Hebrews Ch12 - Throwing Off What Hinders

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Date: 27 October 2013

Preacher: Michael Grant

[0:00] It's probably roughly around 1202 or something. No?

It is. 1202, Hebrews chapter 3. Michael will be speaking from a section in Hebrews in just a while, but I want to read something which is the basis for our prayer.
So Hebrews chapter 3, verse 12. So I'll read it and then I'll pray in response to what we've read.
Hebrews chapter 3, verse 12. See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of us has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.
But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of us may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.
[1:32] We have come to share in Christ, if we hold firmly till the end, the confidence we had at first. Let's pray.

Father, we recognize that for each one of us as we go through the week, there are many voices competing for our attention.
There are many things that are trying to lead us away from the Lord Jesus. And so it is our prayer that we would keep our thoughts and our eyes focused on him.
We pray that we would keep our thoughts and our eyes focused on him. We pray that we would be people who quickly deal with any sin in our lives.
That we would support one another and encourage each other. not by means of condemnation, but simply pointing one another to the Lord Jesus, the one who forgives, the one who transforms us and changes us, the one who equips us with the power of his Holy Spirit to live the life that he has called us to.
[2:58] So, Father, we pray that as we go through this week, we would not just be thinking about ourselves, but we would be thinking how we can spur and encourage one another on in the faith.

Father, provide us with opportunities to serve one another. Provide us with ways to get alongside and to pray for each other.
We thank you for the support of this family. We thank you for the testimonies of one another.
Father, I thank you for just the couple of people speaking to at coffee time, of how they were encouraged with the church family.
Father, please that you would help us to be all that you call us to be. We thank you for helping Betty to be with us today.
And we pray that you would continue to strengthen her and give to her everything she needs over the coming weeks. We pray for all those who are away, who are helping at camp or leading.
[4:20] We pray that you would give them lots of energy and enthusiasm. And we pray for every camper that they would grow in their understanding of you and know what it is to love you and follow you.

Please help them to keep their focus on Jesus. We pray, Father, for all the students.
And thank you for the weekend they had just gone. We pray for their continued support on campus.
Amidst all their studies and all the work that they have to do, we pray that they would live well for you and continue to point others to Christ.
We thank you for our Sunday school teachers and for those who help at Cresce who are doing that right now. Please, would you give them the energy that they need and fill their lives with joy to serve you well.
And that every child who is represented here would not only grow healthy and strong, but that they would be built up in the faith.
[5:30] That they would grow to be people who follow you. Leaders in the next generation. People who are leading your church and growing your people.

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Please be gracious in that way, we ask. And for ourselves in all that we do this week at work, at college or at home, wherever we find ourselves, or if we're travelling away over the half term, Lord, keep us close to yourself.
Keep us walking with you. Trusting you. And looking only to you. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.
Well, we're going to read before Michael comes and speaks. There's two readings. The first one is in Psalm 1, which is on page 543.
Psalm 1, which is on page 543. This psalm contrasts the difference between the one who walks with God, listening to God, and the one who does not listen to God.
[7:07] So Psalm 1, we'll read that together. It's on page 543. Blessed is the man or woman who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law meditates day and night.

They are like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers.
Not so the wicked. They are like chaff, that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. And then turn to the New Testament, to Hebrews, chapter 12, which is on page 1210.
Hebrews 12, which is on page 1210. Starting at verse 1.
[8:46] 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.

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 at shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.
Okay. I'm going to ask Michael, who's going to come and speak. If you don't know who Michael is, he's related to me. He's my father.
And, yeah, he's struggling with his back. He wouldn't want me to tell you that, but I'll tell you that. So we've got out the wooden platform to lean against, and I'm going to pray for him.
[10:07] Thank you. For lots of energy to stand. Okay, so let's pray. Father, thank you for all your goodness to us, and thank you for your love, and thank you for your word.

Thank you that you continue to speak to us, and we pray that through Michael, you would be speaking your words to us, not just individually, but corporately as a church.
And we pray that you will strengthen him physically, and that you would empower him by your Holy Spirit, that his pain would not be a distraction, but he would be able to speak well, and point us to Jesus.
We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, in spite of a bad back, it's a joy to be with you this morning.
And if I do wince now and again, you'll understand the reason why. But we're going to be looking at Hebrews chapter 12, and focusing our thoughts particularly on verses 1 to 3.
[11:16] A number of years ago, I remember having to make a pastoral visit, and it was quite an occasion, the reason being that two young people were getting married, but the father of the bridegroom wasn't particularly pleased with the fact that it wasn't going to be in their local Catholic church, two young people had been converted, and so I was asked to go and see the father.

