

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/25/2024  
Hebrews 12:1-3 “Running with Our Eyes on Christ”<sup>\*\*1</sup>  
Series: *Christ: The Object of It All*

Brad Brandt

Main Idea: According to Hebrews 12:1-3, living for Jesus involves two basic responsibilities. Keep running. Keep remembering.

- I. Keep running (1).
  - A. The race involves a crowd (1a).
    - 1. Others have finished the race.
    - 2. We can do the same.
  - B. The race involves a strategy (1b).
    - 1. Get rid of all hindrances.
    - 2. Get ready for hardship.
    - 3. Stay on the course.
- II. Keep remembering (2-3).
  - A. Remember who Jesus is (2a).
    - 1. He’s the One who started the race.
    - 2. He’s the One who will finish it.
  - B. Remember what Jesus did (2b).
    - 1. He focused on future joy.
    - 2. He endured the cross.
    - 3. He despised shame.
    - 4. He received His reward.
  - C. Remember how much Jesus suffered (3).
    - 1. We’ll never suffer as much as He did.
    - 2. We’ll never give up as long as we remember Him.

Application: Three lessons to remember regarding suffering...

- 1. Remember that suffering has a limit.
- 2. Remember that suffering has a purpose.
- 3. Remember that suffering is a way to please our Father and identify with our Savior.

It’s a joy to be back with you after a refreshing time away that you graciously gave Sherry and me. Thank you. I’m grateful for the team of people that God has raised up at WBC, a body with members who serve in so many ways. So while we were away, the body continued to function as God intends, for His glory.

Christ is the object of it all. When it comes to life, Christ should be the center, the purpose, the focus, the *object* of it all. And when He is, it shows. This summer we’ve been looking at verbs in the New Testament that show us what it looks like to make Christ the object of it all. We’ve seen action verbs like opening, following, abiding, knowing, suffering, and others.

Three weeks, you pondered the verb *walking*, as Michael helped us see in his exposition of 1 Peter 1. Two weeks ago, Pastor Matt showed us it involves *remembering*, from 1 Corinthians 11, and specifically remembering Christ through the observance of communion. And then last week Rex took us to John 21, and demonstrated from Peter’s restoration that it involves *loving*. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?

Today it’s *running*.

*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 12:1-3*

There’s an event that I’ve seen several times in my life. I saw it happen once at our kitchen table. It happened another time while I was sitting in an easy chair in someone’s living room. On yet another occasion I was standing by a hospital bed.

---

<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Hebrews series 5/3/09.

I recall seeing it happen several times across the desk in my study. It's happened in this very room, too. And each time the event took place, my heart rejoiced!

Perhaps you can guess the event. Some of the most thrilling moments in my life occurred when God privileged me to watch His Spirit perform the miracle of new birth.

It's exhilarating to see people come to know Jesus Christ! One moment the person is lost, dead in sin, separated from God. The next moment the same person is a regenerated, cleansed, child of God! A breathtaking transformation occurred. Whereas moments before the person was weighed down with the load of sin, but now he's set free from his bondage and reconciled to God.

I've seen people cry. At other times I've seen them beam with amazement. Quite often people will say to me, "Pastor, I feel like a great weight has been lifted from my shoulders. Wow! What a great feeling!"

And it is. Can you relate? Do you know for sure that God has forgiven your sins and given you new birth?

Those first days, weeks, and even months are thrilling for the new Christian. It's like you're walking on cloud nine. The sky seems bluer, the grass greener, and the future brighter. You think about heaven and ponder what it will be like to see Jesus. And you want the whole world to know what He did for you.

But as time passes, there's something that inevitably occurs, for all of us. The feelings begin to wane. Oh, you still love Jesus, and you're still amazed at what He did for you. But you begin to observe something that perplexes you.

Life is still hard. In fact, in some ways life gets even harder once you become a Christian because now you're in a battle. You have three enemies that war against your soul—the world, the flesh, and the devil. And the temptation to go back to the old ways is ever present.

Is it easy to be a *biblical* Christian (I use the term "biblical" because not all who call themselves "Christian" are indeed *biblical* Christians—some are cultural Christians)? The answer is no.

