

Title: Run with Endurance pt.3  
Text: Hebrews 12.1-2  
Theme: Living with our eyes fixed upon Christ  
Series: Hebrews #47  
Prop Stmt Running with endurance demands that we keep our focus on Christ  
Aim: I aim to inform my people as to what it means to look to Jesus and then to encourage them to do it.

David Brainerd (1718 – 1747) was a missionary to Native Americans. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 30, spending the last days of his life in the home of Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan's daughter, Jerusha took care of him in these last days, and contracted the same disease and is buried next to him in the Bridge Street Cemetery in Northampton, Massachusetts. Taking care of David in his home allowed Jonathan to come into possession of David's diary, which was published following his death. For over 250 years, his diary has been a testimony of an enduring faith. I first read his diary 30 years ago and have never forgotten it. The last entry that he made in his diary is from Oct. 2.

Now, lest you think that dying at the young age of 30, having never married, never having children, devoting your life to bringing the gospel to a people in such a way that would take from you your very life would be the occasion for bitterness or the questioning of God, you will hear the result of a life, albeit young, consumed with one thing – making Christ known. From Oct. 2, 1747:

*"My soul was this day, at turns, sweetly set on God: I longed to be with him, that I might behold his glory. I felt sweetly disposed to commit all to him, even my dearest friends, my dearest flock, my absent brother, and all my concerns for time and eternity. O that his kingdom might come in the world; that they might all love and glorify him for what he is in himself; and that the blessed Redeemer might 'see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied!' O come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen."*

What you have just witnessed is an example of Hebrews 12.1-2. Here is what it means to run with endurance to the end. David's run of endurance was fueled by the glories of Christ. This text not only commands us to run with endurance, but it points us to the only source of energy and fuel that makes that possible. If you are going to run with endurance, you have to look to Jesus and you have to keep on looking to Jesus.

Read Text:

Looking to Jesus means to:

1. **Think about Who He is.**

*"the founder and perfecter of our faith"*

Looking to Jesus is not a sentimental exercise. Looking to Jesus means to engage your mind by considering his identity. Why do we look to Jesus? He is the founder of the faith. He is the pioneer. He is the one who blazed the trail. He is the one who defines faith. If you want to know what it means to believe, look at Christ.

#### **a. The Founder**

He is the founder of the faith because he perfectly trusted the Father. Speaking of Christ, he says (2.13) of the Father, "I will put my trust in him." He not only trust the Father but Christ trusted in his Father, even though it was the will of the Father to crush him (Isaiah 52). His trust was not only perfect, but he was under the most severe pressure than any human has ever faced. Christ was God and he was human all at the same time. We are most tempted not to trust when what is being asked of us does not make sense. Did it make any sense for the sinless Christ, to be treated as if he was guilty of all of our sins? Did it make any sense for the sinless Christ to bear upon himself the righteous wrath of the Father's holy justice? We think that the cross was an expression of the love of God, and it was. But, what kind of love is this that kills an innocent being and asks that innocent being to trust the one who is ultimately responsible for his death?

Will you trust me, even though I am going to crush you? Job expressed faith like this when he said, "Even though he slay me, yet will I trust him." God did not slay Job, but God did slay his own Son. Abraham exhibited this type of faith when God commanded him to offer his son to God, a sacrifice that never took place because God intervened by offering a substitute in his place. That substitutionary sacrifice spared Isaac, but God did not spare his Son. But, Christ did not die under protest. Christ laid down his life as an act of faith in His Father's plan to redeem you and to secure your salvation that would bring many sons to glory. Will you trust god even when adversity visits your home? Will you trust when what you are called to endure does not seem fair, nor make sense?

Looking at Jesus means to look at the faith of Christ in the will of his Father. Look at Christ and you will see He who was the recipient of the most egregious injustice was so absolutely convinced of the goodness and trustworthiness of His Father, that he was willing to die. But, he is not only the founder, the author and pioneer of the faith; he is the perfecter of the faith. Now remember, I am explaining this in order that you will know what it means to look to Jesus so that you will press on with joy in the face of adversity.

#### **b. The Perfecter**

When you look at all that Christ did, it really is overwhelming. Brainerd spoke of this awestruck wonder quite often. Because of the excellent perfections of Christ, his worth can never be exhausted and we will never push the limits of understanding him. So, while we cannot get the arms of our minds around all of this, we can ponder some of it. For example, Christ was both perfect and was made perfect through

suffering. How can that be? Christ learned obedience through what he experienced and through what he suffered (Heb. 5.8). His obedience as a toddler prepared him for obedience as a little boy which prepared him for obedience as a young man and finally a fully grown man. Every act of obedience on the part of Christ was an act of faith in his Father's plan. Every act of obedience in the midst of temptation taught him something more about the temptations and struggles that we face; which not only made him a perfect Savior who could die for us, but now he is a perfect high priest and advocate who pleads for us. His faith was not only a perfect example, but it was perfectly mature and perfectly complete.

