exodus 1 that all male babies of the Israelis should be killed.

parents of Moses, when they saw that Moses was a good child they by faith hid him. they had a conviction that God was going to protect this child. it wasn't just an act of parental love.

it was more than that we read very clearly it was by faith that they hid him for three months and so it is when we act in faith as parents that we can have an influence upon our children. why is it very often these days that children of believers grow up in worldly ways? the answer is very clear and simple for all who will accept the testimony of scripture. it's very obvious that in the vast majority of cases the parents have not lived and acted in faith.

they have acted in unbelief. they may have believed certain doctrines and gone to church but they lived in unbelief as it were, not separated from the world, not having the characteristics that we studied in previous weeks concerning these men of God described in Hebrews 11. and so the children grow up without faith too.

but Moses' parents had faith and that faith gradually came into Moses. Moses' mother looked after Moses in the early years and instilled that faith into her child. and this is what enabled Moses when he grew up to take certain decisions on the basis of faith himself.

and this is what we need to learn as well dear friends. that we need to walk in faith not only for our own sake but for the sake of others around us. children in our own families, our spiritual children in the church and others who may be looking at us.

we can have an influence on them for good if we will walk in faith ourselves. for we read that because his parents acted in faith like this when Moses grew up, verse 24, when he had grown up he also stood on the ground of faith. it's so clear that that faith came to him because he'd seen that faith in his parents.

in his mother particularly, he was looking after him. by faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. and in those three verses we find that Moses took a decision on the basis of faith.

he refused honor, he refused pleasure, and he refused wealth. there are three things we see here in these three verses. first of all, honor.

to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter was the greatest honor that any human being on earth could have had at that particular time from a worldly standpoint. Pharaoh was the greatest king of the earth, and to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter meant that you were in line for the throne. but he refused the greatest honor that any mortal man could have had at that time from a worldly standpoint.

secondly, verse 25, he refused the temporary passing pleasures of sin. he knew that the pleasures of sin were only for a season. the Bible teaches very clearly that sin does bring pleasure, and you and I know that from our experience, that we have sinned because it has brought us pleasure.

there's pleasure in love, there's pleasure in the love of money, there's pleasure in keeping a bitterness in our heart against someone. but the Bible also says that that pleasure is only temporary, it's only for a season. it's a passing pleasure.

finally it kills us. that's the foolishness of seeking the pleasure of sin. and Moses knew that, that it was only a passing pleasure, and so like a wise man he gave it up.

therein we see his faith. he gave up pleasure. and thirdly, he gave up the treasures, the wealth of this world.

in verse 26, he considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. he gave up riches, the love of material things. he forsook wealth.

there we have the three things that draw people to the world today. honor, pleasure, and wealth. and the man of faith will follow in the footsteps of Moses, refusing honor, refusing pleasure, refusing wealth.

these are the three areas where many many Christians have fallen. dear friend, if you want to know whether you're worldly or not, examine yourself in these three areas. if you want to know whether you're a man of faith or not, whether you're living by faith or not, you can examine yourself in these three areas.

what is your attitude to honor? do you seek for honor? do you seek for that which will exalt you above your fellow men, perhaps your fellow believers in the church? do you seek for positions of honor, perhaps not in the world, but perhaps in Christian circles? if you seek for honor and bigness and position in Christian circles, you are certainly not living by faith. you may have a doctrinal conviction concerning certain truths, but you don't have the faith that Moses had, who refused honor, knowing that honor was a temporary thing, knowing that honor was empty. here is one area where it's really worthwhile for us to examine ourselves constantly, because many many Christians have fallen a prey to this temptation.

Jesus was tempted with honor and he refused it. he was asked to jump from the pinnacle of the temple and to get honor for himself as one who could land unhurt at the bottom. he refused it.

check whether you are drawn by the temptation to pleasure. Jesus was tempted with pleasure to satisfy his hunger, but he said no. Moses said no.

and when the pleasures of sin draw us, do we respond and give in? then we know whether we are living by faith or not. and the third area, are we drawn by wealth, by material things? Jesus too was tempted thirdly with the glory of the world and all that this world had to offer, and he said no. he refused it.

Moses refused it. Jesus lived by faith. Moses lived by faith.

and we are called to live by faith. and here are the three specific areas where the Bible calls us, by the example of Jesus, by the example of Moses, and all these other men, to refuse the wealth, the honor, and the pleasures of this world, knowing that they are temporary, knowing that they bring death in the end, and to choose affliction with the people of God, and to choose the reproach of Christ, for these are greater riches. we turn now to Hebrews, and chapter 11, and we have seen last week, concerning the decision that Moses took when he had come to age, verse 24.

by faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. and this is the mark of the man of faith. he looks forward for a heavenly reward.

he wants nothing on this earth for himself. verse 27. by faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is unseen.

now the thing that we notice in all these verses is that faith led Moses to take a decision. it was a decision that led Eve into sin in the garden of Eden. God has made us creatures of free will.

without free will we could never be children of God. we would be reduced to something the equivalent of a tree, or a table, or a chair, that is unable to take any decisions, and therefore unable to commit sin, at the same time unable to be holy. there are many people who ask this question.

why did God not make man in such a way that he could not sin? if God had done that, then man would have been like a chair, some inanimate object. a chair can never commit sin, true, but then a chair cannot be holy either. and God desired men to be holy, to partake of his nature.

and the only way that man could partake of God's nature is by being created as a moral being, with freedom of choice, to choose whether he wants to serve God or whether he wants to live for himself and serve the devil. and that free will God never takes away from man, and it's through the exercise of that will that we become sinners or saints. the Holy Spirit comes to strengthen us within, to will the will of God, to deny our own will.

this is why we need to receive the Holy Spirit, to be strengthened within, to deny our own will, and to do the will of the Father. Moses, strengthened by God, made a decision by faith, refusing the pleasures of sin. it's the opposite of the decision that Eve took in the garden of Eden, refusing honor and wealth.

