

Weekly Devotional
May 20, 2020

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. (Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV)

Have you noticed life requires endurance? Unexpected, faith-testing trials pop up with a certain amount of frequency. At best, these trials are a little uncomfortable or annoying. Often, they're painful and filled with sorrow. To persevere through life's trials, we really do need endurance!

In my younger years, I was used to playing 90-minute soccer games with only a halftime break for rest. As our coach gave us feedback, I'd grab my water and my energy bar from my duffel bag. If it was a grueling, fast-paced match, I'd take some sips from my end-of-game Gatorade for some extra refueling at halftime. In those types of games, that extra intake of energy was the difference between enduring the entire match or needing to be substituted off the field due to fatigued legs. I knew I'd need help to endure!

But what can we turn to when we need help to endure the trials of life? In today's verses, the author of Hebrews encourages his readers to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). He then points us to the example of Jesus, who "endured the cross" for us (Heb. 12:2). But it's not just that Jesus endured the cross, it's *how* he endured the cross. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that a certain joy was set before Jesus, and *that* joy strengthened him—in his human nature—to endure the cross. What was that joy? In all honesty, there is a bit of mystery here. But I agree with careful Bible scholars who see this joy as something future—something that would come *after* the pain of the cross.

Most immediately, of course, there is the joy of the resurrection after his death on the cross. But there is also the joy of his exaltation, the joy of accomplishing salvation, and with that, the joy of one day being united to his church—his bride—forever in his heavenly kingdom. I believe it was the joy of all the future blessings of the cross that strengthened Jesus to endure his great, yet temporary, suffering.

What a great reminder for us as we continue to patiently endure the effects of COVID-19. At this point, we're beginning to see a return to normalcy. But in your own quarantine-fatigue, you might be tempted to lose your patience as you wait for officials and authorities to "reopen" life. Like me, you might find yourself looking for something that can strengthen you to endure. But you need something far better than Gatorade or an energy bar. So, I encourage you: Like Jesus, look to the future blessings of the cross and allow your heart to rejoice in those blessings. One day you will experience the great joy of being forever joined to Christ, your bridegroom. May this gospel-centered joy strengthen you as you suffer "a little while" longer (1 Pet. 5:10).

Questions:

- In what ways has your patience and endurance been tested recently?
- How do today's verses strengthen you to patiently endure through today's trials?
- Spend some time in prayer rejoicing over the blessings of the cross of Christ.