Theologians describe the righteousness of Christ as being comprised of two aspects. 1) His active righteousness describes every perfect thing that he did by means of his own will and energy. Examples of this would be his teaching ministry, serving ministry, and even miracles. In order to live a life of righteousness, he had to do all of the righteous things that a perfect life required. 2) His passive righteousness speaks more of what was done to him. He suffered because our sin was laid upon him. He was treated as a criminal and was punished and was beaten because he was considered to have been guilty. He died. Even in his receiving punishment, even in his dying he was fulfilling the definition of righteousness and was demonstrating a perfect faith and a faith that was perfected because it was perfect all the way to the very end of the greatest injustice ever.

So, in looking to Jesus, we see Him the Founder of the faith and the Perfecter of the faith who not only is our example, but he is our substitute. We look to him as our example and as our substitute because, although we want to believe like that, we will not believe perfectly like that. But, he trusted the Father perfectly in my place. Looking to Jesus means that I trust Him who trusted for me.

Listen, this is a critical issue. Religion is notorious for telling people to suspend all of their God-given rationality and park their brains at the door in order to put all of their faith in the qualified leaders who alone know the secrets and cannot share them with the untrained masses. The result is, you are told to put your trust in the religion, or put your trust in the leaders. Genuine Christianity calls us to put our trust in Christ. So, even though others can be sources of encouragement in our journey, there is only One who is the object of our faith and the desire of our hearts because there is only One who is the founder and the perfecter of the faith. Looking to him means that we...

## 2. **Think about What He has done.**

*“endured the cross, despising the shame”*

### **a. He endured the cross**

What does this mean? Yes, he accepted the verdict, the punishment and the sentence that was placed upon him. But this was more than resigning himself to his fate. He

persevered in his belief. He persevered in his righteousness. He was fully engaged in his death by crucifixion. He was completely aware of the entire ordeal. When given an opportunity to take a narcotic to dull the pain, he refused because he was enduring it all, every bit of it.

His death by crucifixion was unspeakably painful, but the physical pain was only part of it. In bearing our sin he became shameful, that is, he became full of shame. He, who had never known embarrassment, never experienced disgust with himself, never knew what it was like to look in the mirror and feel a horror at what he had thought or done, was now experiencing your lifetime of shame all at once upon himself and it was revolting to him.

His enduring of the cross means that he endured the abandonment of his Father. But, he even endured the abandonment of the Father in faith. Yes he cried, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" but remember that he was quoting from Psalm 22. According to Matthew's gospel, just before that, the chief priests and scribes and elders mocked him by saying, "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him." It is remarkable to see that in their anger and spite that these men were actually repeating Psalm 22.8. Psalm 22 was a Psalm of David fulfilled in the Son of David. Later in this Psalm the Psalmist who felt abandoned, who was mocked for his belief in God even when it looked as if God had forsaken him, said, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." Even though Christ was abandoned and felt that abandonment, he endured that abandonment knowing that the abandonment was promised and he knew that the abandonment was not final. He endured the abandonment by faith knowing that His Father who kept his word to treat him as guilty would keep his word and accept the travail of his soul. Looking to Jesus means to endure with faith, but here is the difference; you will never be abandoned. In fact, you will know the sweetness of his presence like no other.

#### **b. He despised the shame**

What does that mean? Did Christ despise the fact that he was now associated with the shame of being executed in such a humiliating fashion? Actually, this means that he scorned the reputation that came with death by crucifixion. He viewed the shame of the cross as being insignificant in comparison to the will of his Father. In this phrase ("despising the shame") we have a great illustration of faith. We have seen that living by faith means to take the promises of God and hold them up against the promises of this world. This is exactly what Christ did. The world's opinion of the cross is that it is only for losers and low-lives. The Roman government used the cross to humiliate and shame the criminal by seeking to prolong an agonizing death, in full view of the public, by removing any modesty, and any mercy, except for some water or at times a narcotic. This not only punished the criminal, it served as a warning to the public. Christ despised the shame. That is, he considered obedience to his Father to be more important than public opinion and personal reputation. The world's opinion was not his concern and therefore, in his despising of the shame, he

overturned death by crucifixion. That which was despised is now that in which we glory. *“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Galatians 6.14)* We boast in the humiliation of the cross! We glory in the shame of the cross! Why? Because Christ accepted the Father’s verdict of the cross. The cross became the place, the event whereby the penalty of our sin was paid in full. There is nothing left for me to pay. Think about WHAT he has done and...

