

Text— Hebrews 12:1-11

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Today is Palm Sunday. Consequently, we especially recall Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem which occurred just days before His bitter sufferings and death for the sins of the world.

Think about it. Multitudes "cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." (Matthew 21:9) And then, just a few days later, the crowds "cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him." (Luke 23:21) Hence, it's obvious that Luke 8:13 is absolutely correct when it informs us there are people, "which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." Furthermore, other folks in the crowd undoubtedly never believed in Jesus but were simply swept up in the moment while He was hailed as King; subsequently, they easily turned on Him. But thankfully, there was a remnant of people who truly did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for He always has His "little flock," as He states in Luke 12:32. Nevertheless, it's clear that we must all be on guard against temptations to sin from the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," declares Ecclesiastes 7:20.

Therefore, fellow Christians, we must never become complacent about retaining our faith in Jesus. Rather, our Scripture selection encourages us to:

"KEEP THE FAITH"

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What is the faith we need to keep
- 2) How we can keep the faith

-1-

Verses 1 & 2, ----- (Hebrews 12:1-2)

We Christians *are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*— that is, we are surrounded by numerous heroes of the Christian faith, such as those listed in Hebrews chapter eleven. Consider the names of those heroes of faith: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and the others there mentioned. They ALL had faith in the promised SEED, the Messiah, the Christ who would bruise the devil's head, for we read in Hebrews 11:13-16, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Hence, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the faith we need to keep, as did the believers who have gone before us.

Observe that our text informs us as to WHO our faith is to be centered on, for we are to be found, *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Since Jesus Christ is the AUTHOR of our faith, the chief Leader, Source, and Captain of our faith, it is obvious that He is the OBJECT of our faith— Jesus Christ is WHOM our faith is to be centered upon. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is the FINISHER of our faith because He has done everything necessary to obtain salvation for us. Jesus kept all of God's Holy Law perfectly for us, and then Jesus paid for our lack of keeping God's Holy Law. Indeed, it's true, for Galatians 4:4-5 reports, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And, we read in 1 Peter 1:18-19, "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as

silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Accordingly, the faith we need to keep is faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord.

We are NOT to have faith in ourselves, or in any other sinful human being, or in man's science falsely so-called, or in idols of any other sort made by men from the windmills of their sinful minds, "For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens." (Psalm 96:5) We are NOT to have a divided faith, that is, faith in Jesus coupled with faith in our own works as if it takes both to save us. Romans 3:19-28 reports, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Thus, the faith we need to keep is faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, for Acts 4:12 relates, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Take it to heart that faith in Jesus Christ is the only

faith by which one personally receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation, for Holy Writ reports, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:16, 36) Let us therefore keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord. Yes, let us keep our faith in Jesus Christ because such is the faith we need to keep.

-2-

As we continue to ponder our text to its conclusion, let us see how we can keep the faith.

Again, let's look at verses 1 & 2, -----
(Hebrews 12:1-2)

Bearing in mind all the heroes of faith that have gone before us and all that they endured in this world because of their faith in the promised Christ, *let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

The apostle Paul likens the Christians' life in this world to running a race. Now, if a runner in a race was to carry a 100 pound barbel while attempting to run, it would surely slow the runner down and might cause the runner to be unable to even complete the race. Likewise, if the Christian attempts to run the race of life while carrying the weight of being overly concerned with the things of this world, he or she will surely slow down reaching toward heavenly things and may even be unable to reach the goal of eternal life in heaven. Accordingly, 1 John 2:15-17 warns, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Thus, we can keep the faith by not permitting the things of this world to weigh us down, but rather let us strive to keep the Lord and His Word first in our life.

Our text instructs us also to lay aside *the sin which doth so easily beset us* since we are surrounded by temptations to sin each and every day. If a runner in a race were to welcome sickness and disease, such a runner would not run well and would in fact be unable to finish the race because he or she would be overcome by illness and death. Likewise, the Christian running the race of life cannot willingly embrace sin and remain spiritually healthy, spiritually alive, and able to reach the goal of eternal life in heaven, for Hebrews 10:26-27 says, "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Realize that one cannot keep the faith unless one fights against temptations to sin, and patiently endures temptation when it comes upon himself or herself.

