

"Moving Through Change - Our "In Him" Focus"



[Hebrews 12:1-4](#)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

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Transcription of the sermon:

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As we look into the Word this morning, I want to put up here a image. So what do you see here in this image? This has almost become a classic. So it seems to make the point. Have you ever seen this before? How many have seen this before? Okay, many of you. So what do you see here? As you look at this sketched diagram, what do you see? An old lady? Yeah. So if you see an old lady, right here is her nose. This is her mouth. As you can see, it's kind of downturned there. And she's kind of got a bump on her nose there. Here's her eye and her hair. She has this bonnet on. You see an old lady there? Yeah, it's a drawing. Then on the other hand, depending on how you look at this, there is this jawline of a younger woman as her head is turned away and the little pug nose that she has there. And here is her ear and ear lobe and her hair and a fur hat there. What do you see? A younger woman with her head turned away? Do you see an older woman with a crooked nose? Okay, let me outline her for you. Here is her nose. This is her chin. This is her eye and her hair is coming down. Do you see that? Still don't see that? This really depends. What you see here depends on how you look at it. It depends on how you look at it. I'm going to put up here another image. This one not a drawing but an actual photo. And the question is, what do you see here? Okay, let me do a follow up question

here. Who's wearing the black shoes? Is it her or him that's wearing the black shoes? The girl or the guy? This may help you. I'll outline them both for you. One person is sitting in the chair. That's the guy. The girl is coming up behind him. She's got her head slightly wrapped around his neck as she looks at what is on his computer screen. And she is wearing the black shoes. They look like girl shoes anyway, right? So the answer to this is, a girl is going around a guy's shoulders wearing these shoes, but it really depends on the way you look at this, the focus. Now there really is a reality that is pictured here. But it may seem like he's wearing the shoes. One more picture, a photo. You ready for one more? Spring Break time here. What do you see here? It looks like some girls on spring break. But do you notice, in the background, the pedestrians going by? What do you see there? It's a funeral procession going by. But really look at the heads of each one. They are all the same person, it's the same face on each one. Well, here, let me circle each one. Those nine people in the back are all this same person, over and over and over. And even though we looked at this, we really didn't get that at first. That the same person in a photo had been photoshopped, superimposed, so to speak, on this.

The reason I've shown you all of these this morning is because they're very relevant as an illustration of what we're going to be looking at this morning. Moving through change. I'm going to ask you to turn with me to Hebrews chapter 12. In Hebrews chapter 12 there is laid out for us, from the Lord, a very clear statement of handling life, as you're moving through it. It's an extremely clear statement. It applies for moving through change. We're going to be continuing our mini series, that we started last week, about moving through change. Last week, we noted that God does intend, in this fallen world that we're in, that things change, even the heavens and the earth, they will be changed. There will be change. It's not always going to be like it is right now. A war on a Ukrainian front, with an evil aggressor, it's not always going to be the way that it is right now. It will change. As a matter of fact, the Lord talks to us also, about us changing. For outer man is what? He is wasting away. Our inner man is what? He is being renewed day by day. That's change, physical change. And God intends spiritual change, we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being changed. As we see and hear the Lord being clearly communicated to us, through the Scriptures, we are being changed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. God intends change. We spent a great deal of time looking at this, just to establish the basic fact that God looks and intends for us to have change. There is change in the world, it's going away, change in our own physical being, as day by day it wastes away, our inner man renewed day by day into the same image to reflect what the Lord was like. And don't be conformed to this world, be transformed, changed, informed by this process, the renewing of your mind, that you're able to discern what God wants, what His will is, what is good and acceptable and complete in regards to God's will for us, change. Change is what God intended for us, physically, spiritually, even in our world. He intends that. There is a constant however, you remain, Oh God. You're the same. Your Word doesn't change. Because, he says in Malachi 3, I, The Lord, doesn't change, you are not destroyed. You're not completely overwhelmed and wiped out because I, The Lord, don't change.