The truth is, if we profess allegiance to Jesus Christ and acknowledge that He alone is Lord, we are asserting something that's very offensive to a society that promotes tolerance and pluralism. Even religious people will attack us, and call us things like "radical" and "narrow-minded."

And we may get weary and discouraged. We may feel like throwing in the towel.

What should we do when life gets hard? We find the answer in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a book designed to encourage and motivate Christians to hang in there.

In its original setting, God used a writer unknown to us to urge Jewish Christians to persevere. Some of them were contemplating quitting and returning to the old ways of Judaism. Hebrews says, "Don't turn back! Remain on course!"

How do you motivate the discouraged and disillusioned? Hebrews does it by putting the spotlight on Christ. In chapters 1-7, we learn that Christ is superior in His person. Then in chapters 8-10, the author shows that Christ is superior in His redemptive work.

And if Christ is superior, it's unthinkable to turn back to the status quo and settle for a deficient system of works like Judaism offered.

We need Hebrews for we, too, get discouraged at times. We, too, young and older Christians alike, may feel like giving up. Oh, we may not stop calling ourselves a "Christian," but we stop living like one, for a Christian is a Christ-follower, and while we may still follow Christ to church on a fairly regular basis, that's about as far as it goes.

So how do we make Christ the object of it all when life is hard? God's Word gives us very practical counsel in Hebrews 12. According to Hebrews 12:1-3, it boils down to two basic, essential responsibilities.

Grammatically, in the Greek text and unlike in our English translations, there are only two main verbs in verses 1-3, with a host of participles and phrases that modify these two main verbs. The first main verb occurs at the end of verse 1 and identifies our first responsibility.

### I. Keep running (1).

Verse 1 states, ““Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”<sup>2</sup>

The main verb in verse 1 occurs at the end, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” The Christian life is likened to a race, and not a sprint either. Living for Christ is like running a distance race.

“Let us run,” the text exhorts us. The Greek verb is *trechomen*, and could be translated, “Let's keep on running.” That indicates Christianity is not a spectator sport. We must exert effort, not to enter the Christian life, no, but certainly to live it.

We're running a race, a race which began at our conversion and will end when we die. “So let's run!” the writer urges us.

But how do you run when you don't feel like running, or worse, when you feel like quitting? The rest of the verse tells us what's involved in running this race, namely, two particulars.

**A. The race involves a crowd (1a).** Most of the distance races I ever ran in high school didn't have much of a crowd. When the gun sounded to begin the Cross Country race, there were the contestants, some coaches, a few parents, and maybe a squirrel or two.

But in the race of the Christian life, there's a crowd. The text begins, “Therefore, since we are surrounded [KJV, “compassed about”] by such a great cloud of witnesses.”

Though we may feel like it at times, we're not alone in the race. Just what is this “great cloud of witnesses?” And if they're “surrounding” us, how come we can't see them? Where is this crowd?

The text calls them “witnesses.” The Greek word is *marturon* from which we get the English word “martyr.” This is a different kind of crowd. It's not a crowd that's looking at us. Rather, we're to look at them.

Where are they? Actually, they're in heaven but their names appear in the preceding chapter. Who are these martyrs that inspire us to run the race for Christ? They're the people of faith mentioned in chapter 11: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, David, and others.

What do all these witnesses have in common? First, they are all people who exhibited faith, who believed God and obeyed God no matter how hard it became. And secondly, they completed their races. They kept going until they reached the finish line, and reached the country for which their hearts longed.

---

<sup>2</sup> The NIV says, “...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Beloved, we are surrounded by this “cloud of witnesses.” The witnesses aren’t spectators. I don’t believe the intent of this verse is to teach that they’re witnessing what we’re doing (they’re focused on something much more glorious than us). Instead, they are *bearing witness* to us that by God’s help we can make it just like they did.

Do you hear them? Abel lived by faith, and it cost him his life—but he finished his race. Noah lived by faith, built an ark, and the world mocked him—but he finished his race. Abraham obeyed God even when it didn’t make sense—and he finished his race. In fact, Hebrews 11:13 puts it plainly, “All these people were still living by faith when they died.”

The point is twofold.

1. *Others have finished the race.* They didn’t give up. They didn’t quit when things got tough. They persevered. They kept taking God at His Word. They kept living by faith.

