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A just weight  
and balance

are the  
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- When the Civil War broke out in 1861, there were many in the north who didn't imagine that the war would end up being as long as it actually turned out to be,
- Nor as bloody as it actually turned out to be either.

- Those initial assumptions were particularly evident in the lead up to the first major battle of the Civil War, the Battle of Bull Run,
- Or what some have since nicknamed the Picnic Battle.

- When Lincoln ordered some 35,000 troops to take on a Confederate force of roughly 20,000,

- There were many in the North who thought that that battle would be swift and decisive and relatively bloodless union victory.

- So much so, in fact, that a throng of spectators from Washington, D.C.
- Followed the advancing Union Army southward in order to watch the battle unfold while they enjoyed a picnic.

- A number of civilians
- Several dozen congressmen,
- Journalists, food vendors,
  - Women and children set up near the battlefield with opera glasses
- To watch the battle unfold and enjoy a picnic as they did so.

- **They were so confident**  
in a swift and bloodless  
**union victory.**
- The new recruits that  
were marched south  
to take on this Confederate force
- Were only signed up for  
**a 90 day term.**
- **Few imagine the war**  
would last any longer than that.<sup>8</sup>



- Yet, as that July day unfolded, it became increasingly clear that everyone carried naive expectations about the length and the brutality of the conflict that would endure for months and years.

- By the end of the day,  
not only was the  
Union Army  
in retreat,
- So too were  
the spectators.

- The picnic battle was no picnic.
- Hebrews urges us that in our battle
  - And in the grueling race.
  - He tells us to take it seriously.

- Hebrews tells us don't underestimate the challenges that we face along the way.
- It is no picnic!

- Hebrews warns us **not to water down our faith** and retreat into the world.
- The specific temptation of the Jew was **to revert** to the old Jewish covenant system.
  - Going “**AWOL**”
  - Therefore, **avoiding persecution.**

- Though the race is grueling **we are reminded** we have a **great cloud of witnesses** to look to as we run.

- But these witnesses aren't anything like the spectators at Bull Run.
- The witnesses that we look to as we run the Christian life are those who have already run that race
- And who have endured a multitude of sufferings themselves along the way.

- When we become Christians, it's as if we're registered into a great race, **a marathon of sorts.**
  - In the first **three verses** of our passage, our author plays off this metaphor of a race to explain what it looks like to run the Christian life from our **conversions** until our **death.**



- In describing these Old Testament believers as a cloud of witnesses, it's as if we're invited to imagine them as spectators

in attendance at a stadium in which we run the Christian life.

- But this imagery needs to **be qualified** a little bit,
- Because it's not as if these Old Testament saints **are watching us** and cheering us along.
  - **It's us** **who look to them** for encouragement.

- We look back to those who have gone before us,

- Those in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11,

- And we learn how to run

- the grueling race of the Christian life well.

- We also look to those in our church family who have suffered loss,
- Who have endured real sufferings and hardship,
- And yet have endured.
- We look to them to know that endurance is possible.

- Then we are instructed to ***"to lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely."***
- Did you ever use the term **"Beggar lice"** ?
  - Those little seeds **that clung to** your clothes.
  - Every little weight.

- How does this applies to us in our race?

- We have to be mindful of both the sin that prevents us from running well,

- And of those things

- that might not necessarily be sinful

but aren't altogether helpful either.

- There are a number of things that we entertain in our lives that aren't necessarily sin or inherently sinful,

- But they just aren't building us up spiritually or helping us mature as well as we could.

- **Ask yourself**  
**the following question:**

- Where am I  
**investing**

a great deal of time,

- And how are

those investments

**helping my spiritual life?**



- How you answer that question will go a long way in identifying those things that might not necessarily be sin
  - But aren't entirely helpful in running that race either.

- As important as it is  
that we

**look upward**

to the cloud of witnesses,

- It is equally important

**to look inward**

to our own hearts,

- And any weight

**that is holding us back.**

- Next we are advised  
to fix our attention  
on Jesus.
  - Who he calls,  
*"The founder and perfecter*  
*of our faith."*
- These two words are words  
are loaded with significance.
  - But what exactly  
does this tell us  
about Jesus?