We're in a world of change, particularly this applies to us, as we move in the next couple of weeks into a major change, for Heartland, for the folks of Heartland. So we took time

to look at how God intends for us to be moving forward through change, as you received Christ Jesus. How did we receive them? By faith, trusting that God sent His Son and we trusted him like a child, trusts a parent. Children have questions, they have wonders, but they listen to the parent. Jesus said, as he sat the child in their midst, Matthew 18, Unless you become like this child, whom Jesus directed, and he followed and obeyed, you're not going to enter the kingdom of heaven. We have to trust like a child. He brought a change to us in the past that way. If you were genuinely in Christ, you know, trusting Jesus alone, for your salvation, that his death paid your sin debt, his resurrection showed that God accepted this, his appearance to others changed you. It changed you. We are no longer working to please God but taking the free gift and enjoying the opportunity to know Him and serve Him. That's a change based on faith. And now we move forward through change, as you've received Christ, so walk in him. That's the basis for moving through change, walking in him. By the way, was the wrap up from last week, that I didn't get a chance to show you. When change is in the air, God's promises are all "yes and amen", to His glory.

Now we turn to Hebrews 12. And I have a question for you. And the question is, what do you see here? It is a matter of your life in the future. And God gives us direction here that is clear. And the question I want to ask you, as you read through this, is this. What is the focus God calls for us to have here? What is he called us to fix our attention on? What you see depends on how you're looking at it, what lines you see are connected. What is really true. What is being photoshopped and inserted. So as we read through this, remember this question. What. is God calling you to focus on as you move through life? Just like we started last week, there's a "therefore". Hebrews 12:1-4, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us," that's your life, "looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint hearted. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." Well, what's the answer? What is the focus God calls for us to have here? Looking to Jesus, looking to Him, looking to Him. Now as we go through change, it is very easy to have a perspective that sees lines and presents a different picture. Did you see a young woman or an older woman in that first image? It is very easy as we go through our life and experiencing change, it's very easy to see something that appears to be this way, but it's not really the way it is. As we go through life, and we experienced change, change like we're about to have in a couple of weeks. Any kind of change, change of relationship, change of life circumstance, change of finance, change, all kinds of change, it's very easy to photoshop this thing and always see the image of me, the image of me over and over and over and lose what was the focus of this, what God had in mind as you move through change. I used those illustrations, by pictures, to make it really, really clear that what you see, as you go through change, depends on your focus. It depends on the lines you see connected. It depends on if you really see what is there or you superimposed yourself on it, over and over and over. It really depends. It really depends.

The Lord helps us here by telling us where the focus needs to be as we move through life. We're gonna see these two things. Our "in him" focus, you and I, we are here. We are here. Have you ever seen that before? I just saw it this past week. We had two of our grandsons with us for a few days as they were on spring break. And one of the things that we did was go on some trails at Mounds State Park up near Anderson. And we were on this trail and I went up on the display board, at the map of the trail, and it said, you are here. You've done that before too. In the mall, in a major building, a government building, on a trail...you are here. And that's what he does first, and he says, You and I-we, it's all of us corporately, because he uses a you that's plural. We don't have that in English. The closest thing is what the southern folks say, you all. I sent that to my sister, who now lives in Georgia, and she sent it back with a correction. It's y'all. It's not you all, it's y'all. So I had to get that corrected. That's the closest we get to how he does this because he's talking about all of us, together as believers, but it also applies to us individually, because individually he says, you are here. And you are to do this as you move forward in your life through the change. You and I-we look here, so to do this. And that's how this is laid out for us here this morning. Here is where you are, do this and look here, so to do this, moving through change, our "in him" focus. And this is where we always need to be whatever change comes, which there will be change, because God intends change, there will be change in your world, there will be change in your person, there will be change in you spiritually, as God intends. And it always needs to be our "in him" focus to see what's really there. And not superimpose as in a photoshopped picture of ourselves into the picture, inappropriately, inordinately.

So let's take a look at this. First of all, you and I-we are here, come up to the map and see where we are. Verse 1, "Therefore", he says, "since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses". What we are surrounded by is a great mass of people, a large number, a large number that are giving witness. They're also testifying, they are also making it known what it is to live a life of faith in God, in His Word, in Christ, in His resurrection, and what that accomplished for us, those who trust Him alone, and what that means. It is a great number of people who give witness to this testimony. Now remember what Jesus told us in John 3:11, he told us that somebody who gives a witness, a testimony is this, "I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you don't receive our testimony." You don't accept that this can be an actual experience. And he said that to Nicodemus about being born again, born of the Spirit of God, so your life has changed. First change God has us to go through, you come to know Christ and He changes you. We are surrounded, here is where you are, we are absolutely surrounded by a great number of people who give testimony, what they see and what they know, about living life with faith in God, with faith in our savior, Jesus Christ.

