

Jesus is a **BETTER EXAMPLE**  
(Hebrews 11 & 12:1-2)

What happens when people keep their 'eyes on the prize', seeing what is, as yet, 'unseen', persevering toward a goal that seems impossible?

In the year 1855, at the dawn of modern "professional" athletics, the world record for running the mile was 4 minutes 28 seconds.

For a full century, people thought the 4-minute mile barrier was unbreakable, until Roger Bannister did it, in 1954.

What's the IMPACT of just *1 example* showing us something can be done?

People now had **HOPE!** And **FAITH** to live in light of that hope:

*Did you hear? Roger's done it! He broke the 4-minute mile?*

*Who else will give it a go?*

Consider the ripple effect of this 1 example who with 'eyes on the prize', pursued the "unseen", the "too hard":

- For a century, it was considered "Undoable"
- Only one month later, Aussie John Landy broke it again!!
- 3 years later, 16 men had broken it!

Technology did not suddenly advance in 1 month! Nor 3 years. Neither did coaching. What changed? Living in hope, by faith!

- As of Today, nearly 5,000 men have officially broken the 4-minute mile!

The *increasing examples* give us *increasing hope* that something is 'Doable' rather than Impossible.

This is what the writer of Hebrews is on about in chapter 11, **examples** of *FAITH* that give us *HOPE* to persevere in the faith, despite very difficult circumstances.

Hebrews chapter 11 begins,

*"**FAITH** is the assurance of things **HOPED** for . . . ."*

And the author '**frames**' chapter 11 with very end & beginning of chapters 10 & 12, motivating us to run not the mile, but the race of faith, and our need to run it with endurance, through to the finish line!

• 10:32, 36

*"you've **endured** a hard struggle with sufferings.... you [still] have need of **endurance**, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*

• 12:1-2

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ... let us **RUN** with **endurance** the **RACE** that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Founder & Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him **endured** the cross...."*

Right in the centre of the picture frame is the '**portrait**', chapter 11:

*The "Cloud of Witnesses" . . . EXAMPLES of enduring faith!*

Chapter 10 ends,

*"My righteous one shall live by faith . . . ." (10:38)*

Then, "*by faith*" occurs 20x in chapter 11! It's one massive encouragement of many **EXAMPLES** of what it *looks like* to **live by faith**, faith that **endures/finishes the race** & obtains the prize of eternal life. And the "capstone", the 1 Example par excellence we are called to "fix our eyes upon", is Jesus, in 12:1-2.

Main Idea:

Consider **Examples** who lived by Faith in God's Promises

Our Outline:

Flawed Examples of Faith (11:1-40)

Flawless Example Faith (12:1-2)

The (obvious) Title:

Jesus is a Better **Example!** (Jesus is *both* our Example of faith & object of Faith)

Obviously, with so many verses, we only have time to "glean" from these examples.

But what *glorious gleaning* of faith!

The word "faith" is such a misunderstood word these days . . .

In "The Devil's Dictionary" by Ambrose Bierce, here's the entry for "Faith":

**Belief without evidence of what is told,  
by one who speaks without knowledge  
of things without parallel.**

Clearly, we need to start by grasping what true biblical *faith* actually is.

So before getting into the many **EXAMPLES** of faith, first we must consider the . . .

A] **ESSENCE** of Faith (11:1-6)

- 1) *Rational* (vv. 1-3)
- 2) *Personal* (vv. 3ff.)
- 3) *Hopeful* (vv. 1, 6)

1) Faith is **Rational**

Faith being "*conviction of things not seen*" (v.1),

does not mean faith is "**blind**"! (Faith is not the opposite of reason!  
Faith is not a "feeling".)

Verse 1 can be legitimately translated 2 ways:

from the perspective of either *internal convictions* or *external evidence*:

1] Faith is the REALITY of what is hoped for, the PROOF of what is not seen (CSB: external proof)

2] Faith is the ASSURANCE of things hoped for, the CONVICTION of things not seen (ESV: internal convictions)

Someone can be *convicted* of a crime due to *evidence* against them, and

Someone can have *internal convictions* based on reasons that *stand up* to evidence.

Both translations are good, since they 'sync' together perfectly:

Internal *persuasion* should sprout from reasonable *proofs*.