2. *We can do the same.* We, too, can finish the course.

Several years ago, a friend gave me one of those gadgets that test your problem-solving skills. It’s a piece of wood with three pegs in it, an attached rope, and a ring. The object is to move the rope in such a way that you release the ring. Sounds simple enough, doesn’t it?

My family spent hours trying to figure out the puzzle. Every so often one of us would say, “I don’t think it can be done. It’s impossible.”

Then in June of that year, the Scioto Hills Camp staff came to our house one evening, and Sherry handed the object to Gary Storm and said, “Here’s a puzzle for you. If you can figure it out, I’ll give you a million dollars.” Twenty minutes later Gary handed her the ring, and we’ll be in his debt for a long, long time.

When you’re facing a challenge, doesn’t it encourage you to know that others have made it? Sure, the Christian life *is* hard, but by God’s grace countless others have finished this race. And so can we.

Are you discouraged right now, my friend? Listen to the crowd. Listen to Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the rest. Did they ever get discouraged? Sure, they did. But they fixed their eyes on God, and by His strength they reached the end of the course. And their examples are on the page in front of us, in black and white, cheering us on, “Keep going! You can make it!”

You may be thinking, “Wait a minute. It takes more than hype to finish a race. Is there something specific we must do if we’re going to finish the race?” Yes, there is.

**B. The race involves a strategy (1b).** The strategy is very specific. There are three decisions we must make, all enabled by grace, if we’re serious about finishing this race.

1. *Get rid of all hindrances.* Notice the text again (NIV), “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, *let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.*”

The last thing we always did before a Cross Country race was remove our sweats, outer shirts, and put on our light-weight spikes. The last thing we wanted to do was carry unnecessary weight around the course.

I vividly remember the State meet, which was always the first Saturday in November. We were scheduled to run around 10:00 in the morning. It was cold that November morning at the Scarlet and Gray golf course in Columbus. The spectators had on winter coats and toboggans, but not the runners. When race time came, we stripped off our warm-up gear, and stood on the starting line wearing the lightest clothing possible. Our

goal wasn't to be comfortable. Our goal was to achieve a mission in this race, namely to bring home a state championship trophy.

Sometimes we forget this reality in the Christian life. The goal isn't our comfort. It's to achieve our mission. And if we're going to achieve the mission our Savior gave us, we need to eliminate some things, two to be specific.

First, we need to get rid of "every weight" (ESV and KJV; in the NIV "everything that hinders"). In the Greek text it's the word *ogkon*. In classical Greek the word *ogkon* referred to excess physical weight as well as any burdensome load.

What are these "weights" that need to go for the Christian? To put it simply, a weight is anything that hinders one's progress. It could be a habit, a distracting ambition, a possession, or even a person.

You don't run with heavy boots and a trench coat, not if the race is long and you want to win. Anything that handicaps us must go. Someone has well observed, "If we would travel far, we must travel light."<sup>3</sup>

Right here may be why some of us are discouraged about the race. We're carrying around excess baggage. The hindrances may be, in fact, good things and not sinful things.

For instance, work is good, but it can become an idolatrous pursuit. Having friends is good, but we can become obsessed with wanting people to like us. This too is an *ogkon*, a weight.

Do you have anything in your life that is hindering your Christian walk? Busy-ness can be a weight. So can the love of pleasure. Screen time. What are we supposed to do with hindrances that keep us from running the race well? Throw them off!

But there's something else that needs to go, too, according to the ESV, "sin which clings so closely". The writer doesn't mention any particular sin. The NIV identifies it as "the sin that so easily entangles." It's not *a* sin, but *the* sin. Likely, the author is referring to the sin of unbelief which is the opposite of the trait for which he commended the witnesses in chapter 11.

Why did Abraham and Noah and Moses keep going even when the race became hard? The bottom line is this. They *believed* God. And why is it that others give up? It boils down to this sin. *Unbelief*. Faith is "trusting in the person of God and living in light of the promises of God regardless of how we feel." But a person who gives up stops living that way. They stop living by faith.

Allow me to speak frankly. If you are a person who lives by your feelings, you won't run the race well. When you have a bad day, you won't carve out time to read your Bible and pray. You won't go to your prayer closet and sing to the Lord. You won't give thanks to Him when you lay down at night. And when the Lord's Day comes and you don't feel like coming to church, you won't.