Now just to make the picture clear, notice what he says in chapter four verse one, "Therefore". Last week, we started there too. And remember what this is? The author is saying, Based on what I have just said, as a consequence, as an outcome of what I've just said. What has he just said in Hebrews chapter 11? He's talked about a whole bunch of people 17 plus, 16 who are named by name and then a whole group like prophets, and like people who went through the Red Sea and all of them who numbered in the 100s of 1000s, they lived a life of faith. Therefore, based on what I've said about them.

"Therefore", he says, "since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses", now

notice chapter 11, verses 39 and 40, where he talks about the "therefore", "And all of these", all of the people who had faith, people like Moses and people like Abraham, and people like David, and people like Daniel, just look at the number he lists here, there's Gideon and Barak and Samson, and a whole bunch of them, all had to various degrees and amount of basing their life on faith, trusting God like he is and his promise for the future. "And to all of these", he said, verse 39, though commended through their faith", because they had faith. God gave them a recommendation. Yep, that's it, that's where you're supposed to be. They "did not receive what was promised". All of these Old Testament people never received the promise of the coming Messiah. They never saw him come to earth and die on a cross. And this whole thing that God had promised, from the very beginning, in the book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve sinned, that there would come a Savior, who would crush the head of Satan and his evil in this world. They never saw it. They had faith in it. But they never saw it. They did not receive what was promised, verse 40, "since God had provided something better for us," Who's the "us" here? It's you and I, who are now, after Jesus Christ came, believers in Him. There's something better. What's the something better? The something better is that Christ came and has established this New Covenant, where he actually moves inside of us through faith, where he now begins to write on our hearts and on our minds what his desires are. So that when we hear this word, it's like, Yes, that's it! That's it! This is something better. And by the way, if you want to check out this, something better, I'll give you a reference here, you can go back to Hebrews 8:8-12, and just look at the something better that we're already experiencing. This is what we're already experiencing, something better for us. But he goes on here and says, verse 40b, "that apart from us they should not be made perfect", brought to the perfection, the completeness of this thing that God has in mind. You see, not only do we have something better than they had, though they had some good stuff, the better is yet to come. There's still a better yet, a better yet, then indwelling Spirit and the work of God in our lives, that changes us from the inside out, there still something better yet, when Christ completes this thing.

"Therefore", he says, since we are here, surrounded by a great number of people who give testimony to this same faith, he says, do this. This is now what you are to do. We are here, and we have this to do, run the race. This is your life that's ahead of you. This is the course that we have yet to follow. He's talking about the future and moving through the change that God intends. To do this, he says three things, each one tells us this, you need to let yourself do this. He says it this way, "Let us", number one, "lay aside" or cast aside, "every weight". You know, I kind of do this every night when I'm ready to tumble into bed. I cast aside the outfit that I had on all day and quite literally, I have a spot right beside my bed where I just cast it aside, just throw it off and jump into the covers. Now some people are big on PJ's. Okay, they are pajama people but I'm not so much a pajama person. Okay, I'm not gonna go any further in that. That's just the way it is. Okay. And I don't really want to hear about in the future, even in the streaming in this thing. I don't want to be asked on the street. Okay. But that's basically what you do, you cast it off, that's what he's talking about here. And he's talking about as a weight. Cast aside every weight.

Now Warren Wiersbe was a preacher and in his book, *Run With The Winners*, he talks about this weight thing. The word also means buldge, cast off the buldge or the bulk that you have. Warren Wiersbe talks about one day, he was in his office as a pastor, and he bent down to pick up a piece of paper, and he couldn't straighten up. He couldn't get up again. And he said, somehow, he got to his car, went to his doctor, and his doctor went in to see him. And he said, I'm having back trouble. And his doctor, who had known him for a goodly while, said, You're not having back trouble. You're having front trouble. Yeah. And his doctor had been after him to lose some of the weight, the bulk that he was carrying. And now if you know Warren Wiersbe, he was a guy of stature. And so he said the doctor was right. He laid aside some of this weight to the process, and suddenly his back trouble cleared up quite well. Now in Hebrews, when he says lay aside every weight, he's not talking about what we all struggle with, especially as we come out of winter, we suddenly notice the extra bulk. He's not talking about that. He's talking about the things that weigh you down. That gives you back trouble. After Warren Wiersbe told that story in this book, he went on to say, "You're not having back trouble. You're having front trouble! ...What did the writer mean by encumbrances?" or weight. "He was probably referring to anything that keeps us from successfully running the race of faith, anything that distracts us or divides our attention. It might in itself be a good thing, yet if it hinders us, it's dangerous and must be removed" or cast aside.