Whether 'proof' or 'persuasion', *biblical* faith is not 'blind' faith.

Whether it's . . .

- Doctor Luke to Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4)  
“from the first **eyewitnesses** ... I myself have **carefully investigated** everything from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, Theophilus ... so that you may have **certainty**.”
- Paul’s Death-row Defence (Acts 26:24-25)  
I am speaking **true & rational words**. The king is familiar with [Messiah’s death and resurrection], So, to him **I speak boldly**...for this has **not happened in a corner!**
- Israel about to Enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 7:17)  
**Remember** what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt.  
**You SAW with your own eyes** the great signs & wonders....”

So, biblical ‘**Faith**’ is *rational*, based on God’s **PROVEN Faithfulness**.

It’s ‘*past-proven*’, built on *past fulfilments* of God’s promises

And thankfully: “**He** who promised is **faithful**.” (Heb 10:23 and 11:11)

Top put the nail in the coffin, 11:3 expresses the same *rational* aspect of faith:

By faith we **understand** that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made from things that are **visible**.

Christians don’t need to take the ‘leap of faith’ that chemical materialism does: that matter is *somehow* eternal, that matter only comes from matter (the ‘visible’), & *somehow* non-living matter ‘sprung to life’, on its own accord. A ‘*deep leap*’ of faith!

Rather, God is the eternally living Creator, giving the world & us our existence and life.

This verse reminds me of a story about the opposite of FAITH . . . SCEPTICISM/CYNICISM.

It’s a parable about a family of mice, who lived all their lives *inside* of a large piano. From time to time, their piano-world was filled with music from the instrument, and all the empty spaces would echo with beautiful sound and harmony.

At first the mice drew comfort and wonder from the realisation that there was someone who made the music — though invisible to them — someone beyond, yet close . . . the Great Piano Player, whom they could not see.

Then one day, a daring mouse climbed up part of the piano and returned from his ‘expedition’. He had discovered how the music was made. Wires were the secret — tightly stretched wires of varying lengths that vibrated due to the pounding of hammers. It all went to show that they lived in a *purely mechanical world*.

They must revise all their old beliefs! They could no longer believe in the Unseen Player. So, the idea of the Unseen Player was viewed as a “myth” . . . although the *real* pianist continued to play!

Faith has eyes of *reason* to see the invisible God and to trust His *trustworthy* word.

And faith is not just Rational. It’s also . . .

## 2) **Personal**

Faith is not just some “academic” thing, acceptance of a set of theoretic ideas.

Faith is a *dynamic personal trust* in God that impacts our lives . . .

Look at the shift between Verses 2-3, from *history* to *everybody*:

By faith the people of old . . . (v.2)

By faith **WE** understand . . . (v. 3)

Then the writer launches into *personal* story after *personal* story of people who responded to God’s call in *personal* faith:

*Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and more.*

And so it is with each of us . . . “We” are called to *personally* respond to God by faith.

Please understand this is really important. Why?

*By faith the people of old received their **commendation**.*” (v.2)

*By faith, Abel . . . was **commended** as righteous* (v.3)

*By faith, Enoch . . . was **commended** as having pleased God.* (v.5)

*And all these, **commended** through their faith . . . .* (v.39)

*Without faith, it is impossible to **please** God* (v.6)

It’s really important because we come into **relationship** with God through faith.

“We’re saved by grace **THROUGH FAITH** – not by your works – it is the **GIFT** of God.” (Ephesians 2:8).

Relationship with our Creator was broken by our sin.

But God promised to provide a way of reconciliation – through the **gift** of His Son, Jesus, hanging on a cross in our place, the righteous in place of the unrighteous!

It is **by faith** – that is **relying on** Jesus’ righteous sacrifice alone to pay our sins – that we are saved us from *eternal condemnation* and granted us *eternal life* with God!

And that does not just ‘happen’ on its own.

Jesus said, “*you must be born again to enter the kingdom of God*”

That is, we each must *personally* choose to trust in Jesus as our Saviour & Lord.

Have you done that, personally? Repented of self-righteous self-rule & trusted in Jesus?

If not, I urge you this Father’s Day,

to come to know your Heavenly Father, through faith in Jesus.

One more reason faith’s so important – not just for eternal life, but for life *right now* . . .