### 3. **Think about Why He did it.**

*“who for the joy that was set before him”*

He did it in order to secure the joy!

Perseverance through humiliation is the means by which Christ reached the joy. Endurance through trial is the means by which Christ reached the joy. Faithfulness through pressure, faith under fire, and resolve in spite of not having all of the answers is the means by which Christ reached the joy. The joy was his to procure. The joy was set before him. But, what exactly was the joy? Clearly the joy that was set before him is connected with his exaltation to the right hand of the Father. But, based on Hebrews 2 which also speaks of the exaltation of Christ, it is clear that the joy of his exaltation is associated with the knowledge that Christ has accomplished the will of the Father, that Christ has secured our salvation once and for all, that Christ has guaranteed the safe arrival of his children to glory, that through death Christ has destroyed the one who has the power of death and has delivered all of us who through fear of death were subject to life long slavery.

Now, watch this. Over and over Christ told his disciples that he was going to go to Jerusalem and was going to die. He also told them that if they were going to be his disciples that they too had to take up their cross daily. That is, they too had to surrender to the misunderstanding of the world, to the shame of being identified with Christ, to being accused of being wrong, ignorant, and subjected to great humiliation. In other words, he sets the mark and we keep the pace. This run of endurance, this journey of faith is a path that he has already walked. In going before us, he removed all of the roadblocks that would have prevented us from making it home. The path is not easy. In fact, it is marked by suffering. We do not suffer in order to pay for our sins; Christ did that. We suffer because we follow the King who is hated by this present world. But, as *Romans 8.18* says, *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* The deeper the suffering now, the greater the joy is to come, which means that since Christ suffered in faith more than anyone – ever, He is the most joyful and delighted being – ever! Think about why he did what he did. Think about what he accomplished. As you consider the challenges of persevering, look to Christ. He is the ultimate example of the greater the challenge now, the greater the joy will be. The difficulty of your endurance as a follower of Christ is directly tied to the amount of joy that you will experience.

Some of you will do just about anything to avoid difficulty, or demands. You shy away from commitment and relationships and ministry because you may be stretched or challenged. If you are able to avoid being stretched, you think that you will be happy. In reality, when your heart is not stretched then it can only hold about a thimble's worth of joy. It is those whose hearts are stretched by challenges and expanded by looking to Jesus through adversity whose hearts now have the capacity of a swimming pool for joy. So, as you endure, look to Christ. Look at his infinite capacity for joy and look at what he is doing to stretch your heart for more joy. Finally,...

#### 4. **Think about Where He is.**

*"and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God"*

##### **a. He is in a place of honor**

The Father exults in the faith-driven obedience of his Son. At the baptism he said, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." Now, at his right hand he adores and magnifies and exalts his Son before all of creation.

##### **b. He is in a place of power**

Christ is seated next to the Father. It does not get any higher than this. Now, here is why you do not pray to Mary or to a saint. Mary was a remarkable girl, used by God to bring His Son into this world, but Mary is not at the right hand of God. When we pray, we pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. That does not mean that we add "in Jesus' name" to the end of our prayers, like a formula or mantra or rabbit's foot. Fact is, no prayer in the NT ends with the words, "in Jesus name, Amen." Seriously, to use that formula at the end of a prayer without thinking about what you are saying, but doing it out of habit is akin to taking his name in vain. Praying in the name of Jesus means that as we pray to the Father, we recognize that we can only approach the Father through Christ. If you mean it when you say "in Jesus' name", then good. But don't pray without that understanding and do not say those words as a thoughtless habit. We pray to God because of what Christ has accomplished for us and are called to come boldly to the throne. We have that right because Christ...

##### **c. He is in a place of ministry**

Even now, he is before the Father. Even now, he represents us. Even now, because he learned obedience through what he suffered and was tempted like us, yet without sin, and experienced death for us and walked through suffering and endured with faith, he is able to know the feelings of our weaknesses and identify with our infirmities. We can never accuse God of not caring, nor of not understanding. Christ understands. But, Christ does more than empathize! Christ advocates on our behalf. He pleads our case. He stands in our defense. His wounds stand as an eternal testimony to the reality that our debt is canceled, that our

salvation is secure and that we are going to make it home. His death, resurrection and exaltation guarantee it.

Conclusion:

Believe it! Read it, pray it, sing it, speak it, preach it, and rest in it.

Think about where you are – in Christ. Seated with him

Ephesians 1.15 – 2.10 – cong. reading