

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

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Dear Heavenly Father, we first of all want to thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, that through whom we have access to you. We ask for forgiveness for our sins, for our shortcomings, and also we ask for a blessing for all the children, wherever they may be, throughout the entire earth. You know, Father, who they are, who want to have fellowship with you, with your son and the brethren and those who do not have the ability to be with all of us from all over the country and to praise you, Dear Lord God, we ask for a blessing upon this brother who's going to be speaking to us from Thy holy word. Please may he speak just the words from your word and that the lessons that he gives us we could put into use in our lives.

We thank you again for everything. We ask for a blessing on this entire day and all the days of the Convention, and we ask this in Jesus Christ. Amen.

We will have a talk right now.

From the title will be from Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, and this will be by brother Tom Gilbert and chastity.

Greetings, brother.

In his letter to the Church at colossae, chapter 1, verses 15 to 20, the apostle Paul tells us that Jesus is the image of God, of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created. Things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things were created by him and for him he is before all things, and in him all things hold together, and he is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Nowhere in the Bible is the supremacy of Christ more clearly and elaborately explained than in the letter to the Hebrews. It is the singular purpose of this letter to demonstrate that in all things Jesus has preeminence. The writer is trying to persuade disciples of Jewish heritage to not abandon their faith, to persuade them that everything about Christ and the Christian faith is superior to and the fulfillment of the elements of the Jewish faith. In Hebrews we are told that Jesus is superior to the prophets, to angels, to Moses. He offers a superior rest of faith and has a superior priesthood.

He is a mediator of a superior covenant established on better promises. His sacrifice is superior to all of the sacrifices under Jewish law.

Most of the first 11 chapters is devoted to explaining, and then we arrive at the encouragement to faithfulness of which our convention theme is a part. It reads in Hebrews 12:1 2 let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, 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. Brethren, I am comfortable believing that the Apostle Paul wrote this letter. I'm going to refer to him in that way in my remarks.

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

However, I'm not dogmatic on that point. I know some brethren favor authorship by another person, and I mean no offense to you if you are one of those brethren.

But let us now examine the details of this encouraging counsel in these two verses. The first portion says, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Paul uses a foot race in the Grecian games as an illustration of the path of a Christian. This is not the first time he has used this illustration. In First Corinthians 9, verses 24 to 27 he writes, do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?

Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air.

No, I beat my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

He says we should throw off everything that hinders. A runner in a race would not carry or have on his body any extra weight that would slow him down, such as adornments or heavy clothing.

What might these things indicate in our lives? It could be our job or our profession. It could be commitments to others. It could be material possessions.

Whether these things hinder us or not depends on how we use and manage them. Many of us need to work to support our families. We must be careful that our job does not become more important than our family, that it does not become more important than meeting with our brethren, and that it does not cause us to compromise our Christian values.

As a retired person, I do volunteer work in my community. While these commitments could be detrimental, they have instead deepened my yearning for God's kingdom, my understanding of God's restorative justice, and my understanding of Jesus willingness to give his life to save humanity, and sometimes I am able to share the good news of God's divine plan.

Sometimes what hinders us can be an attitude of mind. I was hindered for many years by psychological depression until I got professional treatment for it.

We can be hindered by a pattern of behavior such as frequent outbursts of anger. In my younger years I had that pattern of behavior. Then I learned that anger is a choice, a choice that was injuring relationships in my life, and I decided to change my choice, and now I rarely choose anger as a response to irritating circumstances.

We can be hindered by a pattern of always insisting on our own preferences or being so self-conscious that we do not reach out to be a blessing to others. We can be hindered by an attitude such as learned prejudices towards other people who are different from us. All of these things can slow us down in the race. Let us cast them off so that we can run more swiftly. We are also told to throw off the sin that so easily entangles us.

A runner would not want to wear clothing that would entangle and restrict their free movement, slowing them down. Paul writes in Ephesians 4, verses 20 and 23, 22 and 23 you were taught with regard to your former life to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds.

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

We each know the sin or the sin sins that most easily entangle us, to which we most easily fall prey, and which interfere with our progress in the narrow way. There are powerful drives rooted in our human nature. There may be some weaknesses of the flesh that we will never totally be free of as long as we are still in the flesh. But we must at least be diligent in keeping those weaknesses contained and submissive to the new will.

