

## Hebrews 12:1-2

January 19, 2020

I have no proof or corroboration but I would imagine that across this nation and anywhere English is spoken, two words are spoken more than any others in elementary playgrounds.

"My Turn!"

The dispute might be over different things:

Slide

Ball

Swing

See-Saw

Hoop

Toy

But the refrain would be—the same the world over.

My turn!

America's playgrounds echo with, "my turn." I can further imagine that the least shouted two words on the playground are, "Your turn."

Every child on the playground wants their turn to go on and on and on. Right? No one is going to yell,

“Your turn.” In fact, we adults fight for our own turns in our own subtle ways. We may not be shouting “my turn!” on the outside of our heads, but we are on the inside. Right?

Hebrews is the opposite of a child’s playground. Our passage this morning—Hebrews 12:1-2 shouts, “Your turn!”

And by the end, I hope we all really believe is our turn and that we each shout with our lives, “My Turn.”

Hebrews 11 introduces us to heroes of the faith who had their turn—Hebrews 12 shouts—YOUR TURN.

Let’s listen together.

We are going to focus on Hebrews 12:1-2 but let’s read starting up in chapter 11:32.

<sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured,

refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. <sup>36</sup> Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

<sup>39</sup> And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, <sup>40</sup> since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Our passage for today—

“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, <sup>2</sup> 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.” Hebrews 12:1-2

PRAY

### *1. Our Turn To Run*

Every person that draws breath this morning aches to be a part of something that matters. Humanity yearns to be a part of something bigger than themselves. Hebrews 12 describes our purpose.

Our turn to run the race.

The writer to the Hebrews compares our life's journey to a race.

Did you catch that?

Very LAST part of verse 1,

**"and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..."**

It is your turn to run.

The image here is not an oval track on which the racers go round and round. Rather, this is more like a cross-country race. A race where the way is known by the path cut through the landscape. The Lord had set this race before you. You are not racing other people but following a path that he has cut through the landscape of this life for you.

In this race, the racers can never see that far ahead. At times, there are rolling hills of joy, thick undergrowth

of temptation, and sheer cliffs of hardship. At times just taking the next step is difficult. At other times the weather goes bad. At still other times enemies stalk us on our way.

It is our turn to run. And we must run with endurance.

But look also—we run this race observed by others.

The writer draws our attention to what he calls “a great cloud of witnesses.” These are those who have had their turn to run. Those that we read about who

“suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

There are heroes of the faith who have gone before. Right now this cloud of witnesses has their attention riveted on the people of God. Not on

Geo-political leaders  
Hollywood stars  
Billionaire Moguls  
Instagram famous

But on the church. Not only do they witness to us—they are witnesses FOR us. These have responded to Jesus in faith even though they lived in anticipation of the coming of Jesus Christ. They never received the promise that is ours today.

Vs. 40,

<sup>40</sup> since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

In other words, we will all be made perfect when the Lord Jesus comes and makes all things new.

The writer does not describe all the twists and turns of our race, just that we all have a race to run. Just that it is OUR TURN. You might think that the cloud of witnesses only cheer on those who do “important” things for the kingdom—Like Pastors, Missionaries, Ministry leaders and the like.

NOT true.

We all have a race to run.

The race you are called to run should look very much like your ordinary life. Are you in construction?

Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you a mother? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you a father? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you a Grandfather? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you an empty-nester? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you a business owner? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you an artist? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you Married? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you single? Good. First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

Are you widowed? First you are a Christian. It is your turn to run.

You are already in the race. You don't have to quit your job and change your life completely to start racing. You are in the race NOW.

Don Carson relays the following conversation from a church in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

What do you do for a living?

I'm in ministry.

You mean you are a pastor?

No, not at all.

Then are you a missionary?

No.

Then do you hold another church position?

No.

I'm confused, what do you do to pay the bills?

By day, I'm a butcher, but I'm always in ministry.

That is exactly right.

Whatever you are, it is YOUR turn.

You might ask, HOW? How do I run?

"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..."

Lay aside every weight and every sin.



Imagine a line of Olympic distance runners presented at a starting line. They are stretching and hopping around trying to stay loose. They all have similar running gear. Gear that is meant to weigh them down the least.

Further imagine that one of the racers has a backpack strapped on full of rocks. And she is holding two bricks.

You don't have to be a world-class distance runner to give advice to that person. It's easy, right?

You should take off that backpack and drop the bricks. There is no sense weighing yourself down more than necessary.

What if a runner showed up ready to go with his legs tied together with a length of rope? How well do you think he would run with one leg tied to the other? Poorly.

Worse than running with Weights and Rope is trying to run the Christian life with burdened by weights and sin. The text here tells us to throw aside weights and sin.

