

How Does the Faith of the Cloud of Witnesses Influence Our Living by Faith?

The faithfulness and perseverance of the Old Testament luminaries named in chapter 11 serve as inspiration and inducement to the first century Hebrew Christians and to us to persevere under trial as well. It must be emphasized that “the cloud of witnesses” are not the pattern for our faith but the inspiration for our faith. The pattern for our faith is the “Faithful Witness” (Revelation 1:5), the Lord Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews focuses our gaze *briefly* on the faithfulness of Old Testament believers in order to demonstrate **two duties we must perform** if we are to persevere under trial, and he uses the metaphor of the marathon runner to make the points.

“...let us **lay aside**...” 12:1

A W Pink: “...the Christian’s twofold duty is given again and again in the Scriptures: the duty of mortification and of vivification, the putting off of the ‘old man’ and the putting on of the ‘new man’ (Ephesians 4:22-24).”

External Temptations: “...every weight...”

The author has in view primarily **the burdens placed upon God’s people by the imposition of legalistic demands** which go beyond the duties actually required by God’s word: Matthew 23:4; Luke 11:46; Hebrews 7:18-19; 8:7; 10:1-4

Acquiescence to the demands and expectations of others as it relates to cultural, political, and social concerns: “a multitude of cares which many of God’s people impose upon themselves.”

The immoderate use of things which God has otherwise given is richly to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17)

“It is not the lawful use of God’s creatures, but the intemperate abuse of them which Scripture condemns. More die from overeating than from over drinking. Some constitutions are injured as much by coffee as by whiskey.” Pink

Indwelling Sin: “...and the sin which doth so easily beset us...”

“...**cast off** the works of darkness...put on the armor of light.” Romans 13:12

“...**put off**...the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Ephesians 4:22

“...**putting away** lying, speak every man truth...” Ephesians 4:25

“...**put off** all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication...” Colossians 3:8

“...**lay apart** all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness...” James 1:21

“...**laying aside** all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings...” 1 Peter 2:1

“The call to the daily mortification of our hearts to all that would mar communion with Christ...everything which requires us to take time away from God-appointed duties. Everything which tends to bind the mind to earthly things and hinders our affections from being set on things above, is to be cheerful relinquished for Christ’s sake.” Pink

How do I lay aside sin? Ephesians 4:22 and Romans 6:11-12

“By faith’s recognition of my legal oneness with Christ, and by drawing from His fulness. Indwelling sin is to be laid aside by daily mortification (Romans 8:13), by seeking grace to resist its solicitations (Titus 2:11-12), by repenting, confessing, and forsaking the effects of its activities (Proverbs 28:13), by diligently using the means which God has provided for holy living (Galatians 5:16).

"...let us run with patience..." 12:1

Here the author returns to the theme of his exhortation: persevering faith to do whatever God commands no matter how difficult our present circumstances may be and how seemingly unattainable God's promises may appear to be. Personal holiness is our supreme business and quest (Pink) and faith under trial is how it is attained. See James 1:2-4

"Patience" here is endurance.

"The principal thoughts suggested by the figure of the 'race' is rigorous self-denial and discipline, vigorous exertion, persevering endurance." [Pink]

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13

The course is the entirety of the Christian life (Acts 20:24). It is endured with the goal in view: "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:11-14), "the crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:8), and the commendation of the Lord Jesus: "Well done, good and **faithful** servant: you have been FAITHFUL; enter into the JOY (Hebrews 12:2) of your Lord" (Matthew 25:23).

"For consider him..." 12:3

"Looking" in verse 2 is *aphoraō* meaning to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something

"...consider..." in verse 3 is *analogizomai* which means to estimate (the value)

The same Greek word is translated "*proportion*" in Romans 12:6. A. W. Pink says the word means "to compute by comparing things together in their due proportions...to form a just and accurate estimate."

To consider Jesus in this context means "to draw an analogy between his sufferings and yours, and what proportion there is between them!" Compare who he was with who you are. Compare the opposition he faced with the opposition you face. Consider that he is your Lord and Redeemer and you are a sinner subject to him, and yet HE ENDURED such hostility. Why should we think ourselves ill-treated when we suffer so much less than our Master, Lord, and Savior suffered.

"...lest you be wearied and faint...consider him" 12:3

"*wearied*" is to be so exhausted that resolve is broken, giving way to casting away your confidence and drawing back unto perdition (10:35-39)

"*faint in your mind*" is the cause of such discouragement (fainting). This faintness of mind is the opposite of the spiritual vigor required by an active and obedient faith. Only an active faith modeled after the faith of Jesus (see last week's notes for the particulars of Jesus's active faith) will guard your mind against fainting which leads ultimately to despair and denial of the faith.