A runner in a race keeps his or her eyes on the goal. Likewise, we Christians must keep our gaze upon our Savior and where He dwells, for we are to be *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Patiently persevering in the faith requires that we look to Jesus, who said to His followers in John 8:31-32, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Yes, we need to continue in Jesus' Word, for Romans 10:17 relates, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And, we read in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 that "the word of God," is that "which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Fellow Christians, our focus must be and remain on Jesus Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith who sits at the right hand of God the Father in

heaven, for He kept God's Law perfectly for us and He paid for our lack of keeping God's Law when He shed His holy and precious blood while nailed to the cross of Calvary to pay for our sins in full. Jesus was joyful over the fact that He would deliver us from doom and would return to His place of glory at the right hand of the throne of God. Hence, Jesus is whom we must focus upon above all else! Jesus Christ is the ONLY SAVIOR! Jesus Christ is the only example we have of perfect living, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) So, let us keep the faith by keeping our focus on Jesus Christ above all else.

Verse 3, ----- (Hebrews 12:3)

Talk about a contradiction against one's self! Consider the fact that the perfectly holy Jesus Christ was accused of sin by wicked human beings! For example, we read in Luke 11:14-15, "And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." Can you imagine it? Jesus did a miracle by casting out a devil from a possessed man, but some of the onlookers accused Jesus of working in league with Satan instead of praising Jesus for the wonderful work of God He had done. Jesus was totally holy and just; and yet, sinful men accused Him of being sinful and demon-possessed. Therefore, we Christians should not be wearied and faint in our minds when folks get-on-our-case with snide remarks because we won't go along with their wicked practices. Let us keep the faith by standing firm in Jesus even in the face of ridicule.

Verse 4, ----- (Hebrews 12:4)

Think about the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night in which Jesus was betrayed, for we read in Luke 22:44, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to

the ground.” Yes, so deep was Jesus in prayer to His heavenly Father as He contemplated the bitter sufferings and death He would soon endure that He sweat great drops of blood. Oh, the immense anguish Jesus experienced in fighting against sin – our sins which He was bearing for us – was so great that blood issued from the pores of His skin; and later, blood flowed from His whipped back, and His pierced hands, feet, and side. Hence, we can keep the faith by always bearing in mind the great cost of our redemption: the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, which cleanses us from all sin.

Verses 5 & 6, ----- (Hebrews 12:5-6)

We Christians sometimes wonder why we have to suffer at all in this world since it’s a fact that Jesus has paid for our sins in full. So, we must realize that any suffering we have in this world is NOT a punishment from God for our sins, but is rather chastening from our loving heavenly Father who is calling us back to a closer walk with Jesus when we fall into sin. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” Let us appreciate the fact that God loves us so much that He lovingly corrects us so that we do not totally fall from faith and lose the salvation we have in Christ Jesus.

Verses 7 & 8, ----- (Hebrews 12:7-8)

Chastening from the Lord may be in the form of sickness or some other ailment of the body, or perhaps a loss of income for a time. However, the Lord is NOT intent on harming us as if He gets His kicks out of our suffering; NO, the Lord is dealing with us as His adopted sons because He desires that we cling more tenaciously to Jesus Christ our Savior, for we read in Galatians 3:26-28, “ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Realize that God’s chastening us is indicative of the

fact we are His legitimate children.

Verses 9 & 10, ----- (Hebrews 12:9-10)

Let’s stop and think about when we were children. I’m sure each of us can remember being punished by dad when we did wrong. There were times we got spanked, and looking back now we have to admit we deserved it. Being chastened, we learned to respect dad, and mom too, for even as kids we were sinners who needed correction. Oh, at the time we got punished we were angry; but, later we realized we usually had it coming. Nevertheless, it’s possible that a parent may have been in error by punishing us for something we did not do. However, realize our heavenly Father never makes mistakes. When God our heavenly Father chastens us we surely have it coming, and He does it *for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

Our heavenly Father desires that we increase in sanctification of life, being fruitful in the faith of Jesus Christ, and that is why He chastens us. Thus, we can keep the faith by heeding the corrections we receive from our heavenly Father. Let us strive to live as Ephesians 5:1-11 instructs, where we read, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Let us keep

the faith by striving to be fruitful in the same as we heed the chastening of our heavenly Father.

Verse 11, ----- (Hebrews 12:11)

Think about the closing words of our text: Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

I'm sure we all agree that being chastened does not seem a joyful event when we are going through it, for none of us enjoys pain or suffering. However, when the Lord chastens us and we turn to Jesus with firmer faith for healing and relief, we end up spiritually stronger as we live in this world in a more righteous manner, which incidently is a positive witness for Christ to others as well. So, we can say with the psalmist, "The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death." (Psalm 118:18) Therefore, let us keep in mind that chastening from the Lord exercises us in the faith and thereby strengthens us in the faith, enabling us to keep the faith and increase in sanctification of life.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; and, let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord as we have been encouraged by the words of our text to keep the faith. God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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