Satan tries to take advantage of our weaknesses to get us to rationalize giving in to our sinful tendencies. We are told in 2nd Corinthians 11:14 Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. But the Apostle Paul also tells us that we are not ignorant of or unaware of Satan's methods, his schemes to entrap us, so we must be watchful to avoid his traps. The apostle tells us that we must run with perseverance. The Greek word has the meaning of cheerful endurance.

It means we will give our best effort in running the course. It means when we stumble, we get up and continue running with renewed determination.

Brethren, our training program, the race we are in, is lifelong. We must persevere so that we have the knowledge and skills to heal the world of its spiritual and moral diseases.

All of us are on the same course, but we are not competing against each other. Everyone in this race who crosses the finish line is a winner. So comparing ourselves to each other, who we are ahead of or behind, who is on the inside lane or in the outer lane, is wasted effort. It only distracts us from successfully running the race.

We simply need to encourage one another on the course to persevere. The only reason for looking at and speaking to one another on the racetrack is to encourage one another onward. So let us encourage one another. Each of us can attain the prize. We need not make distinctions about what ecclesia we are in, or what conventions we attend, or what circle of fellowship we keep.

We simply need to encourage everyone on the course to persevere. This is our one and only opportunity. We should not let it slip by. In 1974 and when on a trip organized by Brother Carl Hagensik, we started in Europe, attending conventions in Little France and in Krakow, Poland. Before going to Egypt and Israel, we traveled down to Mount Sinai.

We awoke at 3am to begin climbing the mountain. It was a hard, steep climb with many, many steps, and I fell behind all others. Finally, all by myself, I decided to give up. I sat down to wait for the brethren when they came back down.

Then an elderly man I did not know sat down beside me to rest. He was on his way back down. When he learned that I had given up, he said, you must go on. You will probably never be here again. Do not miss your one opportunity to climb the mountain where God met with Moses.

I got up and I climbed to the top of the mountain, and I am so glad that I did. Brethren, we need to encourage each other so much.

Continuing with our theme text, the apostle writes, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

In the first two verses of the Book of Hebrews, we are told, in the past, God spoke to our forefathers through prophets, at many times and in various ways. But in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son. In chapter two, we read that God ministered to Israel through his angels, but now he is speaking through his son. In chapter 11 we are told how God worked through the

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

lives of the ancient heroes of faith. But in our theme text, Paul tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus.

Paul really wants his readers to clearly understand the very important role that Jesus plays, the very prominent place that Jesus occupies in God's plan of ransom and restitution. Jesus is the perfect example of one who has run the race before us. He surpasses all other competitors. The Greek word translated author, means chief leader. In Hebrews 2, verse 10, the same Greek is translated captain, referring to Jesus as the captain of their salvation.

We are to look at Jesus as our teacher, our leader, the one who is the foundation for our faith. The Greek word translated perfecter means completer or one who completes. Jesus is the fulfillment of all scriptural promises and prophecies. They all point to Him. In Hebrews, Paul brings together the scriptural evidence that would impress this doctrine on his readers.

He wants us to look to Jesus for everything we need. He wants us to trust Jesus with all the details of our lives. That is not easy by nature. We can be rather comfortable with who we are and our patterns of behavior. But as disciples of Jesus, we cannot be content to stay as we are.

We must be committed to the transformation of our character.

Returning to our theme text, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning the shame? This testimony regarding Jesus is amazing. Why? Why would anyone endure the pain and shame of being crucified when they didn't deserve it and had the power at their disposal to avoid it? Crucifixion was one of the most extreme forms of execution during Roman times.

It was intended to provide a death that was particularly slow, painful, gruesome, humiliating, and public. What joy could be so great that it exceeds the pain and shame of being crucified? Surely part of Jesus joy was pleasing his heavenly Father. He understood, as no one else could, the strength of His Father's desire to save humanity from its descent into sin and the penalty of death. John 3:16 tells us, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Knowing His Father's love for mankind and his desire to rescue them, Jesus had often stated that his purpose on earth was to do His Father's will, as we read in John 6, verse 38. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

Jesus knew that a sacrificial death, which only he could provide, was needed to ransom Adam and all of the generations after, and to redeem Israel from the curse of their failure under the law.