like Daniel in Babylon, who determined not to defile himself, he took a decision by faith, we read in Daniel 1.8, same way Moses took a decision, and by faith we read further in verse 27, that he forsook Egypt, he left Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, and that king was the greatest king in all the world. faith makes a man fearless of the greatest powers in the world. it's a tremendous thing to be a man of faith.

to be a man of faith means to walk in the footsteps of these men, who walked with their heads held high like Moses, denying the pleasures of sin, refusing the wealth of this world, rejecting honor, and living without fear of the greatest powers of earth, because they had seen him who was unseen, they had seen the living God. and like it says in Isaiah 8.13, as paraphrased in the Living Bible, Isaiah 8.13, if you fear God, you need fear nothing else. that was true concerning Moses.

he feared God, and so he did not fear Pharaoh or anyone else. he did not fear the wrath of the king. as long as there is fear in our hearts, John says we are not perfected in love, 1 John chapter 4. but it's also true that we don't have faith, because when there is faith in the eternal almighty God, there is no fear in the heart of the man of faith.

we can endure, despite all the threats and persecution of unbelievers, if we are walking by faith, because we endure as seeing the one who is invisible. in verse 28 we read, by faith Moses kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of the blood in Egypt, so that he who destroyed the firstborn might not touch them. now keeping the Passover was not Moses' own brilliant idea.

it was God who told Moses what to do, and it was God who told Moses to take a lamb and to tell the Israelites to shed the blood and to put it on the doorposts. and Moses' faith was seen in obeying that revelation of God. we see exactly the same thing in verse 29.

by faith they passed through the Red Sea. it was not Moses' brilliant idea to split open the Red Sea and go through. he didn't know what to do.

but God told him what to do. he had a revelation from God. lift up your rod over the Red Sea, and the sea will part.

and he did it. and the sea split open, and they passed through on dry land, and the Egyptians, when they tried to follow the Israelites, not being men of faith themselves, they were drowned. when a worldly person or a nominal Christian tries to copy the man of faith, he drowns in the very thing in which the man of faith comes out triumphant.

don't try to copy men of faith. no, we can't copy them. we need to have the same faith that they have.

then we can copy them. there are people who have tried to live like George Muller, that great man of faith in England in the last century, and have made a miserable failure because they never had the faith themselves. and then they have to degenerate to living by hints and by charity.

there are many full-time workers who say they're living by faith today, or actually living by hints and by charity, because they're trying to imitate someone not having the same faith. they make the same mistake that the Egyptians make. Moses had a revelation from God.

the Egyptians had none. the same thing we see in verse 30. by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

there again, it was a result of a revelation. it wasn't Joshua's idea to go around the walls of Jericho and to see it fall down by itself. no, God had spoken, saying you do this.

and all they did was act on the revelation of God. they had no brilliant idea to conquer Jericho. and so we see that in all these steps we find faith was the result of obedience to God's revelation.

faith was not the result of their own thinking of something brilliant to do. we read in verse 31. by faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient after she had welcomed the spies.

with all these people, it was faith that brought them to salvation. Rahab was saved by faith. Moses and the Israelites were saved out of Egypt by faith.

Joshua was saved from being exterminated by the giants of Jericho by faith. all these people were saved by faith. and so, even in the Old Testament, salvation was by faith, even from physical danger and from physical oppression.

but looking at these verses, verse 27, 28, 29 and 30, we find in every case faith involved obedience to God's revelation. who was it, verse 27, who told Moses to leave Egypt? God. who was it who told him to keep the Passover? God.

who was it who told him to go through the Red Sea? God. who was it who told Joshua to go around the walls of Jericho? God. and so we find that faith is not just a question of thinking something brilliant to do in our own mind and then going ahead and doing something stupid and believing that God will protect us.

no. if Jesus had jumped off the pinnacle expecting God to protect him, nothing would have happened. no.

faith means acting on God's revelation. faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. faith is not imagination.

faith is not trying to work up belief that God will do something if we believe hard enough. no. faith is always based on a clear revelation in the Word.

if you don't have a clear revelation in the Word, if you have not heard God speak, then you cannot have faith. let's learn this lesson very clearly. faith is always, always founded, first of all, on God's revelation.

we turn now to Hebrews and chapter 11 and verse 32. the apostle has spoken about some of the great men of God in the Old Testament who walked by faith, obeyed God by faith, and accomplished great things for God and His people. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, etc.

and now he thinks of the many, many others who were there in Old Testament times and he says concerning them, what shall I say? verse 32. for time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight, women received back their dead by resurrection, and others were tortured not accepting their release in order that they might obtain a better resurrection and so on. there are many of these people in the Old Testament, all descendants of Abraham, who walked in the steps of their forefather Abraham, and thereby God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled when God told him that your seed will be as innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

his physical seed, which is symbolized by the sand on the earth, was in great numbers. this man who thought he couldn't have any more children, after Ishmael, found after he had become impotent, having Isaac, and from Isaac so many others that we've read of in this chapter, and time would fail to tell of all the others it says. but God's promise to Abraham was not only that he would have seed like the stars of this, like the sand on the seashore, but also like the stars of the heaven in number, and that could refer to his spiritual seed.

Abraham had physical seed as well as spiritual seed. those who in Old Testament times lived by faith, and who in New Testament times lived by faith, who have no physical generation coming from Abraham, but who have a spiritual generation having the same faith that Abraham had. and so Abraham had seed not only like the sand by the seashore, physical seed, but also like the stars of the heaven in multitude, spiritual seed.

and time would fail, the Apostle says, to speak about all these men, Gideon, who conquered the Midianites by faith. he had an army of 32,000, but God said that was too much. reduce that army to 300, and said now you go and fight the Midianites, because now you'll have to depend upon me.

the principle is the same. as long as you have strength, as long as you have an army of 32,000, you'll tend to depend upon that. but when you don't have that, then you will depend upon me.

and in every situation God seeks, dear friends, not to increase us, but to reduce us. not to make us strong, but to make us weak. because it's only when we are weak that we can have faith in God, and thus become really strong.

God doesn't seek to make us clever, but to show us how stupid we are. then we will lean upon God's wisdom. the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, if any man would be wise, let him first of all become a fool.