Things like what? Things like relationships. They can be hindering. Relationships aren't bad, they're good. As a matter of fact, God is a relational being. He is a Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all interacting in one, in close communion. That is the basis why believers cannot live in isolation. We have to live in community with each other. It's based in who God is as a person. Sometimes it's relationships that are weighing us down. Sometimes it's the idea of what my life ought to be. I've heard many believers get utterly frustrated, and say, I just want to have life be easy. I've had enough trouble in my life, I just want it to be easy. You mean, you want heaven on earth? Not coming. Not gonna happen. That is a thing that weighs them down. Because they're frustrated over and over and over, when life has problems. Let's see, who said this. In this world, you will have trouble. Who said that? Jesus Christ said that to us at a very important moment. And then he said this, But be of good courage. Be courageous in this. Because I have overcome the world. One day, life will be fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. Here, it's not that way, it's not going to be that. And if that's what your aim is, it's a weight. It's bulk. It's a buldge that's weighing you down. Heaven is for sure. The nice thing about heaven is that it's the best that's yet to come. Not here. I think I've illustrated enough that this weight thing, they aren't necessarily bad, there just things that weigh us down.

But there are some things that are bad. He said, Let us cast aside the sin. The sin that so easily entangles us the way that he words this he words it as a thing that kind of surrounds your feed. Have you ever had that? I had that just this week, I was in a math class, with my grandkids doing the homeschooling thing, first time praise God, that we were able to be in person again for a long time, first time, and I was there and I walked around the desk, and I have this lamp that comes up and sits on the desk. And when I did, I stepped across the cord. And pretty soon it was like I was like this. And my extremely intelligent granddaughter said, Well, I knew that was going to happen. Thank you, the entanglement there is sin. There is a sin the he uses a definite article V sin,

there is a sin a missing a mark with God that gets us entangled over and over and over again. comes from a sin of unbelief that you don't really believe God on this and it it untangles us, I have to deal with them, I have to deal with them personally. It sometimes it has to do like right now. It has to do with the thoughts and the meditations of your heart. Do you know that we all meditate, I'm going to just take you into my struggle right now. Do you know we all meditate? We all meditate. The Bible tells for us to meditate on God, his works and his work. And sometimes the meditation of my heart gets to be on some things that are very distant from that. I'll be driving along and I'll be thinking about this. And all of a sudden now realize that is the meditation of your heart. That That is what God is talking about when he talks about the meditations of your heart, the things that you say over and over and over, okay, enough of my struggle, that's where I am right now. And, and this, this sin thing entangles me over, my granddaughter could have said, well, I knew that was going to happen. It's going to do that to you over and over and over again. So he says, get a grasp on this thing. casted as such, this is what we are here. And we are to do this, dealing with our sin that entangles us, by the way, if you need help on that, that's what biblical counseling is for. And it's just not from a quote, unquote, biblical counselor. It's from a brother or sister who you can talk to, that will help you that will understand and come alongside to infuse strength. This is where we're at, you are here in this race that has entangling sin, and this is the direction that we're to go. And he adds this, let us run the race. This is the race. This is the course that God has said, I can demonstrate to you that God has determined the time and the place where people are to dwell on the earth, he has determined the events and the nature of those events in their life, like having to move through change, like we are right now. And he has set that course before you. And the call is, for where you are at, here and now, to run with endurance. It's a staying in there, a staying on this course. Even when, sometimes, I just feel like I want to give up.

Then, secondly, "looking here". Now I've already illustrated this, "looking here", by the pictures we put up here earlier. What do you see? What lines? It depends on what lines you're connecting. Do you see what's there? Or do you see something different than what's really there? It depends on what's being superimposed on this. Are you photoshopping? Where are we to look? Here's where we are to look. Our "looking here" is to Jesus, verse 2, fixing our vision on him, fixing our vision on him. You know, when my kids were growing up, they were PK's, Pastor kids. And the PK has a lot of typical experiences of any kid. But they have a couple others because their Papa is always talking about what's right and what's wrong before God. So they get evaluated on whether they're right or they're wrong before us. So they get to do that. One of my Mondays, which was the day that we kind of took for the family, we went to a place called Hidden Lake in Chicago land we lived up in Merrillville, Indiana, and we went to this lake that was kind of in the middle of Merrillville. But it was hidden. It wasn't very well known. And we took the family there. We got some Subway sandwiches before, went out and did a picnic so mom got a little break. And we were there on the beach at this lake. And the kids were out there swimming. Josh was little at that time. I know that's hard to imagine. Josh little, no beard and with hair, little. My wife and I were sitting on the beach, we had these lawn chairs out, you know, the kind that used to have the vinyl straps in them, you know, not the kind they have now that all fold up. These were the ones with aluminum frames, but we were sitting there and watching them and