He willingly came down to provide that sacrifice. But when it became clear that his death would be by crucifixion, it caused him to mentally pause to consider the horrible pain and agony that it would bring, and he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to his Father, asking if it might be possible that this part of the experience could be taken away, changed in some way, perhaps. Matthew 26, verse 39 reads, My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will, but as you will. Jesus submitted to his Father's will.

The joy that was set before him was so great that he determined in his mind to endure whatever His Father required him to do.

Again we ask, what joy could be so great, so consuming, so compelling, that he would endure the pain and disregard the shame of crucifixion? It was the joy of not only saving his Father's work, his Father's creative work, but his own as well. For he had the active agent of the Father in bringing

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

everything into existence. As we already read in Colossians 1:16, just as God so loved the world that he gave his only son, Jesus so loved the world that he was willing to risk his eternal life and endure an agonizing death. Jesus is 33 and a half years living among humanity further deepened his emotional commitment to their salvation.

God knew that those years on earth would deepen Jesus, yearning to redeem and restore mankind because of the perfect love and compassion in his heart. Isaiah 53, verses 11 and 12 say, After a life of suffering, he will again have joy. He will know that he did not suffer in vain. My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many, and for his sake I will forgive them.

And so I will give him a place of honor, a place among great and powerful men. He willingly gave his life and shared the fate of evil men. He took the place of many sinners, prayed that they might be forgiven.

If God asked you to save the entire human race by sacrificing your life, what would you say?

Would any of us refuse that opportunity? Brethren, God is not going to ask you to give your life to ransom mankind. It has already been provided, and only Jesus could truly do it because he was perfect. But the passion for saving humanity should be just as deeply in our hearts as it was in Jesus heart. The work of restitution must be more than an intellectual doctrine that we believe.

It must be a passion within us that overflows with joy because of every person we know, every meet. This joy should be reflected in the way we treat every person yes, we are told in James 4, verse 4, that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. But we are also told in John 3:16 that God so loved the world that he gave his only son to redeem.

Is important for us to understand the difference between. Between those two statements if we would have the correct focus in our daily lives.

We are not to be a friend of the ways and values of this present evil world, but we are to love all persons just as God and Jesus loved them. Brethren, the joy set before us becomes very real when we learn the stories of of people's lives. One that makes my heart yearn for the kingdom is a sad episode in the life of Sullivan Ballou, 32 years old, and his wife Sarah, 24 years old. When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, Sullivan volunteered and joined the Union Army. On July 14, 1861, he wrote a loving and eloquent letter to his wife that has been preserved in our history.

And I want to read a few portions of his beautiful words.

My very dear Sarah, the indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days, perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more. Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure, or it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will but thine. O God, be done.

If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. Sarah, my love for you is deathless. It seems to bind me to you with mighty cables that nothing but omnipotence could break, and yet my love of country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with these chains to the battlefield.

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long and hard. It is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grow up to honorable manhood around us. I have, I know but few and small claims upon divine providence. But something whispers to me. Perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed.

If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name. Sarah, do not mourn me dead, think I am gone and wait for me, for we shall meet again. Sullivan.

One week later, Sullivan was wounded in battle and he died eight days later. His wife, Sarah never remarried.

There are so many similar stories in human history. Can you imagine the joy of bringing Sullivan and Sarah back from the grave? Can you imagine the joy of their reunion in the kingdom? Can you imagine the joy of Sullivan learning about the lives of his sons? And he probably has grandchildren to meet for the first time.

These joys will be replicated millions and billions of times, and our joy in helping this happen will be even greater. When you read the account in Luke 7 of Jesus raising to life the only son of the widow of Nain, are you able to imagine her joy? I hope that we all can.

Paul tells us in 2nd Corinthians 5, verses 18 to 21 that God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Our primary work will be reconciling each person with their Creator. But there is also the work of reconciling one person to another. Some of those reconciliations are going to be very difficult and painful. There have been terrible hurts and betrayals, and those wounds are going to need an awful lot of the balm of forgiveness as well as time to fully heal.

Imagine reconciling the Jewish person who died in one of Hitler's death camps with the guards who worked in the camp, and we might ask ourselves, would I be willing to give my life to save those guards?

Jesus was willing and did. Imagine reconciling a New York City firefighter who died in the collapse of the World Trade center, or the passengers who died on the planes flown into the towers with the terrorists who hijacked the planes or those who planned the attacks. Would I give my life in trade for those terrorists? Jesus did.