1 Corinthians 3.18. then he can become truly wise. the same way concerning strength, he says concerning his own experience. 2nd Corinthians 12 and verse 10.

when I am weak, then I am strong. it is through weakness, through our human inability, that God can make us strong. it is through our human stupidity that God can make us wise.

the wisdom of the world is revealed not to the clever and the wise, Jesus said, Matthew 11.25, but to the children. the same principle in the Old Testament. Gideon's army has to be reduced from 32,000 to 300 before God can use him.

and then he went out without any sword, but just blowing the trumpet, trusting in God, exposing the light in the earthen vessel, and the enemy was defeated. do we see the lesson there? we have a treasure in an earthen vessel. as that vessel is broken, and we confess our faith in God, the enemy will be defeated.

not by human power or by human might, but by the Holy Spirit, says the Lord. and in an age where the world around us thinks that man is capable of many things, having gone up to the moon and conquered space, we need to remember, dear friends, that the only way we can walk by faith is if we come to an end of ourselves, an end of confidence in human ability, and a total confidence that through God's power, I can do all things. faith has two words written on either side of its coin.

on one side, John 15, verse 5. without me, you can do nothing. and on the other side of the coin are the words of Philippians 4.13. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. here is a way by which you can test whether you have faith.

can you honestly say, deep down from your heart, Lord, I acknowledge, without you I can do nothing, and I'm never going to try to do anything without you. and at the same time, if you stop there, you don't have faith, and you only have discouragement. but if you can go on to say what it says in Philippians 4.13, but I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

God is working within me to do and to will his good pleasure. yes, that is the mark of the man of faith. Barak, who overcame the enemy by faith.

Samson, who had his mighty physical strength by faith, teaching us that even the strength of our bodies comes through faith. it's through faith that we can have healing in our bodies. God gave supernatural physical power to Samson.

Jephthah, who overcame the enemy by faith. David, who accomplished all those great things that he accomplished by faith. as a shepherd boy, he slew a lion and a bear.

and as a young man, he slew the giant Goliath. not by human strength, not by his own wisdom or strategy, but by faith. Samuel and the prophets.

think of the great leadership that Samuel gave to Israel. it was not through his own ability or cleverness. as a little boy, he heard the voice of God.

we said earlier that faith is based on revelation, on hearing God's voice. the first step to faith is a total lack of confidence in self and a humble dependence upon God with great eagerness to hear what he has to say to us through his word. then through hearing comes faith.

Samuel and all the other prophets, Daniel and many others, who by faith conquered kingdoms. whereas in the rest of the world, people conquered kingdoms by the might of their armies, here were those who conquered kingdoms by faith, by simple dependence upon God. we read in 2nd Chronicles chapter 14 about King Esau, who trusted in God and cried out to God and trusted in Him and God defeated his enemies.

we read in 2nd Chronicles 20 of Jehoshaphat, another king of Judah, who in his weakness trusted upon God. he said in 2nd Chronicles 20 and verse 12, Lord God, I don't have the strength to overcome these enemies. I don't have the wisdom to overcome these enemies, but I trust in you.

our eyes are upon you and God slew the enemies. and so they conquered kingdoms, performed righteousness. they walked in righteousness by faith.

they obtained the promises by faith. there are many promises in the Bible. they cannot be obtained apart from faith.

shut the mouths of lions. Daniel dropped in the lion's den, had no fear because he trusted in God. and the mouths of those hungry lions were shut.

they quenched the power of fire. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walked through that fire that Nebuchadnezzar put them in. and they came out unhurt because they trusted in God.

and they testified that they trusted in God, escaped the edge of the sword from weakness, were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. women received back that dead by resurrection. think of that woman whose son was raised up by Elijah.

another woman whose son was raised up by Elisha. all these people received what they received by faith. think of the mighty possibilities that there are in faith.

this is what the Apostle is trying to show us. and know that our vision would be enlarged to see that truly as Jesus said, to him that believe it, nothing is impossible. we turn again to Hebrews chapter 11.

we come now to verse 35. we have looked at the various men of God in the Old Testament who manifested faith in varying situations. and as I said before, faith manifested itself in different varieties of situations.

and here in verses 32 to 35, the Apostle speaks of some of the outstanding achievements of faith. and we see here men who risked their lives and overcame kingdoms and were made mighty in war, like some of David's mighty men, shut the mouths of lions and many other things at great risk to their own life. one of the things we see and learn through that is that faith can be exercised only by people who have no love for themselves or for their own lives.

Jesus said he who loves his life will lose it. those who love their lives and are always seeking to protect it and watch over it and take care of it will ultimately lose it. but Jesus said those are willing to lose their life for his sake and for the Gospels will finally keep it.

and this is true wisdom. the man of faith is one who is willing to throw away his life, not only his physical life, but his ego, his soul life. he's willing to give it up and throw it away and die inwardly and physically so that God may be glorified.

we see here that faith could really be exercised only by unselfish people who were devoted to God's cause and to the cause of his people. and so when we ask ourselves whether we are men of faith, we need to ask ourselves this question. am I in my life unselfishly devoted to the cause of God and to the cause of his people? the infection that we have received from Adam is the infection, the deadly infection of self-centeredness.

dear friend, whether you know it or not, all of us are basically centered in ourselves and selfish. we think of our own gain in every circumstance. even when we become Christians and we are born again, we don't get rid of this selfishness.

we don't get rid of this self-centeredness. the flesh is very much with us and that infection that's come through Adam is very much in our flesh. but we can conquer it.