- **Faith is Hopeful**

11:6 – *Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He **REWARDS** those who seek Him.*

Biblical faith is not only **God**-focused, but **Forward**-Focused . . . *Hopeful!!*

Not only does God exist.

He also **promises Reward** to those who seek Him!

*Do not throw away your confidence, which has a **GREAT REWARD**.*” (10:35)

*By faith Abraham went to live in the land of **promise** . . . with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same **promise**.* (11:9)

*By faith . . . Sarah considered God faithful who had **promised**.* (11:11)

*“the things **promised** . . . .”* (11:13)

*“By faith Abraham . . . had received the **promises** . . . .”* (11:17)

*“who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained **promises** . . . .”*

*“ . . . receive what was **promised**”* (11:39)

The Christian race is very demanding but very rewarding. That’s God’s promise!

Aspects of biblical faith now tie together, that God’s *past-proven* faithfulness, and His *future-promised* reward, motivates a *present perseverance* within us, called hope.

Put more briefly:

Faith is past-proven, but future-focused to bring present-perseverance!

*“you have need of endurance so that . . . you may receive what is **promised**.”* (10:36)

Friends, our society is becoming more and more depressed & despairing because our society more and more *lacks faith*, and *examples* of faith.

Because without *faith* we are without assurance of things *hoped* for & without meaning or purpose. Suicide rates are higher than ever, in fact, in epidemic proportions.

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* recently reported that the **majority** of medically assisted suicide cases in Europe were granted on psychiatric grounds, not 'terminal illness' reasons!<sup>1</sup> Despair!

Ray Comfort has produced a sobering mini-movie called **EXIT**

I want to show a 20 second-clip with just 1 of many people interviewed. She comments on her own outlook on life & the outlook of someone else who wrote a suicide letter.

**{PLAY CLIP 1}**

Friends, life is **TOUGH** in a fallen world filled sinners!

But without faith it is far more despairing!

That person *desperately* needs faith & hope in Christ for *life here & now!*

So does actress Amanda Peet!...Here's just 20 more seconds from **Exit** **{CLIP 2}**

"I don't want to be a bag of dust! **I need to know what to believe in!**", she cried.

Amen! Here is the answer:

- We are fearfully & wonderfully created by God, designed with His purposes.
- Though we've all sinned and fall short of God's glory,
- God so loved the world, He gave His Son, Jesus, so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life.

That's what and Whom "to believe in" – Jesus – for meaningful, hope-filled life **now**, as well as eternally.

Amidst increasing persecution today in the West, even with faith, life can still be tough. So without further ado, we come to these motivational . . .

## **B] EXAMPLES of Faith (11:7-40)**

Please do NOT approach this well-known chapter thinking,

"Wow. I **cannot relate** to these 'heroes' of faith!"

That's not the writer's point! We'll see at the very end of the chapter, it's is sort of the opposite. We have an *advantage*, a *leg up* on these OT believers, because of Jesus.

We DO relate, so I titled this section: **Flawed** Examples of Faith:

- **Moses** killed an Egyptian who was beating up a Jew.
- **Rahab** was a prostitute when she came to fear the Lord.
- **Jephthah!** the rash military judge brought his daughter to a tragic death.
- **David** – an adulterer with Bathsheba, who set up Uriah to be slain in battle as a cover up

These people had serious issues – JUST LIKE US!

These flawed examples of faith give us great hope – because we, too, are flawed!

If they persevered in faith, so can we!

These examples all knew that it's not our "best life now", but our best life is in glory.

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<sup>1</sup> In the 3 countries of Netherlands, Belgium & Switzerland, as cited by Al Mohler, *The Briefing*.

Therefore, biblical faith is *exemplified* as:

- **Cost-counting & Glory-gazing** (focused on God & His promises to us)

*"This light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison!"<sup>2</sup>*

- **NOAH** (v. 7) had to spend years building a massive boat on dry land at a time in history when there'd been no rain! O, the *ridicule* he'd have faced!

Bonus: all those years, he got to preach judgment is coming! So many friends had he!

But was it worth it?

You bet! He and his household were saved & he became an heir of righteousness.