- Some versions use the word “pioneer”.
- Someone who has blazed the trail by suffering, reproach and injustice.
  - The worst injustice known to man and yet endured.
    - So that we can know that endurance in this life is possible.

- To be called the “**perfector**” means that Jesus just didn't pave the way for us, but that he also conquered the way.

- More than just an **example** to look to, Jesus is also the **source** of our faith.

- The one **who holds us steady** along the path of faith until glory

- Jesus endured the shame, mockery, suffering in a state of humiliation,
- He still pressed forward with with joy.
  - How is that possible?

- What we suffer as the people of God could never compare with the sufferings of Christ.

- James 1:2-3,

- "***Count IT all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,***
  - ***for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.***"



- How can we possibly count it all, joy, when we face the kind of sufferings that we face in this world?
  - The only way is by staying fixed on Jesus.
  - The riches of heaven makes it possible to endure the slums of earth.

- Now the whole great sermon argument of chapter eleven is lost if we do not read the first verses of **Chapter 12:1-2**

- *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 perseverance the race that is set before us,*
- *looking to Jesus the pioneer 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.*

**(Hebrews 12:1-2 RSV)**

- We are  
"***surrounded by  
a great cloud of witnesses,***"

- These people  
are **saying something** to us,

- They are **testifying** to us.

- **What** are they saying?

- You never say

- **Yes**

- to Christ without saying

- **No**

- to something else!

- ***“Let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us***
  - This advice just **makes sense.**
  - No serious runner wants to load himself up with things which will **get in his way** when he runs.

- ***Let us lay aside every weight,***
  - A word which comprises **all the obstructions** in our course.
    - The **fear** of man,
    - The **cares** of this life.
    - The **love** of riches.

- *Note the term:*

**“that is set before us”**.

- Whatever is done for God  
**must be done**  
according to his will.
- **Not mere exertion**  
that is required.

- But running according to God's rules.
  - The course is "*set before us,*
  - In matters of faith we are not left to human conjecture.
    - Not like Cain.
    - But guided by the oracles of God.  
(**1 Corinthians 4:6**)

- We are not to devise means of our own for pleasing God.

- **Jude 1:11**

***Woe unto them!  
for they have gone  
in the way of Cain,  
and ran greedily after  
the error of Balaam...***

- The sacred scriptures **must be our only rule.**



- Those who take human reasoning alone as their guide are running into error, and of being finally lost.

- **2 Peter 2:15**

*Which have forsaken the right way,*

- *and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor,*

- *who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*

- **2:16** *But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.* <sup>41</sup>

- **The most fatal heresies**  
have at all times  
been introduced by human reason  
**in opposition to revelation,**
  - He that would run  
the christian race  
with success  
**must make the word of God**  
**his standard in all**  
he believes and does.
- ***It must be the light unto his feet  
and the lamp unto his path.***
  - **Jeremiah 10:23**  
***It is not in man to direct his own steps.***

- In beginning this race  
it is of great importance  
to see that we begin right.
- The starting point must be:
  - Faith,
  - Repentance,
  - Confession,
  - Baptism.
- No righteousness of our own.
  - John 4:24  
*God is a Spirit:  
and they that worship him  
MUST worship him  
in spirit and in truth.*

- Many difficulties present themselves as one begins the race.
  - We may have to begin **our course alone,**
  - **Those of our own house** may rise up against us,
- But we are to stop for no difficulties.
  - **Matthew 10:36**  
***And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.***

- The path to glory has all ways been **littered with thorns.**
- We may meet with **worldly losses,**
- With daily **reproach;**
  - But we must not **go out of our way** to avoid them.
- ***And it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.***  
**(Acts 14:22)**

## Hebrews 12:2

### *Looking unto Jesus.*

- Not only do we have the example of old-testament saints to witnesses our conflict,
- But we have also the example of Christ himself.
- Who suffered nothing to hinder him till he had fully completed it,
  - *And is now set down at the right hand of God.*  
(Hebrews 12:2)

- Christ however is not only set before us as our example,
  - He is also the fountain from whence

“*ten thousand blessings flow*”

(# 117)

- We therefore look to Him as our example.