They are different.

There are weights and there are sins. Sin is a bit easier to identify. Sin is anything we do that is wrong. As John Owen once said, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you."

When you are aware of sin—lay it aside.

You are not responsible for the sin that you know nothing about. But that is really never the problem. Our problem is that we don't throw aside the sin that we know about.

We excuse it.

We coddle it.

We hide it.

We pamper it.

We justify it.

But we must kill it.

Sin entangles. What a great word. You don't mean to be slowed up, but your feet get tangled up and before you know it, you fall and aren't able to get back up. You have fallen and you are not able to run.

Is anything entangling you? Is there something you know is wrong in your life that you have yet to cast aside? Do you have a secret way of life that no one

knows about? There is power in secrecy. Is there sin for you to cast off?

- Drunkenness?
- Greed?
- Porn?
- Gossip?
- Dishonesty?
- Laziness
- Lying?

Lay it aside.

It is our turn to run.

But we are also supposed to lay aside weights. Weights are different than sin. A weight is something that is not necessarily wrong, but something that slows you down nonetheless. Something that takes your focus off Jesus. A weight is anything that we are tempted to be distracted by. I'm not talking about shirking God-given responsibilities, but there are things that can slow us down in our race.

What are your weights?

What do you need to throw aside?

When examining potential weights to cast aside the question is NOT—can I do this? BUT does this help me in my race?

This text is not saying that you must do nothing but read the Bible, Pray, Evangelize and sing worship songs. But it is saying that we all have things in our lives that we enjoy that could become a potential weight.

An example for me: Cycling. My left knee is held together with duct tape and bailing wire. I used to play basketball, but alas, I cannot run anymore. So, I've taken up cycling. On a weekly basis, you will be able to find me riding my bike throughout the web of canals in the east valley.

The exercise helps me clear my head and stay healthy.

At this moment, cycling is not a weight. But if I began to live for cycling and pushed other responsibilities to the side and didn't have time for the Lord because I was out on my bike, that would be a weight.

Do you see?

The thing about weights are that that the activities in and of themselves are not wrong—not by a long

shot—but things that are weights demand too much of our time and energy distracting us from the race.

Do you have any weights to cast aside?

Travel

Food

Sports

Work

Money

Security

Exercise

Theatre

Video games

We must cast them aside. It is our turn to run.

While it is our turn to run, that does not mean that we run alone or without help. We run together but also

## *2. We Run to Jesus*

Lest we get the impression that this race is one that we just run and run and run without end and without focus—look again at verse 2,

<sup>2</sup> 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.”

Run looking to Jesus

NOT:

The sins laid aside

The weights laid aside

Not in comparison to those you are running with

Not to the cloud of witnesses

Not to our faith.

But to Jesus.

In fact the text instructs to look to Jesus in specific ways. Very concrete and not mystical at all—It would be of little help to just say, “look to Jesus,” with no explanation.

You can’t see him right now.

You can’t hear his voice right now.

But how?

Hebrews 12 gives us real help and not just things to make us feel better about ourselves. Look to Jesus sounds good, but if you don’t know what that means or HOW to look to Jesus it is of no help.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us exactly how.

Fix your eyes on Jesus—as the Founder of your Faith AND the Perfecter of your faith. Our eyes are meant to be drawn to Jesus and what he has done and what he is doing for us.

Look to Jesus for what he is—the FOUNDER and PERFECTER of our faith.

Our temptations could be to—fix our eyes on:

- Regrets
- Disappointments
- Failures
- Frustrations
- Sin

But we must fix our eyes on Jesus.

We are not invited to fix our eyes on Jesus and think of him as we want. The writer to the Hebrews tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus and see him in a particular way.

How?

<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,

Founder and Perfecter.

That is how you look at Jesus. Do you see what that means?

We are not allowed just to think of Jesus any old way that we want to. If you do, you will not find much comfort, much help. Because you will merely be creating Jesus in your own image.

Rather, we must fix our eyes on Jesus the Founder and Perfecter of our faith.

Founder

This word is notoriously hard to translate.

NIV: Pioneer

NKJV: Author

NAS: Author

ESV: Founder

The idea is that Jesus is our Champion. Jesus is the champion of our faith.

He founded our faith.



Look to Jesus the founder of our faith. We see him found our faith in at least two ways—he established the basis of our belief system. What would we do without Jesus?

We would have nothing to believe in and no one to follow if we did not have Jesus. We do not follow a set of philosophies, fancy arguments, hollow myths or human reason.

No.

Our belief systems centers on Jesus our founder and our champion. We would have nothing if we did not have Jesus.

How did Jesus found our faith?