And it was quite a big house. I think, you know, Downton Abbey would have looked small by comparison. And I think the father wanted to impress me.
He'd been part of the British Army. And he showed me into a great big dining room. I could have met in smaller rooms, I'm sure, but he wanted me to be impressed, I think, and perhaps to be a little bit intimidated.
And he sat at one end of this dining table, and I sat at the other, and there were about room for about 20 people, I would say, around this dining table.
And looking down on me were all these old men dressed in their scarlets who'd been part of the Irish Guards. Very impressive.

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[12:48] There they were, all witness to our conversation. It really impressed me, but it also showed me that, well, they were all dead.

They were all looking down, but they were all dead. I'm impressed so much more when I come to Hebrews chapter 11.
I'm surrounded with a great crowd of witnesses. I'm told of all these people who lived in time past, these Old Testament saints of God who continued on in the face of difficulty, in the face of trial.
We have Abel. We have Enoch. We have Noah. We have Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. We have Moses' parents. We have Moses himself.
We have the prostitute Rahab who became a follower of the Lord's people and of their God. We have the judges.
[14:02] Not mentioned much, but they're there. We have the prophets. And we have a group of anonymous people who have been sawn in two and stoned and chained and imprisoned and put to death by the sword who we're told went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, ill-treated, wandering in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground and were bidden to have a look at them and to see that they continued on in the face of difficulty and trial.

They didn't give up when the going got hard. Now, by those people, I am impressed much more than the men in the scarlet uniforms.
And I say with the hymn writer that I want a faith like them. Oh, for a faith that will not shrink though pressed by every foe, that will not tremble on the brink of poverty or woe, that will not murmur or complain beneath the chastening rod, but in the hour of grief and pain can lean upon its God.
That's the kind of faith I want. But how can I obtain that faith? Well, I believe in verses one to three and indeed further on into the chapter twelve, we're told how we can have this kind of faith.
How we can keep going. And why does the writer to the Hebrews write in the way he does? Well, the Hebrews were tempted to go back.
[16:00] They were tempted to give up their Christian walk. And they're bidden to look at these Old Testament saints and they're bidden to be like them.

And that's why the chapter twelve begins with the word therefore. In the light of what I've been saying, this is what you must do.
So there's four points I want to bring before you this morning. And the first is this, that if we would have that kind of faith, we must be ready to get rid of all that hinders.
Chapter twelve and verse one. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witness, let us throw off everything that hinders.
Now, it was a custom of the day. If you went along to the athletics meetings, it doesn't happen today. And in all sincerity, I'm glad it doesn't, but the Roman runners used to strip down to their bare skin.
[17:08] there was no access weight whatsoever. Of course, there was nothing wrong with clothes, but they considered that it would hinder their progress in the race.

And what the writer to the Hebrews is doing here is saying, there are even those legitimate things that must be removed if we are to walk the life of faith.
anything that holds us back, anything that drags us down in the race of life. Of course, there were many things as far as the Hebrews were concerned.
They had their ceremonies that they had brought up with all their holy days. Other Jews would encourage them to adopt food laws and to hold on to those food laws if they had stopped practicing them.
But all of this had to go, even though it was legitimate, if they were going to run the race of life. And what the writer to the Hebrews is saying, I want you to be radical.
[18:24] I want you to put off anything that hinders you. Jesus, of course, was radical himself, wasn't he?

God's love. In Matthew chapter 18 and verse 7, he says, if your hand or your foot causes you to walk in a way that is not helpful, or if your eye causes you to sin, cut off your hand, cut off your foot, take your eye out, gouge it out.
it's a different metaphor to what we have here of laying aside. But it's the same radical thing that he's asking of the believers.
And the Lord would ask us, are we ready to leave those things that would hinder us in our walk with the Lord? Are we ready to put aside anything that hinders?

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I remember talking to a pastor. He was very able with his computer. He published a magazine on a regular basis.
[19:45] But he found that he was spending too much time with his computer. So he put it aside. Are televisions, how many hours do we spend looking at it?