- **ABRAHAM** (vv.8ff)

*"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to GO OUT / LEAVE his homeland, to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, **not knowing** where he was going." (v.8)*

*'We've left Lord. Now, where are we going to 'settle down', Lord?'*

*'I'll tell you later, Abraham. By the way, I will give you and Sarah a son!'*

*'How, Lord? We're seriously old!'*

*'Just trust My word, Abe.'*

And when Abraham and Sarah finally, miraculously conceive a promised child in old age, Abraham's faith is again put to test: God says, "*Abe, go offer your only son, Isaac*"

Abe's thinking: "*But Isaac's the child of promise, through whom Messiah would come to bless the world! How will you keep your promise, God?*"

*"I'll show you later, Abe. Trust me! Just go on up the mountain."*

Because faith is past-proven by God's faithfulness & future-focused on God's reward, Abraham's faith refused to put 'limits' to either **his obedience** or **God's power**. Vv.17-19,

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."*

*He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

Isaac was received back from the verge of death, when God provided a lamb as a substitute, a sign of God's un failing provision of man's desperate need, pointing to Jesus.

What's going on? Why is God pushing Abe out of his sense of self-made security?

God's trying to get Abraham (and us) to stop trying to build our lives on sand, and instead to seek out a better city built on a solid foundation.

Was it worth it? You bet!

*Abraham was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God . . . . a better country, that is, a heavenly one". (vv. 10, 16)*

The **Cost-counting** is "worth it" *because* faith is **Glory-gazing!** (future-focused)

What are you really 'looking forward to'? What would you say you're building your life on?

We all have faith in something:

*social status, a relationship, wealth, power, security . . . whatever.*

But whatever 'it' is – it will not die for our sins!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:17

<sup>3</sup> Nice word picture from Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*.

We see the same Cost-counting, Glory-gazing faith in the life of . . .

➤ **MOSES** (vv. 23ff.)

By faith, Moses made a decision to cast his lot with the people of God.

An exceedingly **costly** choice!

As an adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter<sup>4</sup>, Moses abandoned truckloads!: the *social honour, physical pleasures* and *material wealth* that came with being a prince of Egypt!

11:24-26 By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, **refused** to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **choosing** rather to be **mistreated** with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, [why?] for he was looking to the reward.

Far from 'blind', Moses' faith sharpened his vision!

Godly choices are only 'by faith.'

Moses could have remained *comfortable* while His own people suffered.

But he had his 'eyes on the prize': Eyes on the Lord & His reward.

The verb "to look" in v.26 is fascinating,

*"Moses was looking to/fixated on the reward",*

It speaks of a determined choice, to 'look away from one object to focus on another' –

– like an artist, who keeps his gaze *fixated on the model* that he can accurately reproduce it in painting or sculpture. His focus is not on the art piece, but the model.<sup>5</sup>

With eyes of faith, Moses fixated on the Lord, the model, as verse 27 ends,

***"Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible."***

Moses saw the invisible, chose the imperishable!

His faith *sharpened* His vision.

**KEY:** it's only because Moses fixated on 'the Lord & His reward', that he could *look away* from the 'pleasures & treasures' of Egypt.

Where's your life-focus? Treasures on earth or treasures in heaven?

How would you say your faith is "**costing**" you something specific in this life?

In your choices, where/how is *eternal glory* 'overruling' *worldly security*?

Moses' *Refusal* brought **Reproach**, but the *Reward* made it all worth it!

But don't get the wrong idea about this Reward – the wrong idea of "Triumphalism", that faith brings 'success' by the world's standards, "your best life now"!

The West would consider Moses a **failure** . . . giving up his prestige & wealth, wasting 40 'prime' of life years in a tent in Midian, whittling away his final 40 in the wilderness with a bunch of grumblers, dying before Israel entered the *earthly* land of promise.

We all want to be Joshua! *Triumphant conquerors* by human standards.

But without Moses, there is no Joshua!<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Exodus 2:10

<sup>5</sup> Nice illustration from F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*.

<sup>6</sup> Great point made by Matt Chandler speaking at the Southern Baptist Seminary chapel.

But we cannot summarise from **v.32** onward, but stop only prematurely:

*And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection . . . .”*

Woo Hoo! Count me in!

But we cannot stop there. Yes, there were triumphs and some promises fulfilled.