- He was encouraged in  
his great redeeming work  
by looking  
“*at the joy*”  
set before him.
  - There is also  
a joy set before us  
if we continue faithfully  
in our journey  
by looking unto Jesus.



- **We are to be like a traveler**  
who continues his journey,  
**not distracted**  
by every object  
along the way.
- If we take our eyes off Jesus  
**we lose our balance.**
  - **(2 Corinthians 7:5)**
  - In seasons of darkness  
**when without are fightings**  
**and within are fears**  
let us wait upon the Lord,  
and be of good courage,  
and he will strengthen our hearts.

- When overwhelmed with a sense of **guilt** and **unworthiness**, **surrounded with temptations**,
- Let us still look to Jesus, who is able to supply all our spiritual needs.
- **Ephesians 3:20**  
***Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,***

- Hebrews 12:3.

*Lest ye be wearied  
and faint in your minds.*

- We are ever prone  
to depart from God,

- To grow weary  
in well doing.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:13

*Be not weary in well doing.*

- Those who preach the word are also apt to be discouraged.
- Such was the case with Isaiah, who cried out,
  - *“Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”*  
(**Isaiah 53:1**)

- **Jeremiah** also was so disheartened that he was ready to say:  
“***He would speak no more in the name of the Lord.***”  
(**Jeremiah 20:9**)

- So difficult is it to walk by faith, and live by faith, when under persecutions and reproaches, worldly losses or the loss of friends, we are apt to sink and die.
- Many have fainted under such circumstances, and walked the ways of God no more.

- **The only remedy is** to be looking unto Jesus.
  - Who endured the **opposition of sinners:**
    - **Mocked** by Herod,
    - **Reviled** and **mocked** by His own people.
    - **Scourged** by Pilate,
    - **Crucified** on Calvary.
    - All this he endured **for our sakes,** and for ours only.

- Hebrews 12:4.

***You have not yet resisted  
unto blood,***

Therefore

**never give up.**

- **You are not yet killed!**

- **Fight on!**

• And the **victory**  
and the **crown** will be yours.



- The Christian is **not an unconcerned stroller** along the byways of life.
- He is a wayfarer **on the high road.**
- He is not a **tourist!**
- He is a **pilgrim** who is for ever on the road of righteousness.
  - As a Christian **he is going somewhere.**
- That somewhere being **heaven.**

- In the Christian life **we have a cheering section.**

- We have the unseen **cloud of witnesses.**

- Are we going to **let them down?**

- **How** can we with an audience like that cheering us on?

- Their number is such that they are said to be “**a cloud**”.
- Like an assembled multitudes seen on special occasions to witness some extraordinary spectacle.
  - But, be aware!!

- We are also compassed about **with a cloud of enemies** from **earth** and **hell**,
- Who with eagerness **observe the manner** in which we journey.
- We have one group interested on **our success**,
- And another **in our failure.**

- In the Christian life,  
as in golf,  
**we have a handicap.**
  - The handicap of  
**our own sin.**
- If we would travel **far**,  
we must travel **light**.
  - There may be  
**habits, pleasures,**  
**self-indulgences, associations**  
**which hold us back.**
  - And we will need  
**the help of Christ**  
to enable us to run the race.

- To encourage us along the way we have an example.

- Jesus himself.

- For the goal that was set before him, he endured all things.

- **A cross**  
was a humiliating thing.
- **It was for criminals,**  
for those whom  
society regarded  
as the dregs of humanity
- **Yet he accepted it.**
- If Jesus could endure like that,  
**so must we.**

- The wonder of the Christian life is that we press on surrounded by the saints,
  - Oblivious to everything but the glory of the goal
  - Forever in the company of him who has already made the journey and reached the goal,
    - Hebrews 12:2  
*and is seated on the right hand of the throne of God.*
    - And who waits to welcome us when we reach the end.



- The secret of persistence is in this phrase, "*looking unto Jesus.*" (Hebrews 12:2)

- **Think on these things**
- **Philippians 4:8**

**The doors of the church  
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride  
Say  
“Come”.**

**Revelation 22:17**



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