I enjoy sports, but am I ready to put them aside? Friendships that may not be helpful. Am I ready, if the Lord is calling me to further service for him, ready even to give up that career, which gives me a good salary?
I remember reading the biography of Martin Lloyd Jones a number of years ago. He was a Harley Street doctor. He was second to an understudy of Lord Hodder, who was physician to the King of England at that time.
The whole medical world lay before him, met tremendous prospects. But God was calling him to be a minister of the word of God.
So he was ready to continue in that way. He was ready to leave behind even though he had a prosperous career laid out before him.
[21:12] Are we ready to do that? To get rid of anything that hinders? Like Moses, who we read of in Hebrews 11 and verse 24, who refused to be known as a son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He knew that he couldn't continue as he was.
Naturally, you would think he would like to stay in the palace. Perhaps he could work better there, making conditions easier for his people.
No, palace life was a hindrance to him, so it had to go. Isn't this what the Apostle Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 12?
Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.
[22:25] I won't let those things control my life. I will be controlled by the Spirit of the living God. So I ask you this morning, is there anything hindering you in your way of life, of following the Lord Jesus Christ?

be ready to cast it aside. Throw off everything that hinders you. The second thing the Apostle, the writer to the Hebrews says, is get rid of that which entangles.
That part of verse 1, and the sin that so easily entangles. We know what it is to be entangled. we've all watched a fly in a web.
What does it do when it gets into the web? It struggles. It struggles to free itself, but it becomes more entangled. And then the spider comes along and finishes off the job.
The fly dies. The spider obviously rejoices. Or we can think of another way that we can become entangled. I remember as a child at school sometimes going in for the three-legged race.
[23:50] Now that was alright if the person I was attached to was athletic and was able to run. Yeah, that was great. But sometimes you went to God's side, somebody had no idea about running.

And consequently you both end up flat on your face. You were entangled. It wasn't helpful. you didn't get very far in the race. Now says the writer to the Hebrews, the sin that so easily entangles. Get rid of it. That sin that so easily entangles. But notice he refers to it as the sin that so easily entangles.
He's thinking of a particular sin, a specific sin. Well, what is that sin? Well, I would suggest that the context tells us it's the sin of unbelief.
He goes on to speak about Jesus, the author and protector of our faith. So I think the sin that he is speaking about is the sin of unbelief.
[25:05] Not in the unbeliever, but in the believer. And it is a sin that does entangle us. Of course, there are many sins.

There's covetousness, there's envy, there's criticism, there's laziness, there's hatred, there's lust, there's unthankfulness, there's pride. Many more sins that we could mention.
But here, it's a lack of faith, a lack of trust in God. It's a lack of walking with Him and being obedient to His Word.
Let me try and illustrate it. I'm living my life as a Christian. And then something happens to me. I have that thorn in the flesh.
Something comes into my life. And instead of trusting in the Lord, I start walking in unbelief.

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[26:11] I've asked the Lord to take away the difficulty, but it doesn't seem to be going away. And then the devil comes along and tells me that God has forgotten me.

Or I lose my job. Or I lose my husband, my wife. Or I have a broken relationship.
things that happen in everybody's life. And I take my eyes off the Lord and I spiral down into doubt and unbelief. And I start behaving like an atheist.
Have you ever found yourself there? Even as a Christian? That sin that so easily entangles me.
And I begin to say, Christianity doesn't work.
Now the Hebrews, Christians, were in danger of getting entangled. They were ready to give up. You go back to chapter 10 and verse 35.
[27:18] He writes, don't throw away your confidence. He's not speaking in a vacuum. They were in danger of throwing away their confidence.

No, don't throw it away. it will be richly rewarded. In verse 4 of chapter 12 he says, in your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.
Things could become more difficult for you. Keep on. Remember those who have gone before you.
Remember those who did shed their blood but they didn't give up.
So dear Christian friends here this morning in Carragalline, get rid of anything that hinders and put from you that sin of unbelief.
Hold on to the Lord. Take his word into your heart. It is utterly dependable.
[28:26] The third thing he says is run with perseverance. Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Some of the older versions have the word patience. To keep on even when the going is tough.
The Christian life is not this, if you can remember the Olympic Games, it's more of this. You remember those who ran?
The short sprint. It was over very quickly. But the 10,000 meters goes on, or the marathon goes on for a long time.
And in Christian service, and we're all called to serve to serve the Lord. We begin when we believe to run in this race.
[29:34] And we won't reach the finishing tape until the day we die. We have to persevere. We have to run with patience.