- Sarah did conceive
- Isaac was spared
- Israel was delivered through the Red Sea
- Jericho’s walls did fall.

Even within the Bible These miracles are exceptional. But they’re *portrayed* as normative today, almost the only story filling Christian bookstore shelves and Conferences.

*“Here are 3 techniques guaranteed to stop the mouths of lions in your Christian life & your ministry!”*

But let’s continue right where v.35 left off, noting there was not even transitional “however”. Verse 35 just keeps going with the complete picture:

*Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured . . . <sup>36</sup>Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated.”*

You won’t hear prosperity preachers touch this passage!

Instead of “*named it & claimed it*”/ “*saw it & got it*”,  
it’s “*got sawed in 2 for it!*”

Some Important Questions:

- What Christian biographies have you read (on missionaries, etc.), who’ve motivated you?
- Who are your earthly examples of faith? (Living and Dead)
- How do they stoke you up to live by faith?
- One more profound question for seriously thought:

***“If persecution were legal, would you still be a Christian?”***

It’s easy to quickly answer “yes, of course” . . . but the time may be coming soon to test us in this regard, like legions of Christians throughout the persecuted world today have their faith tested. And in many places, faithfulness to God often leads to *martyrdom*.

And so the author reminds the readers & us of the bigger picture, v. 39:

*“all these, though commended through their faith,  
did NOT receive what was promised/the promise” [singular]*

That promise, *THE* reward, is Jesus Himself & the heavenly glory He brings.

Verse 40 transitions things to Jesus:

*“They did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something BETTER for us,  
that apart from us they should not be made PERFECT.”*

Remember, Jesus is BETTER – that’s the theme of Hebrews.

He’s a Better Word, Better Advocate, bringing a Better Rest, Better Community, etc.

Only Jesus is PERFECT and only Jesus with his once-for-all-time sacrifice can make our conscience perfect.

Jesus – THE promise – did **not** come in their lifetime.

Old covenant believers lived **without** their conscience made perfect in Jesus, **without** a sinless and sympathetic High Priest as their advocate.

YET – these examples still persevered by faith!

If they persevered, then certainly we can **with** Jesus! *That's his point.*

See, knowing Roger Bannister did something *difficult* is motivating to go & do the same!

But it's far more motivating, if a person with a disadvantage / lesser advantage than you does something difficult:

*If "**old-timer**" Dave broke the 4-minute mile after a ruptured Achilles tendon, I certainly can!*

If **old covenant** believers persevered, then certainly we can with Jesus . . .

## FLAWLESS EXAMPLE FAITH ! (12:1-2)

The cloud of witnesses have finished the race. Now it is our turn, and we must run it.

The authors race imagery now pictures us as runners, entering the stadium filled with the witnesses all testifying – "**It's WORTH it! Press on!**" Verse 1,

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

The witnesses inspire us, but they cannot **strengthen** us. Only Jesus can.

So we do not fixate on the them, but on Jesus! Verse 2

LOOKING to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith . . . .

Very similar to the verb used of Moses in 11:26, the verb beginning 12:2, "Looking to" is more literally "look away towards" - describing BOTH turning from & fixating on.

These two 'directions' of focus bring us to our application . . .

### 1. Where we **MUSTN'T** Look! (12:1)

Christian, we cannot afford to be hindered in a race which has eternal consequences!

Two categories are identified as stumbling blocks after we get out of the starting blocks of faith, impediments that might cause us to *fall short* of the finish line . . . .

1] The first category literally "weighs us down",

*"Let us lay aside every **weight** / **encumbrance**" (v.1)*

These are morally-**neutral** things that nonetheless can hinder us.

In the arena, athletes we're to run light, carrying *minimal* load, wearing only *essential* uniform (imagine running, wearing the helmet, padding & gloves of a speed skier!)

We must deliberately **look past** neutral-but-weighty distractions.

In a crowd this size, some of us would be absolutely controlled by morally-neutral things.

Guys, there's a big 'temple' in down the street. It's called Suncorp Stadium!

If you can memorise stats of Broncos players, Origin series wins & Game schedules but not Bible verses or the church ministry calendar . . . it's a heart issue!

Ladies (& Gents), I shudder to ask about your social media use, and how a neutral thing can become *horrible hindrance* from the runner's 'essential uniform', training with God by talking to Him in prayer & listening to His word in Scripture.