Imagine the many joyous reunions that will occur when the 310,000 people who died in the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunamis are brought back to life. Imagine the joy of bringing life again to a miner who was trapped below ground by a cave in and died slowly, helplessly, all alone.

It is the anticipation of such service in the kingdom and such joy that should encourage us every day to greater faithfulness, greater devotion to God and Jesus, and greater carefulness in our consecration, especially in how we represent Christ and God to the world around us as their ambassadors.

The final portion of our theme text tells us the final portion of our theme text tells us that after Jesus had provided the ransom, after God had raised him from the dead, he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God Jesus place at God's right hand is stated here and four other places in the Book

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

of Hebrews. The place at the right side or hand is a symbol of special honor or power. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the sheep are placed at Jesus right side, showing their approval. Jesus place at God's right hand is repeatedly stated in prophecy as well as in gospel and apostolic accounts, giving him authority to judge the nations and humanity. In Psalm 110, verse 1, David wrote, the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

This verse is quoted five times in the New Testament, three times by Jesus about himself and Peter testifies to its fulfillment. In 1 Peter 1 verses 21 and 22 Jesus Christ has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.

The promise to faithful disciples associated with him in this work is that they will be seated with him on his throne. Revelation 3:21 says to him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne.

Our Lord did not come to earth and faithfully provide the ransom because he wanted an exalted position next to His Father. He did this for the joy set before him, the opportunity to rescue humanity from death and slavery to sin. That should be the same motivation that propels us to follow in Christ's footsteps each day as we interact with the world around us. Let us find joy in each life which Christ has saved and rejoice in the prospect of what the restoration of each life will be. Brethren, may our love for the people all around us fill our hearts with joy every day because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has purchased their lives just as he did ours, and with our help he will soon bless them with eternal life and worldwide peace and joy.

Amen.

We thank our Heavenly Father for His word and the brother who showed us all these scriptures that are the guiding thought for our convention. I I remember if maybe you possibly have been running. Have you ever tried running with a backpack on? When you have a heavy backpack on, sometimes it's impossible to run anymore. Similarly, if we want to continue on our journey in this run, then any extra heavy burden, especially that of a sin which has been forgiven to us through Christ Jesus, but other sins that we have let us lay aside and let us be like our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sinless, who sacrificed his entire life and he attained the highest reward.

We will have a song and a prayer. Couple of informations.

Every day about 6pm There will be international choir practice, and brother Tim Krupa is asking anyone who would love to sing in the choir, not only the ones that have practiced earlier, but anyone who wants to sing is welcome to join the choir. At 6pm today or tomorrow there will be an organized a meeting that will deal with prophecies regarding end times, especially what it means to us during these times, and maybe we will think about the picture of Samson, what that could mean for our times and at present time. Brother Hubert, please conduct the song.

Dear brethren, we will sing look at Me, look at look at the Lord my soul 359 in Polish. But I think most brethren know the hymn. There are three verses. Let's sing it.

Sa.

Let us rise.

And at this time we will approach the throne of grace with brother Jerze Hankish.

Tom Gilbert - Hebrews 12:1-2

Dear beloved Father, at this present time we come before your throne of grace and to praise you. You and also to thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have we are able to approach you, and we thank you for this wonderful feast that we have, that we can see each other, that we can listen to the wonderful words coming from your book. Please allow us to apply these in our daily lives. Please allow us to come to you closer.

We thank you for this wonderful salvation plan that you allowed us to know it, that we can rejoice in the greatness of it, that we can look at the future with peace and know that you were there. You are taking care of us. We ask for your care over us and for wisdom that comes from above. We ask for the blessing and for thy Holy Spirit so that we could be together during this fellowship and be together in love. We praise you and we ask for all those who cannot be together with us and rejoice with us, who have maybe great difficulties, maybe in pain, maybe during the war.

Please give them help so that they could remain faithful to you from the bottom of our hearts. We ask for forgiveness for our sins, our shortcomings, for everything that causes you sadness. We beg for your forgiveness. Please be with us and care for us. In Jesus name.

Amen.

We have intermission until 5:15pm Please come earlier because those those hallways are very narrow and probably the weather will help us come sooner.

That applies to all the brethren.