God gives us his spirit so that we can conquer and overcome this infection of selfishness that there is in our flesh. and thus we can walk in victory over self-centeredness. and by faith we can unselfishly give ourselves to God's glory and to the good of his people.

that's how Jesus lived. Jesus never sought anything for himself. that's one of the clearest marks of a man of faith.

that's why these people could conquer kingdoms, obtain promises, shut the mouths of lions, quench the power of fire. they did not live unto themselves. and if this was true under the old covenant, this is the thing that should strike us as we read Hebrews chapter 11.

if these mighty things could be possible under the old covenant, how much more under the new covenant which we have already seen in the book of Hebrews is established upon better promises. the promises of the new covenant are not inferior. and reading through the list of men and what they accomplished in Hebrews chapter 11 should put you in need of shame to think of how little comes through our life.

we don't have to necessarily pull down walls of Jericho or shut the mouths of lions in order to manifest our faith. there are many manifestations of faith and we read some of them here. some of them look very impressive in the eyes of men, shutting the mouths of lions, quenching the power of fire, verse 34, receiving the dead back in resurrection.

but then along with them are listed others, verse 35, the middle of verse 35, who won their victory by being defeated as it were, humanly speaking. there was victory that came in the guise of defeat. and so we find that faith not only achieves but also endures, as we read in verse 35.

others were tortured, not accepting their release. their faith was manifested in the fact that they endured until the end and they were slain and they died. they did not get resurrected.

they did not escape the edge of the sword, as we read in verse 34. these people received the sword and they died in order to obtain a better resurrection when Christ comes back in glory. verse 36, others experienced mockings and scourgings.

they could not escape from their enemies. they were caught by their enemies, mocked and scourged and put in chains and imprisoned. but that could not take away their faith.

they manifested their faith not by opening the prison doors, as Peter did or Paul did, but suffering in prison like James the Apostle did, who was slain with the sword. we read in Acts chapter 12 that James and Peter, the two Apostles, were locked up by Herod. James was killed and Peter came out through open prison doors.

that did not mean that Peter's faith was more than James's. they both had faith. one manifested in his faith by enduring until the end and the other manifested his faith by coming out of the open prison door.

and so we read here of some who were imprisoned and chained. we read in verse 37 of some who were stoned and sawn in two. they were tempted.

they were put to death with the sword, in direct contrast to what we read in verse 34 of those who escaped the edge of the sword. and so both people manifested their faith. there were people, we read in the middle of verse 37, who went about in sheepskins, in goatskins.

they didn't have proper clothing. they didn't sit in a royal palace like Joseph or David. no, God's will for everybody is not the same.

we read that God's will for Joseph was that he should rule in Egypt as the ruler next to Pharaoh. so God took him to Egypt. but God's will for Moses was completely different.

by faith, Moses forsook Egypt. God's will for David was that he should rule upon the throne as a king. God's will for Elijah was that he should go and hide in a cave, persecuted, misunderstood.

God's will for some people has been that they should accomplish great mighty miracles, even raising people from the dead. but God's will for other people has been that they should be persecuted, like we read of the prophet Zechariah, who was slain in the temple. Jesus spoke of him.

Abel, who never accomplished anything great, the first one in this list, but who died in faith. and so faith not only achieves, but faith endures, as we see here. they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom this world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

then we read these magnificent words in verse 39. and all these, having gained approval through their faith. faith is not only manifested in escaping the edge of the sword, but in being slain by the sword and refusing to give up our convictions concerning God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul manifested his faith not only by raising dead Eutychus, not only by casting out devils, but also by refusing to give up his faith when his head was on the executioner's block under Nero's orders in Rome. so faith is not only manifested in magnificent achievements that impress the world, but also in endurance. and I want to say this, that it's easy to believe in God when God does a miracle.

it's easy to believe in God when you've seen someone raised from the dead. it's more difficult to believe in God when you're wandering in sheepskins and goatskins, hiding in the deserts and in the caves. and there is where there is a greater manifestation of faith, when things are not going well and according to your desire.

but all these people, the ones who achieved and the ones who endured, gained their approval through their faith. not through what they did, not through splitting the Red Sea or raising the dead, but through their faith. in their faith they were all the same.

in what they did there was a difference, but in their faith they were all the same. but yet they did not receive all that was promised. they could not come under the new covenant, because God has provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

think of this privilege, dear friends, that we have been called to something better than these men received, to come into a life of victory, to partake of God's nature, to be part of the very bride of Christ. may God help us to be faithful to our calling. faith can be exercised only by people who have no love for themselves or for their own lives.

Jesus said he who loves his life will lose it. those who love their lives and are always seeking to protect it and watch over it and take care of it will ultimately lose it. but Jesus said those are willing to lose their life for his sake and for the gospel's will finally keep it.

and this is true wisdom. the man of faith is one who is willing to throw away his life, not only his physical life, but his ego, his soul life. he's willing to give it up and throw it away and die inwardly and physically so that God may be glorified.

we see here that faith could really be exercised only by unselfish people who were devoted to God's cause and to the cause of his people. and so when we ask ourselves whether we are men of faith, we need to ask ourselves this question. am I in my life unselfishly devoted to the cause of God and to the cause of his people? the infection that we have received from Adam is the infection, the deadly infection of self-centeredness.

dear friend, whether you know it or not, all of us are basically centered in ourselves and selfish. we think of our own gain in every circumstance. even when we become Christians and we are born again, we don't get rid of this selfishness.

we don't get rid of this self-centeredness. the flesh is very much with us and that infection that's come through Adam is very much in our flesh. but we can conquer it.

God gives us his spirit so that we can conquer and overcome this infection of selfishness that there is in our flesh. and thus we can walk in victory over self-centeredness. and by faith we can unselfishly give ourselves to God's glory and to the good of his people.

that's how Jesus lived. Jesus never sought anything for himself. that's one of the clearest marks of a man of faith.

that's why these people could conquer kingdoms, gain promises, shut the mouths of lions, quench the power of fire. they did not live unto themselves. and if this was true under the old covenant, this is the thing that should strike us as we read Hebrews chapter 11.

if these mighty things could be possible under the old covenant, how much more under the new covenant, which we have already seen in the book of Hebrews, is established upon better promises. the promises of the new covenant are not inferior. and reading through the list of men and what they accomplished in Hebrews chapter 11 should put you and me to shame to think of how little comes through our life.

we don't have to necessarily pull down walls of Jericho or shut the mouths of lions in order to manifest our faith. there are many manifestations of faith and we read some of them here. some of them look very impressive in the eyes of men.

