

Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

The only way to build lasting endurance, is to train in that which you desire endurance. You can't simply wish for it, and poof, one day you have all that you need or desire. As Christians, we are exhorted through the New Testament to "practice" our faith. For many people who attend church regularly, this idea of practice is making it to the service on time. But, is that really what we are being encouraged to do? Christianity is far more than learning the songs which are sung during your weekly service, or being able to locate where the nursery is at. Christianity is more than bringing your Bible to church, or learning Christian lingo. It is the recognition that our Savior taught each and every one of us by perfect example, to live a life that costs us everything! Our Lord considered it a joy to endure all that was presented to Him; even though it ultimately cost Him His life. So what kind of joy can be found in such pain and loss? A joy that is far more eternal than temporal. Unless were trained otherwise, we live only for ourselves, and only for today! That is exactly opposite the example that Jesus taught His disciples, as well as you and me. This world so effortlessly throws every encumbrance and sin upon us. Most believers become exhausted, because of the added weight of this world that is upon them. You don't see marathon or endurance athletes, run with weighted backpacks. Why? Because they won't last very long with them and neither will we, unless we learn to shed the weight of the world that seeks to plague our souls.

Brethren, we live in an ever increasing hostile world. Hell has nothing to lose, and everything to gain by wearing each of us down to where we are no longer effective for any Kingdom purposes. Our God isn't concerned with where you park your car, or which row or pew you sit in at church. He is concerned with the choices that you are making, and with your heart. He's concerned with your unrepentive sin, with the movies that you watch, the porn that you bring into your homes, the filth that you read, and the decadent lyrics in the songs that you listen to. We will never attain endurance, to finish this life strong as a Christian, unless we die to the very things that our flesh loves! These scriptures remind us that a great cloud of witnesses are watching the choices that we are making. It is being recorded for all of eternity. This life is a vapor, but eternity is forever. I exhort you to turn off your televisions, to replace "American Idol" for the one and only True God. Take time today to read your Bible, and to pray for more than your own wants and desires. Christianity is not about a life where everything gets easier; but it is about where the eternal benefits will greatly out weigh what little pain or shame that you may encounter during this life. The world around us is dying and going to hell. Are you willing to do more than just attend a church service when it's convenient? Friend, what will eternity have to say about your endurance?