And here's why. It is impossible to run well while we are carrying around the baggage of doubt and self-pity or any other form of unbelief. And if that's how we feel, and most of us do from time to time, we would do well to pray the words of the struggling father in Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Get rid of all hindrances. Throw them off. That's the first decision that's vital if we're serious about running and finishing well in this race.

---

<sup>3</sup> Barclay, 172.

2. *Get ready for hardship.* Notice the phrase that follows the command to run, “Let us run *with endurance* [NIV “perseverance”, “patience” in the KJV].” What does the word “endurance” imply about running the race? It won’t be easy! There will be times when we feel like stopping. When that happens, what must we do? Endure! Persevere!

The author offered a similar charge back in 10:35-36, “So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to *persevere* so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.”

Again, I think back to Cross Country days. A vital part of running a good race occurred before the gun ever sounded. We would inspect the course and find out where the tough spots might be. Where were the sharp turns, the low branches, the tight places where runners might bottle-neck? Was there any water, any slippery places? And of course, were there hills, and if so, how steep were they, and how long?

Before the gun ever sounded, it was vital to prepare ourselves mentally for what was coming. In running, preparation is half the battle. It’s no different in the Christian life.

One of the first things I tell new believers is that hard times will come. Not *may* come but *will* come. Why do I tell them that? Because it’s true. I don’t want little ones in the faith to be surprised when life gets hard and the feelings associated with their first love begin to diminish.

They need to know there will be unexpected turns, and tight spots, and hills to overcome, and that they might slip at times, and possibly go down. They need to get ready for the hardship that’s coming.

Will there be grace for each challenge? Yes indeed! But they’re still challenges, and they are real.

This brings us to the third decision in this divine strategy. One, get rid of all hindrances. Two, get ready for hardship.

3. *Stay on the course.* Verse 1 concludes (NIV), “Let us run with perseverance *the race marked out for us.*” The ESV & KJV refer to it as the race “that is set before us.” Please note that our course is predetermined, by God of course. We don’t invent the course. That’s not our prerogative. It’s God’s.

Furthermore, the race that is set before each believer is distinctive. To put it plainly, no two Christians run the same race. No two Christians face the same challenges in this race. Yes, there are similarities, but our wise, Heavenly Father tailor-makes the course He wants us to run.

Our task is to stay on the course that God marks out for us. But sometimes that’s not so easy to do. When a person cries out, “Why me?” what they are really saying is, “Why do I have to run this course, God? I’d rather run the course You’ve given Bill or Mary!”

Think about it. Abel, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph all faced challenges. But the specific challenges they encountered were different, for they each ran a different course, the course mapped out for them by our wise, Sovereign God.

Beloved, ponder this carefully. God has designed a special course for each of His children, including you if you know His Son. The course will involve breathtaking views along the way, as well as deep ravines to cross and hills to conquer. And there will be grace sufficient for every obstacle. This is His promise to us.

And does He want us to do? What does He ask of us? It’s not complicated. *Stay on course*, He says. To borrow the words of the hymnwriter, it’s to say, “Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way; You are the Potter, I am the clay.”

Just keep running. This is our first responsibility. When life gets hard, we must keep running.

This raises some important questions. What are we supposed to do while we're running and feel like quitting? What fuels this race? What generates the power necessary to finish the course? What should be our focus in the race? The answer brings us to our second responsibility.

## II. Keep remembering (2-3).

Remembering what? Look at verse 2. The NIV says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus." The word "fix" is actually a participle in the Greek text, and is translated "looking to Jesus" in the ESV ("looking unto Jesus" in the KJV). It modifies the command, "Let us run," in verse 1.

This is what we are supposed to do while we're running the race. We're to look to Jesus. We're to fix our gaze on Jesus.

What a runner does with his eyes is key. If he looks around, he might stumble. If he looks back, he could break stride or even fall. To run efficiently, he must run with a proper focus.

Listen friends. It's easy for a Christian to lose his focus, especially when the race gets hard. What should we do to maintain or regain proper focus? The answer is, *remember*. Remember what? Remember Jesus, and specifically, three things regarding Jesus and are identified in verses 2-3.

