

### **“Jesus Endured The Cross...”**

(Text: Hebrews 12:1-3)

**Context:** In this letter to the Hebrew Christians in the first century, the author (some think Paul, others think Silas, or Barnabas, or Aquila, and Priscilla, or Apollos) refers to the many descriptions of the Messiah and then to the way that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these descriptions. Here, under inspiration, the writer of this epistle encourages the scattered and suffering Hebrew believers by directing their attention to the how our Lord “for the joy that was before Him,” endured even the cross. Jesus knew, a head of time, what He was facing. Nonetheless, He, intentionally, went forward to the cross knowing that He would accomplish the salvation of many, many souls. This “joy” before Him, helped Him to endure even the cross. Jesus’ profound love for sinners and His accomplished work of salvation are two realities that can strengthen us when we face fatigue in our following Him. His example lifts us up when we are tired and ready to give up. His love and forgiveness unburden our souls and give us peace along the way.

#### **I. Fatigue And Pain Can Discourage Believers From Continuing Their Walk With The Lord.**

- A. The first century recipients of this letter certainly were experiencing persecution and hardship of every sort.
  1. Their faith in Christ ostracized them from their native Jewish community.
  2. They were treated with contempt by others.
  3. They felt abandoned, small, and weak.
- B. Believers in Christ have faced horrible persecutions and difficulties throughout the centuries.
  1. The great persecution of the Roman Emperor after the burning of Rome.
    - a. Being thrown to the lions in the Roman coliseum.
  2. The persecution of Christians in Pakistan this past week.
  3. The subtle and not-so-subtle targeting of Christians for humor.
- C. The attacks of the devil toward you and me:
  1. Lead us to think that God is not real.
  2. Invite us to follow the values of our unbelieving neighbors.
- D. The devil loves to distract us away from focusing upon our Savior Jesus.

1. He leads us to focus on our own efforts.
2. He encourages us to fight with each other.
3. He loves to assist us in losing “self-control” (which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23).

#### **II. Jesus Endured The Cross And Overcame Sin, Death, & The Devil To Save Sinners.**

- A. This is already accomplished. It has been done!
  1. Jesus declared, “It is finished!” (It is accomplished! It is fulfilled!)
- B. In the words of this God-inspired letter, we are taught to “lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles us,...” (12:1).
  1. Jesus helps us to see what is of eternal value.
  2. He strengthens us, daily, with His Word and the Sacraments.
  3. He grants us His Spirit to live in us, to teach us, to help us, to guide us...
  4. He pours love (agape) into our lives which is the “antidote” to selfish living.
- C. He, repeatedly, reminds us that our sins are forgiven.
  1. Guilt is pushed away from us, daily.
  2. Grudges toward others are cast aside as we forgive those who have sinned against us.
  3. We are re-connected to the purpose for which we were made, that is, to love: to love God & to love our neighbor.
- D. Jesus is, not only, the author, but the “perfecter” of our faith in Him. He will complete, finish, (sustain and strengthen) our faith in Him!
  1. He is the One who carries us across the finish line.
    - a. The father who jumped from the stands to carry his Olympian son across the finish line.
    - b. The Father of the prodigal son ran to meet and welcome Him home.
    - c. We have a Savior who supplies the “wherewithal” to finish our race!