

The Christian Life was never predicted to be easy. There is much false teaching in Christian circles, that when you become a Christian all your troubles go away. Don't confuse "American Wealth and Cultural Christianity" with being a true follower of Jesus. Listen to this passage of Scripture, given this title in the NIV,

The Cost of Following Jesus

*Matthew 8:18-21 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. v19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." v20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." v21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." v22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and **let the dead bury their own dead.**"*

To be a true follower of Jesus involves sacrifice. The road is not easy. It's not called "The Narrow Road" for no reason. If you think it was meant to be easy, listen to what is written by Paul about his life:

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. v24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. v25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, v26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. v27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. v28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

WE ALL NEED SOME

TOOLS TO HELP US NOT GROW WEARY AND LOSE HEART

*v1 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. v2 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. v3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, **so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.** v4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. Hebrews 12:1-4*

THE FIRST TOOL TO HELP US NOT GROW WEARY AND LOSE HEART

1. THE CHEERING FROM THE GRANDSTAND FOR THOSE IN CHRIST JESUS

v1a Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,

As I have watched some of the Olympics a few weeks ago, and now recently the Para-Olympics in Tokyo, Japan, my heart went out to all the athletes who had to deliver the goods, without any fans in the stands cheering them to greater heights.

Imagine all the sacrifices they had to make to qualify for to participate in the event in the first place. Time away from family. Days and days of intense training. No entertainment or fancy food because you had to get up early to train, or needed to watch you weight.

A 2008 article in Forbes magazine says that it's common for Olympic athletes to spend "four to eight years training in a sport before making an Olympic team." In a study of 50 top Elite athletes, they discovered that they spend somewhere between 10000-15000 hours training for Olympics. Most swimmers spend at least 4 hours a day in the pool.

YET NONE OF THEIR FAMILY WERE THERE TO CHEER THEM ON, OR TO REJOICE WITH THEM IF THEY GOT A MEDAL, OR COMFORT THEM IF THEY FAILED.

1. WE ARE CHEERED ON BY FELLOW BELEIVERS –

The reference in verse 1 are all those listed in chapter 11.

Imagine Moses up there saying, "Come on, The promised land is just over that hill." OR

Enoch saying, "Keep up with your Quiet Time, God will walk with you." OR

Sarah saying, "You are never too old to become a mom." OR

2. WE ARE CHEERED ON BY THE ANGELS – As the Israelites were traveling through the wilderness God sent Angels to provide food for them: ***Psalms 78:25 Men ate the bread of angels; he sent them all the food they could eat.***

When Elisha and his servant were surrounded, we read in

2 Kings 6:17 And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and **saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**

3. WE ARE CHEERED ON BY GOD HIMSELF – In the Parable about the TALENTS, Jesus said this about those who served God faithfully.

Matthew 25:19-21 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. v20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

v21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

THE SECOND TOOL TO HELP US NOT GROW WEARY AND LOSE HEART

2. THE CASTING OFF OF THE SNARE OF SIN

v1b let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles

There are two burdens relating to sin that a Christian does not need to carry.

1. **THE ACTUAL BURDEN OF SIN** – One of the unnecessary burdens many Christians' carry is the burden of sinful behavior.

Sinful behaviour is a dreadfully disabling practice that destroys many believers. They carry guilt and shame that prevents them from truly serving the Lord with a clear conscience.

As Christians', only we have the capacity not to sin. A person without the Holy Spirit living in them has no ability to stop themselves from sinning, for the Work of the Holy Spirit is found in *John 16:8* – “When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment” **WITHOUT THE SPIRIT WE WILL SIN**

2. **THE BURDEN OF UNCONFESSSED SIN** – IN

Psalms 38:1-4 David said *O! LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. v2 For your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me. v3 Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. v4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.*

JESUS SAID IN Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. v29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. v30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

We also read in 1 John 1:8-9 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. v9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

THE THIRD TOOL TO HELP US NOT GROW WEARY AND LOSE HEART

3. RUN THE COURSE SET OUT JUST FOR YOU!

v1c and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Earlier in the sermon I mentioned “The Parable of the Talents” found in Matthew 25. The beginning of the Parable says:

Matthew 25:14-18 *"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. v15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. v16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. v17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. v18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*

I want you to notice “**NOT EVERYBODY GOT THE SAME NUMBER OF TALENTS**”. Jesus also said in **Luke 12:48** *From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*

God is not asking you to be Billy Graham or Martin Luther or Corrie Ten Boom.

HE WANTS YOU TO BE YOU.

**BUT HE WANTS YOU, TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOU,
YOU CAN BE!!!**

THE FOURTH TOOL TO HELP US NOT GROW WEARY AND LOSE HEART

4. CONTEMPLATING THE WONDER OF JESUS

v2 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. v3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. v4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

THE WHOLE BOOK REACHES IT'S CLIMAX IN THIS ONE PHRASE:

LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS

IF YOU FORGET EVERYTHING ELSE I HAVE SAID THUS FAR IN ALL OF MY PREACHING IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS, PLEASE DON'T FORGET THIS VITAL LIFE GIVING FORCE:

LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS

AS WE **FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS** WE SEE:

4.1 JESUS WROTE AND ENACTED THE DRAMA OF SALVATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH

v2 ... Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,

The phrase translated “our faith” is a word that is used 94 times in the NT and refers both to “The act of believing” as well as “The CHRISTIAN FAITH”.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews is again reminding us of the EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS OF JESUS.

You either have “ALL OF JESUS” or “NONE AT ALL”!!!

*John 6:60-69 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" v61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? v62 What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! v63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. v64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. v65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." v66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. v67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. v68 Simon Peter answered him, "**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. v69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.**"*

AS WE **FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS** WE SEE:

4.2 **JESUS IS FULL OF JOY THAT YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY TO HEAVEN**

v2 ... Jesus, ..., 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.

In my devotions on the Fruit of the Spirit is spoke about Joy.

JOY is the unbridled expression of rejoicing, happiness and gladness in knowing and serving God. Psalm 16:11 says “in your presence there is fullness of JOY”.

JOY has its source in God. Psalms 4:6-7 says ‘LORD, ... “Let the light of your face shine on us. Fill my heart with joy ...”’. And in John 15:11 Jesus said “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

JOY is connected to salvation. Matthew 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.” Luke 15:3-7 Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

AS WE **FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS** WE SEE:

4.3 **JESUS FACED EXTREME OPPOSITION, SO YOU WOULD NOT HAVE TO**

v3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Have you ever considered what Jesus went through, to make it possible for you to experience salvation?

I could talk about the pain of being betrayed!!

I could talk about the pain of being beaten!!

I could talk about the pain of being crucified!!

Let me mention JUST ONE devastating PAIN JESUS FACED!!

THE PAIN OF SEPERATION FROM HIS FATHER!! Listen to the verse *Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

I preached a sermon last year on this topic and I called it “PROCLAIMING DIVINE PAIN”. You can find it on Facebook in my posts.

AS WE **FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS** WE SEE:

4.4 **JESUS SHED HIS BLOOD SO YOU CAN LIVE**

v4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

EVERY TIME YOU THINK YOU CAN SAVE YOURSELF YOU BETTER THINK AGAIN.

Only through the BLOOD OF JESUS can we be saved.

CONCLUSION

There is only one thing left for us to do:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus