

*Jesus, Founder and Perfecter of Our Faith 12:1-2*

*12:1 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 endurance the race that is set before us,*

There are two Main Ideas in (12:1).

**12:1 Main Idea 1:** Many people from the Old Testament era who had faith in God continue to witness to us Christians with their many good examples of how we should be faithful witnesses to others about our faith in Jesus (12:1).

1) In verse 1, the writer of Hebrews uses an illustration of runners who are running in a race while a large crowd of people sits in a stadium cheering them on. His first readers (and we today) are the runners. And the large crowd of “*witnesses*” are “*the people of old*” (Heb 11:2) or the people from the Old Testament era that the writer of Hebrews listed in chapter 11. Therefore, we see another important reason why the writer of Hebrews made such a long list of faithful people in chapter 11. All of these believers faithfully ran their mission-races as “*witnesses*” to us Christians in order to encourage us to also faithfully run our mission-races (Acts 20:24). Thus, we see that all who have faith in God (or Jesus) have mission-hearts. When the Holy Spirit planted faith in our hearts, he also gave us mission-hearts, because God himself has a mission-heart (<sup>1</sup>M. M. Mt 5:14). By our new mission-nature, and by faith in God, we all run our mission-races. And these many people from the Old Testament era who had faith in God continue to witness to us Christians with their many good examples of how we should be faithful witnesses to others about our faith in Jesus.

**12:1 Main Idea 2:** We Christians should follow the examples of these witnesses by also daily repenting of the sin that clings so closely to us and weighs us down, so that we also have the endurance to witness to others by running our own mission-races (12:1).

1) Furthermore, this large crowd of “*witnesses*” cheers us Christians on as we run our mission-races by witnessing to us about how we should run our mission-races. Verse 1 continues: “*let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely.*” All Christians have been forgiven by God; however, we also still sin every day (Heb 10:14). And our sin is a “*weight*” that we carry “*which clings so closely*” to us, so that it slows us down as we run our mission-races. And therefore, at the end of every day, we should “*lay aside*” our sin by repenting of the sins that we committed that day. We also should forgive others every day, just as our dear Lord forgives us every day (<sup>2</sup>M. I. Heb 4:13).

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<sup>1</sup> M. M. Mt 5:14: When the Holy Spirit creates faith in a person’s heart, he also graciously gives him a new mission-heart that is eager to shine the light of the Gospel throughout the whole world.

<sup>2</sup> M. I. Heb 4:13: Christians should repent of their sins every day, because God sees everything that everyone does; and they cannot hide their sins from him.

And of course, when we repent, our gracious Lord is always eager to forgive our sin (Heb 9:12; <sup>3</sup>M. M. Heb 2:17). Furthermore, it is only his forgiveness that can give us the power that we need to “*run [our race] with endurance*” (v 1). And therefore, verse 2 continues by saying that we should also be daily “*looking to Jesus*” as the only source of his Spirit’s power. He helps us in two ways: Jesus is “*the founder [creator] and perfecter of our faith*” (v 2), as we daily “eat” his holy Word (<sup>4</sup>M. I. Lk 12:40).

*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.*

There are two Main Ideas in (12:2).

**12:2 Main Idea 1:** We Christians should always keep our eyes focused on our Lord Jesus because he is the one who graciously created our faith; and he continues to graciously re-create it by the power of his Holy Spirit, so that we can run the mission-race that he has given us (12:2).

1) It is very encouraging for us Christians today to be “*surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses*” (v 1; ch 11). Their faith gives us wonderful examples to follow; however, our Lord Jesus is, of course, able to help our faith in two ways that they cannot help us. First of all, the writer of Hebrews says in verse 2 that Jesus is the “*founder*” or creator of our faith because our faith in him is a gracious gift from his Holy Spirit (Jn 1:12-13, 2 Cor 4:6). In verse 2, the writer of Hebrews described how Jesus lived and died; he “*joy [fully]*” (v 2) lived and died for us. He did it willingly because of his deep, deep love and grace for us. And this very Good News that he did it for us is the almighty power that his Spirit uses to create faith in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6). Therefore, Jesus truly is “*the founder...of our faith*” (v 2). And, since our faith in him is a gracious gift from him, it means that we did nothing to deserve it (Jms 1:18, Eph 2:8-9).

