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Issue

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Thursday, May 28, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

EBC

Update



## News Brief

- ❖ Our regular May semi-annual general (business) meeting has been postponed until we are able to meet in person according to BC health guidelines. Those in elected positions whose terms were ending this year have graciously agreed to remain in place until we are able to hold the meeting.
- ❖ As the COVID-19 outbreak slows and the BC “Restart” plan unfolds, our leadership is monitoring developments closely. We will update everyone about steps to reopen Sunday services when we have a full plan and timeline.
- ❖ Our online services are available [here](#) on YouTube. They can also be accessed through our Facebook page and website. The next will be held on May 31 at 10:30 a.m., Pentecost Sunday.
- ❖ Our Prayer Chain remains fully functional. Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).

## Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

(Hebrews 12:1–2)

The language in Hebrews 12:1–2 is taken straight from the world of sports. When the author talks about being “surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,” running “with perseverance the race marked out for us” and fixing “our eyes on Jesus,” he is clearly likening the Christian life to an athletics contest in a great Roman stadium. And who is this “great cloud of witnesses?”

Well, in sporting terms, they’re what we would now call the fans. And who belongs to this crowd? The easiest answer is faithful believers from the past, some of whom have already been listed as examples of faith in Chapter 11. A lot of these people performed great feats or suffered much. But they all had one thing in common. They were “commended for their faith” (11:39), because they trusted in God’s promises to them.

As such, the faithful departed can teach everyone powerful lessons about how to live the Christian life. In a sense, they can even be our mentors, because their presence is with us still. We may never be able to see them, and the Bible actively warns us against trying to communicate with them in any way. But they are with us nonetheless, like a great cloud of witnesses, who can show us how to live.

Not that these people were perfect, of course— in many ways, far from it! If we want perfection, we have to look elsewhere. We must turn to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. So Hebrews 12 also underlines that there is only one person who can offer infallible direction in

the Christian life. What is more, he can actually help us live it.

The picture in verse 2 is a very dramatic one, because it's as if Jesus is actually standing there at the finishing line waiting for and watching over us as we run the race of life. There we are, surrounded by all the saints of the past and the present, and there is Jesus, the perfect runner who has gone before us to prepare the way.

And this Jesus, who gave his life as a living sacrifice to set us free, "who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God," is not only the "author . . . of our faith." He is its "perfecter." Without Jesus, we could not be Christians, because it was he who paid the price for our sins and opened the way for us to come to God the Father by grace through faith in him. It was he who won our salvation.

But Jesus didn't stop there. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he is with us now to strengthen and encourage us. According to verse 3, we are to "consider him who endured such opposition from sinful [people], so that we will not grow weary and lose heart."

Unlike any other coach or spectator ever known, Jesus is at the finishing line, helping us run. He set us on the right track in the first place and now he's calling us home. He is our ultimate mentor, the perfect example for us to follow in everything he did and does as the living Son of God.

So what is our best response to this tremendous picture of support and encouragement on all sides? It's very simple. First, our author says in verse 1, "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Second, according to verse 2, "let us fix our eyes on Jesus."

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus." And focusing on Jesus and getting rid of hindrances in the Christian life really go together, if you think about it. For Jesus not only provides us with the perfect model of how to live. As we get to know him in all his perfection, we recognize those areas where we fall short and we're inevitably challenged to work to become more



like him.

So as we face a truly unprecedented situation in our lifetimes, this wonderful text not only reminds us what we can learn from the faithful departed. It first calls us to look to Christ, who was their inspiration and should now be ours. It is he who is truly "the author and perfecter of our faith." And when we consider him in all his glory, we are encouraged to cast aside whatever hinders us. We can take heart and look to the future in hope and expectation for all that God has in store for us.

*Pastor John Oakes*

## Prayer Needs

- ❖ Our sick & shut-ins
- ❖ Government leaders
- ❖ Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
- ❖ Our online services and Zoom outreach
- ❖ All who are anxious, depressed or lonely
- ❖ The complete defeat of COVID-19

## Zoom Meetings and Games Night



- ❖ Pastor John and Kirsten invite Ebenezer youth and young adults to a now weekly Zoom online fun night on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. The evening will include games and quizzes. To access the event, go to this link and enter Meeting ID: 851 704 4556. Hope to see you there!
- ❖ The weekly Friday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting is studying Paul's letter to the Galatians. Tomorrow's passage is Gal. 3:15–29. To participate, please go to this link on your computer. The meeting ID is: 851 704 4556. You can call in by phone, if you prefer, to 778-907-2071, using the same meeting ID when requested.
- ❖ The Zoom Women's Prayer Meeting, hosted by Rhea Ravanera, meets Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. To join, please go to this link and use meeting ID 349 890 420, or call 778 907 2071.