shutting the mouths of lions, quenching the power of fire, verse 34, receiving the dead back in resurrection. but then along with them are listed others, verse 35, the middle of verse 35, who won their victory by being defeated as it were humanly speaking. there was victory that came in the guise of defeat.

and so we find that faith not only achieves but also endures, as we read in verse 35. others were tortured, not accepting their release. their faith was manifested in the fact that they endured until the end and they were slain and they died.

they did not get resurrected. they did not escape the edge of the sword, as we read in verse 34. these people received the sword and they died in order to obtain a better resurrection when Christ comes back in glory.

verse 36, others experienced mockings and scourging. they could not escape from their enemies. they were caught by their enemies, mocked and scourged and put in chains and imprisoned.

but that could not take away their faith. they manifested their faith not by opening the prison doors, as Peter did or Paul did, but suffering in prison, like James the Apostle did, who was slain with the sword. we read in Acts chapter 12 that James and Peter, the two apostles, were locked up by Herod.

James was killed and Peter came out through open prison doors. that did not mean that Peter's faith was more than James's. they both had faith.

one manifested in his faith by enduring until the end and the other manifested his faith by coming out of the open prison door. we turn today to Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 1. it's unfortunate that there is a chapter division between chapter 11 and chapter 12. the chapters in the Bible and the verse divisions of the Bible have been placed there merely for our convenience in terms of making reference to a particular verse.

but there are times when we should ignore the chapter divisions and read on consecutively beyond the chapter division to understand what the first verses of a new chapter often refer to. those of us who have the habit of reading one chapter at a time are usually likely to forget where the chapter ended when we start on a new chapter another day. and so very often when we begin with chapter 12 verse 1 and 2 we often do not relate it to what has gone before in chapter 11.

but really these four verses particularly chapter 12 verses 1 to 4 are the concluding remarks on the chapter on faith in chapter 11. that's why the verse begins with the word therefore. that is referring back to all that has been said in chapter 11.

and you remember we looked at chapter 11 and we saw there the description of the faith of great men of God in the Old Testament. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and many others. and having listed them he continues to say this therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us that is those listed in chapter 11.

from Abel down to the last person who lived by faith who manifested their faith by obedience as we saw in chapter 11. these are the great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. they have gone ahead of us and fought

a good fight in faith.

but yet as we saw in the last verse of chapter 11 God has provided something better for us that apart from us they should not be made perfect. no it's very clear that all that they received and all that they could accomplish and see in their lifetime was inferior to what God has provided for us. that's very clear in chapter 11 verse 40.

God has provided something better for us. we are living in a more privileged time of history than the people who lived before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. the most privileged period of history that any mortal being could live in is since the day of Pentecost and up to the coming of Jesus Christ again in glory.

that's the period in which we are living. and we have this great cloud of witnesses who lived in a less privileged time in the Old Testament and they endured till the end. Jesus said that the greatest man under the Old Covenant was John the Baptist.

but he said that the one who is least in the kingdom of God was greater even than John the Baptist. that's what he said in Matthew 11 and verse 11. and so these witnesses who are around us who have passed on to glory who are in the presence of God now should be an encouragement to us, their life and their witness, to press on in the race that we have today and to the calling that we have which is far higher.

we are partakers of a heavenly calling as Hebrews makes clear. whereas these people under the Old Testament, they had an earthly calling. their blessings were earthly.

their wealth God gave them was earthly. but we today have a heavenly calling and heavenly wealth. and so all the more, it says in this verse, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us, for whom God has provided something better, lay aside every encumbrance in the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with patience or endurance the race that is set before us.

there is a race that is set before us. the Christian life is a race. it's not a series of static experiences, much less one static experience.

the Christian life is a dynamic thing. it's unfortunate when a Christian can only relate a testimony of some crisis experience in his life when he was born again. no, that's unfortunate indeed.

for the Christian life is not meant to be just one experience of the new birth. no, it's not meant to be more than one experience. it's meant to be a race, no matter how many experiences you have in between.

and we must keep that in mind. and we don't get to the finishing line of this race till Jesus comes back in glory. or till we die, whichever is earlier.

but it is a race that has to be run. Paul said in Philippians 3 that he was pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3 13 and 14.

he was straining towards the goal and he said I have not yet attained Philippians 3 12. no, he had not attained the finishing line and he wrote that just two or three years before he was killed. and so we must remember, no matter what experience God gives us, that we have not yet attained to that perfection of being like Jesus.

that is the goal. and that is the goal towards which we are to strain. we are told in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 3. 1 John chapter 3 verse 2. first of all, we shall be like him.

in the last part of that verse. because we shall see him just as he is when he appears in glory. that is our goal.

when he appears in glory, that's the finishing line. we shall be like him. and here's the race that we run in verse 3 of 1 John 3. everyone who has this hope of reaching this finishing line purifies himself or we can say runs the race just as he is pure.

Jesus ran the race and we are to run the race too. that's what we read in Hebrews 12 verse 1 and 2. let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus. so this is our finishing line.

to become like Jesus. and the race is to purify ourselves as he is pure. increasingly partaking of his nature.

increasingly manifesting his virtues and his glory in our life. now no man can say that he is running in this race unless he is increasingly partaking of God's nature in his life. unless he's increasingly becoming like Jesus as each year rolls by in his life.

it's a very sad thing when Christians are defeated by the same old things that they were defeated by years ago. and they still say that they are in this race. no.

they're at the starting line. and many of them have not even come to the starting line. what is the starting line of the race? we see here in verse 1 of Hebrews 12.

let us lay aside every sin. the sin which so easily entangles us. all sin must be laid aside and every weight.

there are two things to be given up if we are to begin this race. now notice that carefully. it says first we are to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us.

and having done that, then we are to run in the race. the race is not one where we progressively give up one sin after the other along the race. it's not that this year I get victory over anger.

next year I get victory over jealousy. and then five years from now I get victory over bitterness. no such thing.

no. we are to give up these things when we come to the starting line. we are to give up every known sin when we come to the starting line.

this is the meaning of genuine repentance. this is where many Christians haven't understood. they have not understood what it means to run the race because they're still preoccupied with trying to give up their sin.