- Honestly. . . How's your 'training' regimen?

On a 'scale' how would your minutes 'weigh up':

Minutes/day in recreational 'reading & chatting' on social media

vs.

Time alone with God, family time with God, and time reading *quality* Christian books & articles about missions, evangelism and growing in Christlikeness?

- If you had to identify the single biggest 'weight/encumbrance' in your life distracting you from looking to Jesus . . . what would it be?

And what's your strategy to *look away* from it, to fix your eyes on Jesus?

**2]** The 2<sup>nd</sup> stumbling block is not morally-neutral, but morally-**sinful**:

The successful spiritual athlete must not be **entangled** by sin.

Before we know it, we've been *tripped up & face-planted, beaten to the ground* by sin!

I cannot help but think of this brief scene from the movie *The Incredibles*, where Mr. Incredible is getting a new uniform designed by the quirky Edna Mode [**CLIP—No Capes!**]

'No entangling capes!'

No entangling **SINS!** – says the writer of Hebrews.

Tripped up again & again, when our sin is not brought to the Lord in confession & repentance, sin can bring our race of faith & hope crashing down in **despair & doubt**.

Like Christian & Hopeful, characters in *Pilgrim's Progress*, who on their journey got side-tracked by sin...and ended up in 'Doubting Castle', captive to the 'Giant Despair'.

Recall what Christian said to Hopeful:

*"What a fool I have been, lying down in this stinking dungeon, when I could have just as well walked free. In my chest pocket I have a key called **Promise** that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting-Castle."*

And it did. But Christian needed to *believe* God's promise, live by faith, *use* the key!

What are you despairing about? What promise of God are you doubting?

Don't fixate on your sin by navel-gazing.

By faith, *Count the cost* (repent!) and **Gaze at glory** . . .

## **2. Where we MUST Look (12:2)**

LOOKING to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Runners, during the whole race, we must constantly refocus our eyes onto Jesus.

Christians, when sins do entangle us, to receive the cleansing we need and the forgiveness He bestows, *look afresh* to Jesus – the **Perfect high priest**.

He is the only one who can effectively remove the 'hindrances' of our conscience.

When we feel drained, without energy for one more step the race, we look afresh at Jesus, who took on flesh & genuinely **sympathises** with us.

*"By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to **GO OUT** to a place (to leave his homeland)."*

Jesus understands! He was called to leave His 'Homeland': perfect security, glory of heaven.

The Father said to the Son, "*For these people to be saved, you need to GO OUT!*"

In love, Jesus came down, to be mocked, assaulted, scourged, forsaken, betrayed, imprisoned, falsely accused, murdered – for us.

Jesus knows, and He endured for us.

Jesus calls us to do NOTHING that He has not done Himself!

We can endure far less for Him. And we must.

He won the race for us! We just need finish, even if our 'mile-time' takes 4 **hours** 28 minutes!

Finally, what motivated Jesus' endurance?

*"For/Because of the **JOY** that was set before Him, He endured the cross...."*

So, what exactly was "the **Joy** set before Jesus"?

In part, His joy was saving us, as 2:10 puts it, '*bringing many sons to glory*'.

But there's also the big carrot of the Father's promise of Jesus' **Exaltation!**

*"...seated at the right hand of the throne of God!"*

4 more times in Hebrews, Jesus is described as NOW sitting at the right hand of the God.<sup>7</sup>

If Jesus sought Jesus' exaltation, WE should seek to exalt Jesus. His reward is our reward.

We should and also long for the favour of God that He longed for:

The "right hand" is the hand of **favour**. This is why David wrote,

*"In **Your presence** there is fullness of joy;*

*at **Your right hand** are **pleasures forevermore!**" (Psalm 16:11))*

Do you **long** for that Day?

*"when He appears . . . we shall see Him as He is!" (1 John 3:2)*

*"our blessed HOPE, the appearing of the glory of our great God & Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13)*

Do you **think** of that Day?

ONLY if we dwell on Jesus & His glory will *Jesus BE ENOUGH* if we get devoured by lions!

This world ain't glory! The answer is not an earthly Jerusalem.

