

“Therefore, Let Us ... Lay Aside”

“Therefore, let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith ...” (Heb. 12:1-2a).

The word *“therefore”* tells that the admonition which follows is tied to and issued in view of things which earlier spoken. Those preceding things were the examples of faith which had been exhibited in both those who lived before Abraham (Abel, Enoch, Noah) and the many who lived after him. Nor was this saving, obedient faith demonstrated only in Abraham’s children: Rahab the harlot -- a Gentile woman had demonstrated her faith in receiving the spies with peace.

Yet, strong as was the faith of all those who had preceded them, they received not the promise. They were to be perfected along with those of us in this new covenant given by our Lord Jesus Christ. We are compassed about with a great a cloud of witnesses. The idea is that Hebrews Christians were in the arena of life, playing their game as well. There were many in the “grandstands” interested in them: their struggles, their trials, their triumphs and they, by their past successes, urged Hebrews on to attain as they had also attained. Noble women were among this number of interested spectators -- Sarah and Rahab. There were kings, judges, prophets, soldiers, prime ministers, lawgivers, and many who were unnamed. Through faith they *“subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens ...”* (Heb. 11:22f).

We are to *“lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”* Two things stand out in this phrase: weights and the besetting sin. Different burden which lay heavy upon the children of men and come in different forms and shapes. Sickness ... responsibilities ... debt ... sorrow ... old age. All these things may trouble different ones of us. Sometimes we say, “Life gets tedious,” and surely it does! Solomon said of those in old age that the “grasshopper” was a burden. Poverty is a weight for many. Their children have needs, needs they cannot supply. They exist from hand to mouth, and never seem to get their head above water. Care for children or aged loved ones is a weight for some. These forgo any thought of their own pleasure, serving, caring for their loved ones. Some are lonely. Their mates are dead. Most of their friends also have passed on. Yes, all these things can be burdensome. Release from our weights can be sweet and bring great relief.

We must lay aside the *"sin which doth so easily beset us."* This sin is not, as some suppose, a different weakness in different individuals. The besetting sin is that which the writer has persistently warned against, unbelief, the besetting sin of us all! Early on the writer had warned, *"Take heed, brethren, lest haply there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief"* (3:12). Following on the heels of that admonition was his warning: *"We see they were not able to enter in because of unbelief"* (Heb. 3:19).

How hard to walk by faith, to live by faith! How difficult to live in a land of dying, of wearing out, to be part of a fast disappearing generation and yet look confidently to things unseen! But we must! We dare not look back! We must look unto to Jesus, the author (captain), the quickener of our faith, who is also the Perfecter of our faith. Let none of us grow weary but let us seek for and press unto the land that is fairer than day.

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