**A. Remember who Jesus is (2a).** The ESV says, "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith." The NIV reads, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." What's true of our Savior? We're given two descriptive titles right here.

First, He's the "author" of our faith. And second, He's the "perfecter" [or "finisher", KJV] of our faith. Actually, the word "our" isn't in the text. The literal rendering says Jesus is the "author and perfecter of *the* faith."

What's that indicate about Jesus? Two things...

1. *He's the One who started the race.* He's the *founder*. What's more...

2. *He's the One who will finish it.* In other words, Jesus is the pioneer of faith.

He's also its perfection.<sup>4</sup>

Beloved, when life gets hard, remember who Jesus is. Earlier in Hebrews 3:1, the author gave a similar exhortation, "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, *fix your thoughts on Jesus*, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."

**B. Remember what Jesus did (2b).** "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame [NIV "scorning its shame"], and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (ESV)."

Think of this, my friend. Jesus already did what we're called to do. It's true. He entered this world as the God-man and ran the course His Father placed before Him. Was it an easy course, a best life now course? No. His course took Him to a cross.

This is what we must remember as we're running. We need to remember what our Savior did, specifically four activities mentioned here.

---

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, p. 352.

1. *He focused on future joy.* “Who for the joy set before him,” the text reads. What motivated Jesus to go to the cross? Why did He do it? He set His focus on “the joy set before him.”

What was “the joy” set before Jesus? Was it the anticipation of returning to heaven? In part. Was it the expectation of securing a redeemed people? In part, for we are His inheritance (Eph 1:18). Was it because He knew He’d come out of the tomb alive? Again, in part, yes. But I think it was something else, something bigger.

Please realize this. When our Lord came to earth, He laid aside the independent use of His divine power for His own personal needs. For instance, when Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread (Matt 4:1-4), He refused. He stayed on the course. What kept Him going as He faced this and many other forms of hardship? It was the joy set before Him, yes, but what was that joy?

I think Jesus Himself reveals the answer in His prayer in John 17:1-4, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”

Stop there for a moment. What did Jesus say His Father did? In eternity past, the Father gave the Son a gift. What was the gift? It was a chosen people. And what did the Son do? He came into the world to give eternal life to the chosen people His Father had given to Him.

Jesus continues talking to His Father in verse 3, “Now this is eternal life: that they [who? The love gift, the people the Father gave to the Son] may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

That was the task His Father had given to Him. That was the Savior’s course, to give His life to redeem the helpless love-gift.

Ponder that. Because the Father loved His Son, He gave His Son the gift of an elect people who would exist for His praise throughout eternity. And to prove His love for His Father, the Son entered the world to redeem this chosen people. That was His course.

Did the Son finish His course? Listen to the Son’s answer this question in verse 4, “I have brought you glory on earth on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”

What then was the joy set before Jesus? It was fulfilling His Father’s plan. It was the anticipation of returning to heaven, looking into the eyes of the Father He loves, saying to His Father, “Father, mission accomplished!” And hearing His Father say, “Well done, my Son. Well done!”

What brought joy to Jesus was pleasing His Father. Is that true of us? Is that what matters most to us? If it is, it will enable us to keep running when the course gets bumpy.

Remember what He did, brothers and sisters. Remember first how He focused on future joy. And where it took Him.

2. *He endured the cross.* That’s an interesting word. What happened on the cross? Yes, Jesus died there, but that’s not all. Here we’re told He “endured” the cross.

We don’t like to endure. If we had it our way, we’d choose immediate gratification and seek to avoid every unpleasant circumstance. But not our Savior. He endured the cross.

Please keep in mind that death by crucifixion was the most humiliating form of execution one could experience in the first century. It was illegal to crucify a Roman citizen. The Romans reserved this punishment for the worst of the worst, for those they deemed unfit to live. Crucifixion was degrading and disgraceful.

But with eyes focused on future joy, Jesus endured the cross.



3. *He despised shame.* “Scorning its shame,” says the NIV. The verb comes from the Greek *kataphroneo*, meaning “to look down on.” Jesus looked down on, He *scorned* the shame of the cross.