but look what the Apostle says. let us lay aside every weight and also the sin which so easily entangles us and then let us run the race. we are to keep this in mind, dear friends.

the New Testament calls us to a very high standard of living and it's amazing that it says here that the beginning of the race is when we give up all sin that we are aware of and every weight, every unnecessary encumbrance in our life. we shall look at this more closely next week. we turn again to Hebrews and

chapter 12 and verse 1. we saw last week that the Christian life is a race and in order to run in this race we are exhorted to lay aside every weight, every encumbrance and also every sin.

even the sin which so easily entangles us. not only the sin that we can get rid of quite easily but that sin which keeps on besetting us. the sins that we have greatest difficulty with.

we are exhorted to lay aside every sin including that which makes us fall so frequently and then let us run the race. in other words we could say that it is when we lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us then we have come as it were to the starting line to run the race. we have come to the place where we have given up all conscious sin and then we have come to the starting line.

then we can run this race. now one of the things that this episode teaches very clearly is that one of the greatest dangers in the Christian life is to remain stationary without making progress. you remember when we studied chapter 5 and verse 12 the Apostle says though by this time you ought to be teachers you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God.

and he goes on in chapter 6 verse 1 to say therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ let us press on to perfection. two of the words that come a number of times in the book of Hebrews are the words better and perfect. the word better comes 13 times in the episode.

the word perfect comes 14 times in the episode. these are two words that characterize this age of the new covenant. since the day of Pentecost since the death and resurrection of Jesus in this age of grace the Holy Spirit gives us something better than what people had under the law.

the law could not make anyone perfect but grace can. grace leads us into a life of victory over all conscious sin and leads us on to discover those things that are hidden the lusts in our flesh and gives us help to mortify them so that we might increasingly become like Jesus. that is running the race and press on to that goal of perfect perfection that is into the likeness of Jesus himself.

so this is the goal towards which we run. let us press on to perfection. the Apostle says in Hebrews 6.1 and the Hebrew Christians were in danger of standing still of being content with past experiences and we are told here that the Christian life is a race.

it is when we stand still that we are not only in danger but very prone to and can easily backslide and sin. the best way to prevent backsliding is to slide forward all the time or to run to go ahead. the best way to keep ourselves from falling into sin is to run the race to press on into more and more of the perfection of Jesus in every area of our life.

if we do that we shall be kept from backsliding and sin. to be kept from falling is not a static thing. it's not by standing still at the starting line that we keep from backsliding.

no. we may have given up all conscious sin in our life. we may have also got rid of unnecessary weight and come to the starting line but if we stay there and don't make progress then it will only be a matter of time before we slip back into our former sin.

but here we are exhorted to run the race. let's look again at these two things that we are to do before we come to the starting line. we are to give up every sin.

the sin which so easily besets us and when it speaks specifically about the sin which so easily entangles us that includes in it every other sin. definitely the sins which we can get rid of quite easily but also those sins which seem to dog our footsteps. we are to lay them aside.

now the Bible could not give us an exhortation unless God has promised grace to help us to obey that exhortation. but after all none of us can overcome sin in our own power and strength. the flesh cannot overcome itself.

we need the power of the Holy Spirit and that's why God has poured out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost so that we can receive this fullness of the Spirit and with that power lay aside the sin which so easily entangles us and every other sin so that as far as we are conscious and aware our hearts are clean. that we have finished with all sin that we are aware of. sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace.

this is the privilege of the new covenant that we have seen again and again. by grace we can be free from all sin that we are conscious of so that consciously we need not commit sin at all. that is the privileged position into which God brings us.

let us then lay aside. let's lay hold of the grace that's available and lay aside the sin which so easily entangles us. but not only sin.

sin is like a chain that ties our leg and a runner cannot run the race if his leg is chained to a post or a tree. that's obvious. but it's not enough that we break the chains and break the ropes that tie our legs down to something stationary.

we may have done that. yet there can be in our life what are not necessarily sins but which can be weights. these could be compared to heavy stones that a runner carries in his pockets which could slow him down.

heavy weights of clothing on his body. think of an athlete. he wears as light clothing as possible.

he doesn't have heavy weights in his pocket when he runs. he doesn't want anything to slow him down. so if sin can be compared to the chains and ropes that tie our leg that we are to snap and break if we are even to begin the race.

the weights are those things that may not necessarily prevent us running in the race but which will slow us down. these are things which are not necessarily sins but things which are not profitable. Paul said in 1 Corinthians and chapter 6 verse 12 all things are lawful for me but all things are not profitable.

all things are lawful for me but I will not be mastered by anything. that can be certain pursuits in life which are not necessarily sinful but which takes so much of our time that they hinder us in progressing along the Christian race. for example a man can be so taken up with his business he may be absolutely honest in his business.

he may not commit any sin in terms of cheating but he can be so taken up in terms of time with his business that he has no time to run the Christian race. his time is taken up with the earthly. for example we can spend so much time talking.

there may not be sin in our conversation but yet so much time in talking that we don't have time to read the word and pray. you can spend so much time developing your musical abilities. maybe you say it's for the Lord but if your time is taken up in developing those abilities such that you don't have time to pray and wait on the Lord and read his word then certainly though you may not be sinning you have weights that you need to give up.

it's when we give up these weights that we find we make progress more quickly. so it's not only known as sin that can hinder us. Paul was so concerned that he should press on to perfection and get as far near the finishing line as possible in this one life.

think of having such a goal that in the one life that God offers us we redeem the time, we make the most of every opportunity, make use of every available means of grace and accept the suffering that comes into our life joyfully submit to God's dealing with us so that in this one life we can progress as far as possible into that perfect likeness of Jesus. this was Paul's goal. he said everything else I'm willing to count as rubbish and I press towards this mark and in his pressing on he was willing to give up everything that was not profitable.

so examine your life. see if not only you've given up sin but even things that are lawful in your life that are not profitable give them up and you will make great progress great strides towards that perfect perfection of Jesus we turn now to Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2. we were seeing how the Christian life is a race the starting point of which is the point where we lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us and then we begin to run with endurance the race that is set before us. he says there in verse one of the necessity for endurance or patience.