The old covenant cloud of witnesses knew this:

*"Not receiving the things promised, but having seen them & greeted them from afar, they acknowledged that they were strangers & exiles on earth." (11:13)*

Likewise, new covenant believers need to cast a longer gaze, the gaze of glory.

*"**Here** we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*

A HEAVENLY city . . . the New Jerusalem of eternity with Jesus at the centre of it all.

Without a clear vision of heaven – and Jesus at the centre – our race on earth will be filled with stumbling and disappointment.

With our vision fixated on heaven – and Jesus at the centre – Jesus WILL be enough, and we will power on, even if leads to getting devoured by lions. And our faith will bring GREAT REWARDS...first & foremost, **Christ being exalted** among the nations!

in 1732, Johann Dober and David Nitschmann, two young Christians from the Moravian denomination in Germany, chose to serve African Caribbean slaves,

<sup>7</sup> Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12

*Dober and Nitschmann offered themselves as slaves to a slave owner and boarded a ship bound for the West Indies.*

Upon boarding, they were told white men could not become slaves.

*"Very well," replied Nitschmann, "Being a carpenter, I will work in my trade."*

*As the ship pulled away from the docks, they called out to friends & family on shore,*

***"May the Lamb that was slain RECEIVE THE REWARD OF HIS SUFFERING!"***

Hear this: Moravian missionaries baptized 13,000 converts before any other missionaries arrived on the scene!<sup>8</sup>

When we seek *Jesus' Reward* (exalting Christ), we will be most rewarded & satisfied!

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus and His glory!

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<sup>8</sup> J. E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (Chapter 6: Foreign Missions and Their Influence), 1909.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Jesus is a Better EXAMPLE*  
(Hebrews 11 & 12:1-2)

– Consider *EXAMPLES* who lived by Faith in God's Promises –

### Flawed Examples of Faith (11:1-40)

- Essence of Faith (11:1-6)

**1]** What 'stood out' as important re. biblical Faith being **rational, personal & hopeful**? Why?

2] Why is faith so important to **us**? (Ephesians 2:8)

Why is faith so important to **God**? (Ephesians 2:9)

(Why the Egyptians drown when they attempted the same thing as the Israelites? 11:29)

- Examples of Faith (11:7-40)

Considering old covenant examples of faith – what they looked forward to & built their lives on...

**3]** Which 'flawed example of faith' do you find most inspiring or surprising? Why?

4] What are you *looking forward to*? What would you say you're building your life on?

5] Would you say your focus is more treasures on earth or treasures in heaven?

- COST-COUNTING Faith

**6]** How would you say your faith is "costing" you something specific in this life?  
**In your choices, where & how is eternal glory 'overruling' worldly security?**

**7]** "***If persecution were legal, would I still be a Christian?***"

What's the very first thought that enters your mind when you heard this question?

As you dwell on the question, how do your thoughts start changing?

- GLORY-GAZING Faith

**8]** What Christian biographies have you read (on missionaries, etc.)?

**Who are your EARTHLY EXAMPLES of faith (living & dead), that motivate you?**

**How/Why do these examples stoke you up to live by faith?**

### Flawless Example Faith (12:1-2)

The verb "looking to" Jesus (12:2), literally is to "*look away, toward*" (from 1 thing, to another)

Looking Away (what NOT to fixate on) – Verse 1

9] Honestly, how your 'training' regimen 'weigh up' against neutral distractions?

10] If you had to identify the single biggest 'weight' in your life distracting you from looking to Jesus . . . what would it be? What's your strategy from *looking away* from it, to Jesus?

**11]** If we fixate on our sins, what's the result? The preacher claimed,

*What you are **despairing** about in life reveals where your **doubts** about God are.*

Please discuss, incl. what you struggle most to trust God in, & what promises of God could help.

**12]** Are we to fixate on the flawed examples (cloud of witnesses)? If we do, what's the result?

Looking To (what TO fixate on) – Verse 2

13] How does fixating on Jesus *differ* from fixating on the cloud? What can He alone do?

**14]** What has help you **MOST** to fix your eyes on Jesus?

15] What motivated Jesus? / What was the "joy set before Him"? (12:2)

16] Why does pursuing Jesus' reward (Jesus' exaltation) actually bring us reward?

17] What are you *specifically* looking forward to about glory? How does that motivate you now?