Ponder the depth of this mystery, fellow Christian. “The shame of the cross, where Christ bore the sins of the world, is something infinitely more intense than the pain of the cross,” says commentator Philip Hughes. “Others have suffered the pain of crucifixion, but he alone has endured the shame of human depravity in all its foulness and degradation.”<sup>5</sup>

Please realize that the shame of the cross would have been far more offensive to Jesus than to us. Why? Because He was perfect, not one trace of sin in His life. Yet on the cross Jesus was treated as though He had committed the sins of the people in whose place He was dying. Think of it. Though He had never committed even one sin, He took upon Himself a world of sin, and endured the just punishment for those sins. No wonder He despised the shame of the cross. But that’s not the end of the story, is it?

4. *He received His reward.* “And sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (NIV).” Talk about a transfer! From the lowest, most demeaning, degrading place imaginable, the cross. To the highest, most important place in the universe, the throne of God!

We don’t think enough about the ascension. What a day it was, when Jesus returned to His Father, to the place and position He had enjoyed before He ever entered the world. But now He returns, with His mission accomplished, and the love gift rescued, and an eternity of praise from those people guaranteed.

And what position does He take when He returns to His heavenly throne? “He is seated,” says the ESV. Don’t miss that. A runner never sits down. But Jesus *sat down*. Why? Because His race was over. He’d finished His course.

Oh, beloved, when life gets hard this week, remember. Remember who Jesus is, and remember what Jesus did. But the writer beckons us to go further.

**C. Remember how much Jesus suffered (3).** We come to the second main verb of the section. The first was “run” in verse 1. Here’s the second. In the ESV, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”<sup>6</sup>

*Consider.* It’s an accounting term meaning “to take an account of.” The idea is “contemplate.” The Greek word is *analogisasthe*. Our English word “analogy” is a transliteration of it. The text is urging us to make a mental analogy and compare our sufferings with what our Savior suffered. If we do that, we come to this inescapable conclusion.

1. *We’ll never suffer as much as He did.* What did Jesus endure? “Consider him who endured such *opposition* from sinful men.” Opposition, *antilogian*, meaning “speech against.” Oh, the hostile ridicule our Savior experienced!

Brothers and sisters, we’ll never suffer as much as He did. Never. And here’s why we need to think about that.

---

<sup>5</sup> Philip Hughes, Hebrews, p. 525.

<sup>6</sup> In the NIV, “Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

2. *We'll never give up as long as we remember Him.* As long as we remember Christ, here are two outcomes that will *not* occur in our lives. “Consider Him...so that you will *not grow weary and lose heart.*”

I love Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Hebrews 12:1-3 taken from *The Message*: “Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s *there*, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. *That* will shoot adrenaline into your souls!”

When Christ is the object of it all, this is the evidence. We run with our eyes fixed on Him. So, keep running, brothers and sisters. And keep remembering.

Take steps to remember. Be in the Book every day. Be in the church whenever possible. Be intentional about singing songs and memorizing verses that rehearse what Jesus endured on the cross.

Application: Three lessons to remember regarding suffering...

1. *Remember that suffering has a limit.* It will end. It will not last forever, not for the child of God.

2. *Remember that suffering has a purpose.* The events of life are not haphazard. Our Father in heaven has mapped out a course for us. So trust Him.

3. *Remember that suffering is a way to please our Father and identify with our Savior.* And in the light of eternity, there’s nothing that matters more.

I must clarify that if you are not God’s child, you will suffer forever. If you leave this world trusting in yourself and your own good works rather than in Christ Jesus alone, you will not head to a “better place,” as naïve people often wrongly describe the afterlife.

We’re told in Hebrews 9:27–28, “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,<sup>28</sup> so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

Christ has paid the penalty of sin. Who benefits from His payment? Those who repent and believe in Him do. What will happen to those who don’t repent and believe, who are not waiting for Him?

Hebrews 12:28–29 declares, “Our God is a consuming fire.” My unbelieving friend, I urge you to call on Christ today, put your faith in Him alone, and ask Him to save you! Join the ranks of the cloud of witnesses who know that suffering has a limit, has a purpose, and is a way to please our Father and identify with our worthy Savior.

**Closing Song:** #385 “*Near the Cross*” (all three verses)

**Closing charge:** Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.

**Next week:** “*Longing to See Christ*” 2 Timothy 4:6-8