we would like to get to the finishing line overnight but it doesn't work that way and God has not planned it that way God has planned that we should progress to that finishing line through self denial and patience and discipline and so he gives us the opportunity every day to deny ourselves. Jesus said if any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. that is the race spoken of here where we deny ourselves and take up our cross daily.

we say no to our self-will and we die to our own will and to that which pleases us and follow the will of God every day as it is revealed to us in our entire conscious area. we are still aware that there's a whole lot of areas that are unconscious to us in which we perhaps are doing our own will but we do not know. that is the sin that remains within us with John speaks often 1 John 1 8 if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves.

there is sin in us but that is what we are unconscious of. but consciously there should be no sin in us. this is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 4. he says I'm conscious of nothing against myself.

in other words in his conscious area he was not committing any sin. yet he says I'm not by this acquitted because there is still unconscious sin in him. if he said that he had no sin in him he would be deceiving himself.

but he could say I'm conscious of nothing against myself. we must make this distinction that the sin which God asks us to forsake is that which he makes us aware of. obviously we cannot forsake that which we are unaware of.

the place where we have to do the will of God is in that area where we are conscious. obviously we cannot do God's will in areas where we are not aware of what we are doing. this is the struggle that Paul speaks of in the last half of Romans chapter 7. he's not dealing there with the sin which he's aware of.

no. but the sin which he is unaware of over which he is gradually getting light and discovering as he runs the race. so the race is one where we discover more and more those things which we are unaware of when we begin the race.

the things that lie hidden in our flesh. here is where we run the race and complete it by discovering those things which are unconscious. that lie as it were beneath the surface.

and the more we are faithful with that which is above the surface the more God will reveal to us of that which is beneath the surface. this is the race that we are to run. and it is just like a cube of ice in a glass of water.

about 10 percent of it is above the surface and 90 percent is beneath the surface. but if we could take a knife and neatly slice off that top 10 percent of that cube of ice what would happen? that which is beneath a little bit of it would come up. and if we did it again with that which is above the surface a little more that is underneath would come up.

and that is how God leads us on in the Christian life. when we are faithful in those areas of our life of which we are conscious and aware of then God can lead us to discover those other areas of our life which we are unconscious of. but only if we are faithful in giving up that sin which so easily besets us which we are aware of and in giving up the weight that we are aware of.

if we give them up then we can run with patience the race that is set before us. and even yet we will not reach the bottom in one day or in one year or in ten years. John the Apostle at the age of 90 still hadn't reached the bottom for he said if we including himself say we have no sin in ourselves we deceive ourselves.

no there was unconscious sin even in John at the age of 95. but he had made so much progress he had got so close to the finishing line by the time he got to the end of his life. so it is with us too.

this is the race that we are to run and we are to be patient. and if we are patient and endure in the midst of suffering and trial and temptation that God sends across our way we shall make great progress into the likeness of Jesus and increasingly finishing with sin from our nature. now here in this race we are to deny ourselves and take up the cross daily and die.

say no to our own will. and it is in this area that we are told that Jesus himself is our example. looking unto Jesus, verse 2, the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.

he had just spoken in verse one of our running with endurance. and in our running with endurance we are to look at the example of Jesus who ran his race with endurance. and we are told that he is our forerunner.

he ran the race ahead of us. and he denied himself. he said no to his own will.

he took up the cross and died daily to himself long before he hung on the cross of Calvary. all through his earthly life he denied himself. that's why he said in Luke 9 23, if any man will come after me let him deny

himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

we are not running some other race than the one Jesus ran. we are running the same race that he ran. as a man he walked on this earth and he completed the course in his earthly life.

and we are running the same race behind him. and we too are to do as he did. there was no sin in his life.

he was tempted in all points like as we are. all through his earthly life he was tested in different areas. and he overcame.

thus made progress along the race till finally he too reached the finishing line. and we are told in Hebrews 5 verse 8, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered and thus verse 9 was made perfect. he completed the race as a man and has set us an example for us to follow in his footsteps.

Jesus came to earth not only to die for our sins and to be a sacrifice, to die the righteous for us unrighteous. no, he also came that he might show us an example as to how we are to live. that's why he said if any man will come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

that's the race we are to run daily. that's the example we are given here. looking unto Jesus, the author or the leader and perfecter of our faith.

he is our leader. as we saw in Hebrews 6.20, he is our forerunner. a forerunner is one who has run ahead of us.

not on some other track but on the same track. not some other race but the same race. he has run ahead of us and how did he run it? for the joy set before him he endured the cross.

the joy of reaching the finishing line as a man. he endured the cross and that is what we are to endure also. that's what he himself said.

let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. in other words Jesus himself denied himself daily and took up his cross daily so that we can follow in his footsteps and so we can run the race as Jesus ran. John the Apostle says in 1 John 2 verse 6, he who says he abides in Christ should also walk, ought to walk as Jesus walked, ought to run as Jesus ran.

so we have the privilege of walking through this earth without committing any conscious sin. there is no need for us to be defeated by sin. that's a lie of the devil.

we can run this race looking unto Jesus, our leader, who endured the cross daily, and if we will embrace this cross daily and die to our self-will and go down and humble ourselves in each situation, then we can walk as Jesus walked, who for the joy set before him endured the cross and finished the race and now he's at the right hand of the throne of God. and he says to us today in Revelation 3 and verse 21, he who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne. we too can come to that same finishing point of sitting down with Jesus on his throne as he finished the race and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

if we consider this a prize worth attaining, we shall give up every sin and lay aside every way gladly that we might finish this race with joy. we turn now to Hebrews 12 and verse 2, 3 and 4. we have been seeing about the Christian race and we are told to run this race looking unto Jesus, or as it could be more accurately translated, looking away from everything else unto Jesus, the leader and perfecter of our faith.

he is our example and we are to look away from everyone and everything else unto Jesus, because it is in his life and his life on earth that we see an example how we can run this race.

