

Hebrews 12:1-3 – Widcombe Baptist Church - Motto Text 2017

“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. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrew 12:1-2

A. Introduction

- Hebrews is a “word of exhortation” (13:22), written to encourage Christians to keep going in spite of opposition.
- He reminds them of the glory and supremacy of Jesus. They must not drift from the faith (2:1), turn back (3:2) or throw away their confidence (10:35). It may be difficult going forward, but it is impossible to go back.
- Jesus is coming back and they must live by faith (10:36-39). This faith is modelled on the example of the Old Testament believers, who faced many obstacles but persevered because they kept their eyes on their goal (Hebrews 11).
- To encourage his readers to press on and not give up he uses the image of a race (12:1). This is a common New Testament image (1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:5; 4:6-8).
- It is an “**agona**” – a painful and demanding marathon, not a walk in the park. As Christians we cannot opt out of this race.

B. Run with Determination (12:1)

The author helps us in the race with two directions

❖ A Word of Encouragement

- We are surrounded by a great crowd of witnesses – the men and women of faith described in Hebrews 11. It is not so much that they are watching us, but we are to keep our eyes on them – we will be inspired by their example – they may be dead but they still speak to us (11:4).
- We cannot run this race on our own – we need to encourage each other and cheer one another onwards (10:24-25)

❖ A Word of Instruction

- **Negative** – we must get rid of everything that prevents us from effectively engaging in the race – casting aside both sin and anything that spoils our focus (Colossians 3:8; James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1)
- **Positive** – we are to persevere and keep going to the end of the race (2 Timothy 4:6). Christianity is a long obedience in the same direction.

C. Run with Confidence (12:2)

They are to fix their eyes on Jesus (12:2) and consider His example (12:3).

❖ Who Jesus is – He is the object of faith

- He is the Author of faith – he sought us long before we sought Him.
- He is the Finisher of faith – He will not desert us but will complete the work He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6; Philemon 24-25).

❖ What Jesus did – He is the supreme example of faith

- **Remember what He endured** – He persevered through the most terrible obstacles it is possible to imagine. On the cross He opened His hands to the nails and His soul to the wrath of God.
- **Remember how He endured** – He trusted God His Father and was confident that He would receive His reward at the Father’s right hand.