

Hebrews 12:1-2

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There are many people from the Old Testament who were faithful to God, which should inspire us to give up on the things of this world that weigh us down. We can live lives of faith too when we put our eyes on Jesus, who founded and finished our faith for the sake of heavenly joy.

The *cloud of witnesses surrounding us* refers to the “Hall of Faith,” the examples of faithful people from the Old Testament listed in [Hebrews 11](#). Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets: a cloud of witnesses, people who pleased God by their faith. Since we have their legacy, their example, we are *lay aside every encumbrance and sin that entangles us to run with endurance the race that is set before us*.

The picture is that our Christian life is a race that we are running, and we have the witnesses of the Old Testament watching us and cheering us on. We can look to them and know they endured in faithfulness, even though their full reward was still far off.

But the ultimate example is Jesus Christ, on whom we should fix our eyes on because He is both the *author and perfecter* of faith. He is the author because He fulfilled God’s promise to send a Messiah redeemer, beginning all the way back in [Genesis 3:15](#). The foundation for the redemption of the world is through His ministry, His death and resurrection. He is also the perfecter (related to the word *teleiosi*, which means to complete, or finish, or fulfill something). Christ fulfilled the task that God called Him to, obeying to the point of death, enduring through many sufferings. As a result, He defeated death, and ascended to the throne. We are in a period awaiting His full coronation.

For the sake of *the joy set before Him*, Jesus *endured the cross, despising the shame*. The phrase *despising the shame* simply means that Jesus endured great shame, but ignored it. If we despise something, we give it no regard. Jesus gave no regard to the humiliation of dying on the cross when compared to the reward set before Him in obeying His Father. He didn’t consider it something to really take into account. It is worth reflecting here on how amazing is this statement. The Romans scourged Jesus, and hung him naked

on a cross in full view of people who mocked Him. He presented Himself as king to His people, and they would not accept Him. That is a lot of rejection. But compared to the reward awaiting Him, Jesus did not consider that massive rejection. The shame did not matter to Him. This is to be our example.

The passage says here that Christ endured these sufferings *for the joy set before Him*. He was rewarded with the joy of sitting down beside His Father, inheriting the earth as a priest-king. As we saw in [Hebrews 1](#), Jesus was already a Son. But by becoming a man, and learning the obedience of faith, even to death on a cross, Jesus received the reward of being a Son as a human. [Philippians 2:5-11](#) says something very similar, and instructs us to have the same mind as Jesus. The reward God promises for obedience far outweighs the suffering He asks us to endure in this life. To believe this takes faith. The exercise of faith is what pleases God ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).

Paul brings attention to Christ as the ultimate example of perfect endurance through suffering so that the Hebrew readers would be encouraged to run the race for themselves, not giving up on their faith. This theme of endurance is constant throughout this letter, such as in 3:14, *For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end*. If we persevere in our faith, holding fast till the very end, we will partake with Christ in His sufferings here on earth, as well as His inheritance of ruling the earth in the Kingdom. Just as the joy set before Him was sitting down at *the right hand of the throne of God*, our joy and motivation is that we too will inherit in this rulership, because this is the promise of God for those who endure.

Biblical Text:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.