we are to look unto Jesus who endured the cross. that's what it says in verse 2 and so obviously verse 2 is not referring to looking unto Jesus as he is now at the right hand of the throne of God. it is true as it says in verse 2 that he is now at the right hand of the throne of God, but we are to look at him as one who endured the cross with joy and now is at the right hand of the throne of God.

we are to look at him as one who has endured. that is where we are to take our example from. many people have looked at verse 2 as though it meant we are to look unto Jesus at the right hand of the father now.

this is true. we are to go to him for grace to live this life, but it speaks about more than that here in this verse. it speaks about looking at the earthly life of Jesus as an example for us to follow, and this is what many Christians do not have, an example of the earthly life of Jesus which they can follow, and therefore they do not have any encouragement in the race.

for example it says in verse 3, consider him who endured such hostility by sinners against himself so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. so in the midst of our trials and we find ourselves being opposed not only by sin but by sinful people, what is it that is to encourage us from growing weary and faint and losing heart? we are to consider him who endured such hostility by sinners against himself. think of the things that Jesus endured.

he endured the cross, it says in verse 2, and he endured hostility by sinners against himself, it says in verse 3. he fought against sin and he overcame, and he loved these sinners who were hostile against him, and he overcame so that there was no evil that came forth from Jesus at any time, but only good. no, he was never defeated by hostile sinners nor by sin. that is our example.

that's the example we are to follow so that we also don't get defeated either by sin or by the opposition of evil men, or the opposition of modern-day Pharisees who may have Christian doctrines right but who do not believe in godliness of life. that was Jesus' battle. he fought against not only sin but against the spirits of evil that resisted him through religious people, the Pharisees and Sadducees who were continuously after him, continuously on his tracks trying to knock him down, but he refused to have any bitterness or any lack of love towards them.

father forgive them for they know not what they do was his attitude. consider him. he endured such hostility.

and when we look at his earthly life as our example, we have an encouragement. for after all, why have the Gospels been written? there's no need for us to read through the Gospels. if all that Jesus did was die on the cross for our sins, that one fact would be enough.

why is the earthly life of Jesus described in the Gospels and four different Gospels describing his earthly life? why? not merely that we might admire it. that would be no help but that we might follow that example. for Jesus said if any man will come after me let him deny himself and follow me.

Christ has left us an example. Peter says in 1 Peter 2 21 and 22. Christ has suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps who committed no sin.

this is the race that we also run. this is what Paul speaks of. this is what Peter speaks of.

this is what John speaks of. they all speak about our walking as Jesus walked, our following his example. Paul says follow me as I follow Christ.

he was in the race himself. and we are to run the same race, looking away from everything else. men would discourage us and tell us that we cannot live a victorious life on earth.

we have to look away from such men. we are not to hear such men. we are to look at Jesus, our example, who ran the race faithfully, enduring the cross, despising the shame.

there is a shame in this race. that is the shame of men who do not appreciate godliness of life. they will think you're old-fashioned.

they'll think you're a prude. they will think that you're otherworldly, and all types of things they will say to drag you down to their worldly level. there are multitudes of so-called believers around us who want to drag us down to their worldly level, and will call us all types of names to drag us down.

but we refuse to be dragged down. we want to be simple and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, free from sin, free from worldliness. and there's a shame attached to it.

Jesus had a shame attached to him, because people spoke against him, the religious leaders spoke against him, but he despised the shame and endured. and so are we also to endure. Jesus is our leader.

we follow in his footsteps. we are to look at Jesus, who was tested in all points like as we are, when we are tempted, and endure and overcome like he overcame. then we shall not grow weary, then we shall not lose heart.

and then he goes on to say in verse four, think of your own example. he's still speaking about the example of Jesus, and how far we got when we compare ourselves with him. so consider him, verse three.

and what about you? verse four, you have not yet resisted. that is, like Jesus did, to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. what is sin? sin is to do our own will.

sin is not just going to the cinemas and gambling and drinking. the root of all sin is to do our own will, what we want, instead of the will of God. Jesus never committed sin.

that means he never did his own will. it doesn't mean he was not tempted. he was tempted, even in the garden of Gethsemane.

he says, father, let this cup pass from me. and if Jesus had refused to drink that cup, he would have sinned. he would have done his own will.

and Jesus was conscious, in the human flesh that he had taken on, of this desire which he expressed, let this cup pass from me. but he refused to do it. not my will, Jesus said, but thine be done.

and so he drank the cup. but what was Jesus' own human will? his own human will is very clearly what he expressed, let this cup pass from me. but he refused to do his own will.

he said, not my will, and he suffered and drank that cup down to the dregs. that is our example. he refused to sin.

and it says it was a great struggle for him. it wasn't easy. many people think that Jesus went through in his battle on earth without any struggle at all.

no, he prayed with loud crying and tears, we read in Hebrews 5 7, in the days of his flesh. and he endured. he went back three times and prayed in the garden of Gethsemane.

father, let thy will be done, not mine. it was through a struggle. and it was at least for one hour that he prayed, we read in Matthew 26.

and he overcame. and in his struggle against sin, that is in his struggle not to do his own will, the sweat came forth from him as great drops of blood. he refused to do his own will, and he did the will of his father.

so holiness for Jesus was not something handed out to him on a platter. no, it was not like an honorary doctorate that a man has to do nothing to get. no, it was an earned doctorate.

it was a victory that was won. we degrade Jesus when we say that he had a holiness handed out to him on a platter. we exalt him when he say that as a man he fought and he overcame.

this is the Jesus the Bible speaks of, one who fought and overcame, and it says to us, now you also overcome as I overcame. this is our example. this is our encouragement in this battle, that there's one who has gone ahead of us in this battle.

and we look to him, we look at ourselves. we haven't resisted like he did to the point of shedding blood in our striving against sin. no, he did.

now we are to follow in his example and never sin, but be willing to be obedient even unto death. it is with such an attitude alone that we can run this race behind him. if we have a loose attitude towards sin, we can never run the race behind Jesus.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/16/SID16525.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/hebrews-ch1123-124/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**