And there will be the uphills. There will be obstacles. There will be things that will try and cut in on you.
And you will reach the pain barrier that you have to go through. But you're to run with perseverance.
There's a great cloud of witnesses looking on.
Didn't they persevere? Didn't they continue? Think of Noah. The commentators say he was 120 years building the ark.
Hauling the timber day after day. Hammering those nails in along with the rest of his family. Being ridiculed by those who looked on.
[30:39] Look at this great big ark on dry land. How ridiculous Noah. Give it up. Oh no says Noah. I cannot give up. God has told me.

A flood is coming. And he persevered. He continued patiently forward. Hauling the timber and hammering the nails.
Moses is mentioned. Think of Moses in his life. Which can be divided into three times forty. Forty years in the palace enjoying all the luxuries.
Becoming to recognise that he was part of the very people of God. And then for forty years being a fugitive out there in the desert looking after sheep.
And then meeting with God and God sending him back and spending another forty years leading the people towards the promised land. Moses do you ever feel like giving up?
[31:49] He tells us he did feel like giving up. Lord take somebody else. I've had enough. But he went through the pain barrier as he heard the word of the Lord and he encouraged himself in the Lord.

I think of the apostle Paul shipwrecked suffering dangers in this way and that way. Paul you have the care of all the churches.
Do you feel like giving up Paul? Oh I have a saviour and I know that I can do all three things through Christ who gives me strength.

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Jeremiah the Old Testament prophet nobody's listening to you Jeremiah nobody cares what you're saying. They're asking you to say something pleasant to them and all you're telling them is judgment is coming.
Much easier to shut up isn't it Jeremiah? No I must go on speaking. I must persevere. My friends if you feel like giving up because the going is hard keep on.
[33:15] Run with perseverance. But it doesn't just say that run with perseverance it says run the road marked out for us with perseverance.

There's a verse from Psalm 139 and verse 16 which says your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
I find that very comforting that nothing can happen to me which is outside the will of a sovereign God. I believe by faith as a young child.
I've been on that race for nearly 70 years. The race that was marked out for me as it was marked out for you as it was marked out for this great cloud of witnesses.
is. The lane is there. You know if you're running on a track you're given a lane.
[34:31] If you go out of that lane you are disqualified. We are to stay in the lane of God's appointment. What will our lanes be like?

What will our road be like? I don't know. but none of us knows. But we are called to walk by faith and not by sight.
We're called to walk in obedience. We're called to walk under the direction of a sovereign Lord who does all things well.
We're called to walk in the light of eternity. Read the lies of the people mentioned in Hebrews 11. they were all different.
Consider Joseph thrown into a pit by his brothers being sold as a slave into Potiphar's house being thrown unjustly into prison before he went to the palace to become second in command in the land of Egypt.
[35:41] It wasn't an easy pathway for him. it didn't happen overnight. Later on he was saying he says to his brothers you meant it for evil but God meant it for good.

Or look at chapter 11 and verse 38 about those fugitives who were ill treated. all the problems that they had to go through some of them even sawn in two.
we don't get that kind of persecution. But we too in our particular lane have the joys we have the hassles at our work in our schools in our university we say suffer with the problem of childlessness we may know the instance is a breakup of marriages of a friend who had a special needs daughter and they have had problem after problem through her 23 years of her life I don't know what your lane will be like I don't know what you're going through now but I would encourage you to keep going on to get rid of all that hinders and to run with perseverance the road mark out for you of course you can take a shortcut because you think it's easier remember pilgrim's progress we find Christian and faithful taking a shortcut the ground looked easier the bypass meadow looked very very nice to them not so difficult as a way that they were on but remember because they took that shortcut they quickly found themselves locked up in doubting castle and giant despair took hold of them my friends don't go out of the way because it seems easier follow this word walk in his way oh it may you may look at the world and say they don't have the problems that I do as a Christian they don't have the difficulties that I have as a Christian but my friends keep on the road the race that is marked out for you and it will always be the best way all things do work together for good to those that love
God and to those that are the called according to his purpose so get rid of all that hinders that which entangles and run with perseverance the road marked out for you the road of God's appointment and the final thing I want to say to you this morning is this and it is a most important of what I am saying this morning as you do it keep your eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ we have it there don't we in verse 2 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 his shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart now notice what he says here let's break it up fix your eyes upon
[39:44] Jesus now I like using the full title when I'm speaking about the Lord Jesus he is he is the Lord Jesus Christ but here Jesus is mentioned it's not his full title it was a name that was given to the man Jesus you shall call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins and what the writer wants us to do is to fix our eyes upon the Lord Jesus who became man who also had to

