TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Bobby Rader
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#867 To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way
#837 I Need Thee Every Hour

Scripture Reading by: Matthew Girard
#382 Why Did My Savior Come to Earth?

Communion Devotional by:
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#886 On Jordan's Story Banks
Sermon: "Faith Surrenders"
James 5:1-6

#948 I Am Resolved
#878 Sweet By and By
Closing Prayer by: Craig Girard

Small Groups

This will be our last Small Groups today.
Robert Ward's group will meet at the building
today at 5:00 p.m.
We will take a break and resume in September.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

May 28, 2023

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Keep Running

Tomorrow is Memorial Day. All over the United States, people will gather to remember those who have come before us and made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their country. That is the key to Memorial Day: remembering. We can think about theme in the context of our faith, too. We have predecessors there, many of whom made that ultimate sacrifice on behalf of an even nobler cause. The author of **Hebrews** calls us to remember this:

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. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **(Hebrews 12:1-3)**

Remembering those great heroes of the faith is meant to inspire us, to spur us on to emulate them in living God's kind of life. The Christian life is not always easy; thus, the writer compares it to a race. A distance race, in fact, not a sprint. In a sprint, you run as fast as you can for a short distance; speed is the critical factor. But in distance running, endurance is what counts: will you make it all the way to the end? Finishing that race is important for those of us who follow Jesus. Consider 3 pieces of advice in this passage to help us run faithfully.

1. **Remember those who have gone before.** This is that theme of memorial we have touched on already. We should be inspired by the faithful examples of others. Notice that the first word of the passage is *therefore.* That's an indication that it follows as a conclusion from the previous context. Indeed, in **Hebrews 11**, we find a long list of people who were faithful to God.

There is Noah, who patiently trusted in God in the midst of a wicked generation. He spent decades building the ark. Patience is a rare virtue; we often think things are moving too slowly and wonder what is taking so long. In those moments, we can consider Noah, who just kept on building and waiting for God to act.

Next, we find Abraham, who followed God into the unknown in every sense: called from his home in Ur, the most advanced city of his day, to an indeterminate place God would lead him; promised in his old age that he and his wife, Sarah, would have a son; ordered to take that precious son to the top of a mountain and sacrifice him. This Abraham passed every test. So when we become discouraged, we can look to his example: if you follow God, the world will likely think you are crazy, because God's ways are not theirs. But listen carefully to what He wills, follow in his steps, and be faithful.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Kelly McCain is in the VA Hospital in Egypt, TX.

Brooke Ann Smith, Gloria McKelroy's granddaughter, is having pregnancy complications.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ka'Leisha Jones, Linda Frank, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Bryan Senegal, Cynthis Deblanc, Patricia Prater, Richard Prater, Edna Semien, Wilson Semien, Gloria Moore, Betty Spencer, Willie Spencer, James Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

We will have a meal this Wednesday night at 5:30 p.m. in the family life center. This will be our last meal on Wednesday's until September.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, June 6th at 8:00 a.m.

Primetimers will be meeting at Tuscany in Dayton on Tuesday, June 6th at 6:00 p.m. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

Summer Book Club

We are starting a Summer Book Club in June. The book we will be readying and studying is "Gentle and Lowly". A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board. If you are interested in this see Bryant.

VBS

VBS is Saturday, June 24th from 9-2 p.m. Mark you calendars. We will have yard signs available soon.

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Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;
Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903)407-5737
Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ

There is Joseph, who remained true to God regardless of his circumstances. He was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers, and then accused of a crime he did not commit and imprisoned. He was down about as low as a person can get. Yet he remained loyal to God. Then the tables turn, and suddenly he is very powerful as Prime Minister, with the control of money and grain and people. And at the top, he is still faithful to God. So Joseph reminds us to be faithful regardless of our circumstances.

The chapter goes on and on with those witnesses who remind us not to lose heart. They are a great memorial, urging us on in the race. And we can and should think of those in our own experience who have encouraged us with their lives too.

2. Be prepared for the struggles that will come. *Let us lay aside every weight*—throw off anything that hinders us. Many things might fall into that category: relationships that drag us down; possessions that hinder our relationship with God; habits that are not necessarily sinful, but are so time consuming that they distract us from God.

Then the writer adds we need to get rid of *sin which clings so closely.* Some translations use a word here like *ensnares* or *entangles*. Those evoke powerful images of the power of sin, like the tentacles of some giant sea monster attempting to drag us into the deep. Just this once, we think. But then another tentacle comes out. Just a little lie—there is another tentacle. Soon we are completely entangled. Let's cast those things aside.

Instead, we must *run with endurance.* I am obviously not a marathon runner, but they say there are two critical times in the race. The first is at the beginning, when you feel good and the temptation is to run too fast and spend all your energy. We have seen some Christians do that, haven't we? They started out with great promise, flush with enthusiasm, but they didn't finish the race. The second key time is somewhere between about mile 15 and 20, when you suddenly realize you still have a long way to go and you are already very tired. They call that "hitting the wall." You are not sure you can go on. We have seen that happen in the Christian life, too, with those who have been around and run hard but are tempted to quit. But the writer says don't give up; keep running.

3. Focus your attention on Jesus. *Look to Jesus,* we are told. Jesus was opposed, he was persecuted, he was mocked. Yet he stayed the course. He ran the race with endurance. So when we grow weary, we are to fix our eyes on him. His life is a permanent memorial for us.

Every individual Christian and every church needs to remember this message, because it is so easy for us to give up. It is tempting to say, "I don't want to do this anymore." But the author reminds us to focus on him. He is *the founder and perfecter of our faith.* And one day, we are going to stand before him as our judge. The evidence will be overwhelmingly against us. All of us will be as guilty as can be, deserving of death. The only hope we will have is by *looking to Jesus* and claiming the benefit of the cross.

May we all remember the examples of those who have gone before. May we look most of all to Jesus, who paid the ultimate price for us. May we all run our race with endurance. Don't lose heart. Don't quit.

Bryant Perkins