2) Secondly, the writer of Hebrews says in verse 2 that Jesus is also the “*perfecter*” of our faith, which means that he continues to graciously re-create or strengthen it by the power of his Holy Spirit. He gives us everything that we need to run the mission-race that he has given us (Heb 12:2). Note that our mission-race is not a short sprint like a 100-meter dash. In such a race all of the runners put all of their energy into every step. But our race is a long distance race because we don’t know when it will end. And we don’t know where the Lord of the mission will tell us to go to reach the people who are lost. In a long distance race the runners set a slower pace during most of the race in order to keep back some strength for the final 50 meters. Therefore, we need Jesus to continually renew our strength.

3) And how does he do this? We have his energy and power in our homes and churches if we have a Bible in a language that we can understand. He continues to “*perfect*” our

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<sup>3</sup> M. M. Heb 2:17: Our Brother, Jesus graciously became a true human being in every way, in order to earn forgiveness for our sins as our faithful and merciful High Priest.

<sup>4</sup> M. I. Lk 12:40: Christians should “eat” God’s Word every day in order to keep their faith strong, so that they are always ready for their Lord’s return.

faith by giving us more spiritual energy as we daily “eat” his holy Word (Heb 4:12-13; Col 2:6-7). As we continue to hear how much he loves us, he daily renews our faith so that each day we continue to run our race with fresh strength (Is 40:31). In this way, we will “*not grow weary or fainthearted*” (v 3). And we are able to run our race with our eyes “*looking to*” him (v 2) “*by faith*” (ch 11), and living our lives by depending on his gracious power. We “*joy [fully]*” live for him and eagerly tell others the Good News about him (v 2), so that we can win many lost people for him. It’s a new mission message. M. M. Heb 12:2a: Our Lord Jesus has graciously created and continues to graciously re-create our faith by the power of his Holy Spirit, so that we can run the mission-race that he has given us.

**12:2 Main Idea 2:** Because we sinful human beings cannot run a race that pleases God, our Lord Jesus graciously ran our race for us by seeing the joy of soon ruling in heaven as the King of kings so clearly that he willingly despised the shame of the cross and endured its pain (12:2).

1) The writer of Hebrews then reminded his readers in verse 2 that the Holy Spirit is able to create and re-create our faith. Our Lord Jesus ran the race perfectly on our behalf since we cannot run it perfectly. Therefore, we need to keep our eyes on him through prayer in order to receive his strength to run our race. Jesus’ resurrection proves that he ran his race completely perfect, and that his perfect life and death earned his heavenly Father’s favor (<sup>5</sup>M. M. Rom 3:24). But how could he run his race with “*joy*” (v 2)? He suffered so many horrible things that he did not deserve! Verse 2 answers this question by saying that “*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.*” He knew that he would not remain dead, but he would rise again in great victory over death and the devil (M. M. Heb 2:14). He knew that he would soon be ruling in heaven as the King of kings (v 2). What amazing love! He did all of this for us, when we were his enemies (Rom 5:10). This kind of love and grace is what his Spirit uses as his mighty sword to create and re-create faith. It’s a new mission message. M. M. Heb 12:2b: Our Lord Jesus graciously ran our race for us by seeing the joy of soon ruling in heaven as the King of kings so clearly that he willingly despised the shame of the cross and endured its pain.

*This Commentary is from **The Mission Bible Commentary**, from Mission Nation Publishing, Inc. and is reprinted by permission. The author of this commentary is Dr. Paul C. Bruns, LCMS Pastor and missionary in Nigeria for 32 years. Along with two other missionary families, Dr. Bruns and his family learned to speak and analyze the un-written Bokyi language of Cross River State. They then established a writing system and prepared literacy materials in order to teach the Bokyi people how to read and write their language, working with three Bokyi men in order to translate and publish the Bokyi Bible. Meanwhile, they also started 10 new Lutheran churches in Bokyi land. Finally the Lutheran Church of Nigeria asked Dr. Bruns to teach in the seminary for nine years.*

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<sup>5</sup> M. M. Ro 3:24: Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience and shed his precious blood on the cross, in order to graciously set all nations free from sin, which a person only receives by faith in him.