Humanity was held hostage for the power of sin and death. We were helpless and unable to escape its clutches. The power of sin and held sway ravaging every human to ever walk the earth.

Then Jesus stepped forth.

Jesus defeated the power of sin and death by dying for our sins and rising from the dead. And with that

substitutionary death and resurrection, Jesus became our champion. He founded our faith.

He founded our faith by establishing our belief system.

Also, he founded our faith individually. Not a one of us would run to Jesus unless he gave us eyes to see. The reason we love him—the scriptures say—is because he first loved us.

In other words, he has granted us the gift of faith to believe.

Jesus is our champion. He is the founder of our faith.

That is wonderful news.

But more is needed. If Jesus was just the founder of our faith, it would be good but not good enough. Why?

If he were just the founder it would be as if he said, "Okay—I've given you a start—a push in the back—run that way. Its all up to you. Good luck! It is your turn to run—GO!"

Jesus founds our faith.

He is not just the Founder he is also the perfecter.  
Another way to think about it is that Jesus is also the finisher of our faith.

This means YOU are NOT on your own in this race.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that we have to run this race with endurance—because there will be many times that we are going to want to quit. Putting one foot in front of another—at times—is going to seem just short of impossible.

But we have a perfecter. A finisher.

We would never be able to run our race if we did not have Jesus right there with us strengthening us along the way.

Jesus does not ask us to have flawless faith. Your salvation is not primarily dependent on the perfection of your faith. Rather, your salvation is based on the authenticity of your faith.

Do you have but little faith?

You have a perfecter.

Do you have seasons of doubt?

You have a perfecter.

Do you feel weak?

You have a perfecter.

Are you prone to wander?

You have a perfecter.

Do you fall?

You have a perfecter.

The amount of your faith may be small. But the point is not HOW much you believe in Jesus but that you believe in Jesus.

I'll say it again.

Your faith is NOT the determining factor in your race. Jesus your founder and perfecter is the determining factor in your race. Look to Jesus who has given you something to believe in and the power to believe in him.

I've talked to TOO many Christians who believe the problems they are having are because of a lack of

faith in their lives. Like they are being punished because they don't believe enough.

False.

The amount of our faith is NEVER the issue—the OBJECT of our faith is what matters.

It is our turn to run.

Do you see how this text cries out to all of us—YOUR TURN!!

How does this work in real life?

What does this mean for us—Center Church?

1. We run together; separately.

This means that there is an aspect that we are all called to be faithful with the race we have been given. Wherever God has placed in you day to day you must run looking to your founder and perfecter.

No one can run your race for you. You must take steps of faith on a daily basis. But you are not alone. We are together.

2. The race is hard

We need endurance. We must expect that we will face things more difficult than we can imagine.

Sometimes we bring hardships upon ourselves and sometimes hardships are thrust upon us. But there are always times when we want to give up. When we want to throw in the towel.

That is when we look to Jesus.

The Bible does not call us to be heroes. We are called instead to look to our hero, Jesus Christ, specifically look at what Jesus has done for us.

He has founded and perfected our faith.

### 3. We must be fixed on Jesus.

Together and individually we have one task and one task alone—we must fix ourselves on Jesus and nothing else.

It is our turn to take the baton and run together for the time we have left.

What does this mean?

It means—

Weights/Sin:

We cast both off knowing that we have a founder and perfecter who overcomes our misdirected loves. And because we have a perfecter we know that we are completely forgiven when we come to him. He will not hold us at arm's length.

Confident

As we are fixed on Jesus we will be more and more confident in the future. He promises that we will make it home. We must not be confident in our native ability but we must be fixed on Jesus. He is the reason for our confidence.

Courage

As we are fixed on Jesus we can have courage. The enemy is arrayed against all believers, and we are no exception. Yet, we have an founder and perfecter of our faith. Whatever we face, Jesus is with us.

Joy

As we are fixed on Jesus we can have joy. Jesus will never give up on us and he will always be working in

and through us. We can have great joy for the reason that what he founded he will perfect.

## Humility

As we are fixed on Jesus we will have humility. Jesus can work through our church to see believers built up and the lost found and that is NOT because there is something special about us, but because Jesus is the founder and perfecter of the faith.

## Thanksgiving

As we are fixed on Jesus we will see many reasons to give thanksgiving. The Lord has put people around us and has a plan for us and he will not give up on us.

## Hope

As we are fixed on Jesus we will be a people of great hope. We don't hope in our potential but in Jesus and all that he promises to do. We have no assurances about tomorrow just that He will be with us. We may have uncertain days that lie ahead but we have a founder and perfecter. We will have much to endure but more to hope in.

Center Church—It is OUR TURN.



## PRAY

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” Col. 2:6-7