we were talking as we were watching them and all of a sudden Josh disappeared under the water, like his head was there bobbing around and then suddenly, just the water is there, and he's not. I saw that and my wife saw that and I'm up out of the chair. And I kept my eyes right on that one spot where I last saw him. And I had to go out into the water quite a ways. And even though it was shallow for quite a ways, all of a sudden, he's gone. And I kept my eyes focused on where I last saw him, and there was stuff going on around us and a commotion and things were being said and that kind of thing, but I just kept my eyes on that one spot. And I kept going towards that one spot, just kind of shutting out everything else, staying on that one spot. And when I got to that one spot, I looked down, and there's Josh, sitting under the water, his arms folded, looking up, and I have indelibly imprinted in my mind, that picture of him there. He was just there. And it been a while, because I had to get out there. And I reach down and pull him up. And if you know, Josh, Josh is just kind of, nothing really shakes him you know, so I pulled him up. And he didn't like grab me or anything. It's kind of like, man, I've been waiting for you, about time together.

That's the way that we fix our vision on Jesus. With all this stuff that's going on, with a lot of commotion, a lot of things that aren't the way they ought to be. This week, my wife shared with me that if I keep going on with this Ukraine thing and the people there, it's just going overwhelm me. Yeah, that's why we have, "be anxious about nothing but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart, minds in Christ Jesus, Phillipians 4:6, 7. It's not that we're disregarding these people. Prayer is the big thing, really pray for that, pray for them. But it guards our hearts and minds. We're looking to Jesus, with a fixed vision, a fixed vision. He is the author. He's the one who started this thing. He's the author. He's the finisher. He's the one that brings this thing to completion. The word is often translated perfecter. He is the founder, the Perfecter. He's the one that brings this thing to its ultimate conclusion of perfection before God. Not now, it's not here now. It's not an easy life. It is in the following of him. He will do this. Keep the focus of attention there, "who for the joy set before him endured", verse 2. We have to go through change. Some changes are hard, we have to go through them. But there is joy here. Jesus had joy in doing this. Do you know what the joy was? It was accomplishing the will of the Father and bringing many sons to perfection, Jude 1:24. He presents sons to the Father, full of joy. Psalm 22, describe his anguish in his enduring of the cross, until one point it begins to break forth with joy. Because he brings them to the Father, "who for the joy set before him endured the cross". Notice this in Hebrews 12 at the end of verse 2, he says, "and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God", the place of power, which we see in the book of Revelation, as this unfolds.

Now, this, it is our looking here now, so to do this, to "consider him", verse 3. This is more than looking. This is thinking about him. This is reflecting on him. This is reading about his life in the Gospels and thinking about him saying, Come unto me, come to me, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden. Come to me because I am gentle and lowly. Think about what that means, consider him. Was this easy for Jesus? No. He learned obedience by suffering, just like we do and yet he trusted God in this, he trusted God. Check out Hebrews 5: 7-10, for what Jesus had to go through to bring us to this

point. Consider him, consider him, he says, so that you don't lose it, verse 3. That's exactly the translation this would be, so that you don't lose it. Look at how he says this. Consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself so that you don't get tired, don't get worn out in this life of faith and lose it. Sometimes people lose it, they look around, they see sin, even the sin of believers, see their own sin, and they lose it. They lose it. No. This is how we move through change, not losing it. But dealing with our sin.

Let me wrap this thing up by saying this. Peter said to the Lord, when he presented some very important truth for their life, that he, Jesus, is bread, you have to eat him, he is drink, you have to consume him, you've got to look to him, you've got to consider him. And some people thought, I can't do this and they left. And Jesus asked his disciples, Are you going to go to? Do you remember the answer from Peter? Where else can we go? We've got nowhere else. Isn't that good! This is making the most of life here. And the best is yet to come. And we've got nowhere else. So we just look to him. And trust him, just like Peter, as we move through change. Not superimposing ourselves but seeing it like it is, through Jesus. Father in Heaven, help us to build our lives on the cornerstone that Jesus is. In his name, I pray, Amen.