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persevere fix your eyes upon the Lord Jesus who had to persevere to the end he was in all points tempted like us he suffered as other men he suffered on the cross if you are the

Christ save yourself and thus said the two thieves although one had a change of mind the crowd shouted if you are the Christ come down from the cross give it up my friends fix your eyes upon Jesus who endured who kept going even to the point of laying down his life on the cross cross and you find that these Old Testament saints they also fixed their eyes upon Jesus Abraham we are told in John 8 and verse 56 rejoiced to see the day of Christ and was glad his eyes were fixed he looked forward to Jesus in Hebrews 11 and verse 26 we said we read
Moses regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt they fix their eyes upon Jesus and you and I as we go through life fix your eyes upon Jesus who endured right to the end fix your eyes upon Jesus the author and perfecter of faith the R isn't in the original he was a pioneer of faith why do you and I believe because of him the gift of faith comes to us through him by way of the spirit he initiates all faith and bestows all faith he's the author of faith and he's the perfecter of faith he's all that faith is required to be when Jesus was on earth he lived in total dependence on the father always doing his will never deviating from the path marked out for him fix your eyes upon him who said not my will be done but yours be done fix your eyes upon Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith fix your eyes upon the one who endured the cross go to Gethsemane see the sweat drops of blood if you are willing let this cup pass from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done see his physical suffering see also his spiritual suffering see the sin of the world laid upon him tempted to give up father forgive them for they know not what they do he knew that there was no other way and Christ showed his love for the church and gave himself for it and my friends if
Jesus Christ be God and died for me then no sacrifice is too great for me to make for him fix your eyes upon Jesus who endured the cross for you and for me fix your eyes upon Jesus who scorned the shame of the cross he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief he hangs naked upon the cross a spectacle to the world bystanders like the priest are gloating over him and laughing at him there's a callous indifference of the soldiers there's there's a snickering crowd and we know that just a cry from him would have brought the armies of heaven and he could have been brought down from the cross of shame but he dismisses it as nothing fix your eyes on him and all he went through for you and ran with perseverance the race marked out for you of course you cannot bear the sin of another as he did but you can seek to be like him and keep going on he scorned the shame why well consider him we're told in verse three who endured such opposition from sinful man so that you will not grow weary and lose heart consider in the original it's the word from where we get logarithm in other words to carefully calculate what Jesus went through as he suffered at the hands of Caiaphas of Herod of Pilate of the soldiers of the mob of people who yelled for his crucifixion consider him when you're tempted to give up when you're tempted to abandon the race when you're tempted to throw in the towel look at what Jesus went through for you and for me consider him the man
[46:51] Jesus who suffered in your place see his perseverance and hear him cry yet continue on my God my God why have you forsaken me consider the man who endured the cross and despised the shame and it would not be in vain follow him as the example why did he go through all this suffering well he went through it for the joy that was set before him he went through it that he might sit at the father's right hand that he might enjoy the glory of heaven so fix your eyes upon him and recognize that the suffering you go through and the ridicule that you suffer and all that happens in your life are but as nothing compared with the joy that will be yours in heaven get rid of all that hinders persevere run in the lane that

God has marked out for you and fix your eyes upon Jesus remember that it's a light affliction that is working for you an eternal weight of glory it will all be worth it and all praise to his name amen let's pray father we thank you that we have this exhortation to continue on lord we know that all of us have been tempted to give up all of us oh lord have heard the devil whispering in our ears why do you keep on believing but thank you that you've given us a glimpse of the lord Jesus you've shown us all his love for us and we thank you for that so help us oh lord to fix our eyes upon Jesus and run with perseverance the race marked out for us help us we pray and empower us by your spirit may we see our own responsibilities of getting rid of anything that hinders may we put from us any doubts and unbeliefs may we hold on to your word and may we look to Jesus and may his be all the glory amen up

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