

The Reward for Endurance (Hebrews 12:1–3)

We have two Sundays before Christmas Sunday, and we're going to spend both of them here in Hebrews 12. I'm not exactly sure what we're going to do on Christmas Day, but it is going to be somewhat connected to the things that we're going to be talking about today and next week. And as you're going to see, the subject matter of Hebrews 12 is directly connected to the great miracle of the incarnation of the God that we worship in the Person of Christ, that He was fully man. This is what we celebrate at this time of year. This is what we have been singing about, God becoming man, God with us, Emmanuel.

Like us, our Lord Jesus ran His race, and like us, He faced opposition and hostility from sinners. He faced adversity, and He endured in His race, and He can sympathize with us because He was fully man. Hebrews 2:9 says He “was made for a little while lower than the angels . . . because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.”

Hebrews 2:14–15: “Therefore, since the children [that is, you and I] share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

So the great work of the incarnation is what makes Him our High Priest. It qualifies Him to sympathize with us. It qualifies Him to offer a sacrifice on our behalf and then to intercede for us. He does all of this because He was fully man. Fully man and fully God. He knows our weaknesses and He can sympathize with them. And in this way He is an example for us.

Now, in the last couple of times together, we've been observing how it is that the author of Hebrews in chapter 12 describes the Lord Jesus. He is the object of our faith. We are to fix our eyes on Him. That is a call to gaze upon Him, both savingly and in terms of our security. He is also the author of our faith. He is the One who initiates or originates the faith that we have placed in Him.

And now today we're going to see that He is the example for our faith in what He has done. This is verse 2 and verse 3. Let's read it together. Hebrews chapter 12, beginning at verse 1:

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1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, [now here's the example that He has set] who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb. 12:1–3 NASB)

That last part of verse 2 and verse 3 describe for us Jesus as our example, what He did. He endured the cross, despising the shame, did all of that for the joy that was set before Him, and has sat down at the Father's right hand. And this kind of endurance, this enduring of hostility, is the very thing that the author has been encouraging us to have in our faith since way back in chapter 10. He says at the end of chapter 10, "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (v. 36). There is a reward for those who have endured and done the will of God. And then every example in chapter 11 is an example of people who endured in the face of hostility and reasons for doubt, and yet they received at the end of that the promises, they obtained the promises that they were promised, and some of them are yet waiting for promises to be fulfilled in the same way that we are.

Nobody suffered worse or more undeservedly than the Lord Jesus did at the hands of hostile sinners. And so how did He preserve—persevere? How did He persevere? That's a better word to put there, isn't it? How did He persevere in the face of all of that hostility and affliction and suffering? It is His perseverance, it is His endurance that is held out to us as an example. How did He do that?

And really this raises two issues here in verses 2 and 3: did the Lord Jesus have faith? And if so, what kind of faith did He have? How is it the same or different than the faith that you and I have? And second: what was the joy that was set before Him, and how does that relate to us? Is there a joy that is set before us? What was the joy that was set before Him? And how did the Lord Jesus come to understand what that joy was? What did He understand it to be? And then how did that strengthen Him to persevere through and endure the hostility at the hands of sinners?

Now answering these questions will require us to give some thought, some mental energy, into areas of theology that we don't typically spend our time thinking about. I

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doubt if any of you this morning woke up and, while you were getting ready and combing your hair or, for those of you who don't have any hair, shaving and getting cleaned up and ready to come to church—I doubt if any of you were pondering the imponderables of the hypostatic union of the Lord Jesus Christ. Anybody here? I was. Because I have to preach on it. But I understand that probably nobody else here was pondering those things this morning.

Well to answer the question, “Did Jesus have faith? What kind of faith was it?” is going to require us to spend some energy thinking about the implications of the hypostatic union or what we mean by the hypostatic union in the Person of Christ, that there is in that one singular Person two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. And once we apprehend that, then we can understand what it means that He had faith and He endured in faith to the end of His life, and we can begin to understand what He would have understood to be the joy that was set before Him.

So these are the two questions. Did Jesus of Nazareth have faith? Let's begin with that one. Did Jesus of Nazareth have faith? Depends on what you mean by that. Did Jesus of Nazareth have faith that resulted in Him being justified, declared righteous, forgiven of sin, and adopted into the family of God? Did He have that kind of faith? No, He didn't, because He didn't need forgiveness nor righteousness nor adoption into the family of God. Now, faith results in that for you and for me, but it did not result in that for the Lord Jesus. So He would not have had what we would call saving faith or believing trust, justifying faith. He didn't have the faith that results in a personal, imputed righteousness that you and I have.

But if by faith we mean a trust in the Father, a belief that God is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6), did the Lord Jesus Christ have that kind of faith? Did He trust the Father? If trusting the Father is what pleases Him, if this is the definition of a faith that pleases God, that those who come to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, then I ask you, did the Lord Jesus Christ believe that God is? Yeah, He did. And did He then also believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him? He did. And this is the kind of faith that the man Christ Jesus would have had. Not a saving, justifying faith, not a faith that gets us adopted into the family of God, but a faith that trusts in the Father.

And to fully apprehend this, you and I have to consider the nature of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we have in Him one Person, singular, but two separate and distinct natures, a divine nature and a human nature. These two natures in the Lord

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Jesus Christ, they never mingle, they never overlap, they never are confounded with one another. They are two separate and distinct natures. They're never confused and they're never in conflict. But the divine nature is always there, and the human nature is always there. So that we can say of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is fully man, and we can say of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is fully God, for He had and possessed at all times both a divine nature as well as a human nature.

This union of natures in the one person is what we refer to as the hypostatic union. So when I asked you were you thinking about the hypostatic union this morning, you probably weren't, because you probably haven't even thought of the word hypostatic in the last six months.

But we should give some thought and consideration to the reality of these two natures in the presence of the one Person. Jesus was never confused in His natures in the sense that His natures were at conflict with one another, that He had to choose which one to operate in and out of. In the Lord Jesus Christ there was always present both a divine nature and a human nature. He is God manifested in the flesh. Colossians 2:9 says, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." That is, in the person of Jesus Christ, everything that is true of God in terms of His substance and His being was present in Jesus of Nazareth.

It is also true that He is fully man, so that everything that is true of essential humanity was also present and real in the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, What about a proclivity to sin? No. What about sinful nature? No. Sinful thoughts? No. See, those are not essential to humanity. Those things are corruptions of our humanity. You can be fully human and be sinless. Adam was before he fell, and we will be someday—fully human and completely sinless.

So the Lord Jesus has everything that is true of essential humanity and everything that is true of essential deity because He is God manifested in the flesh. So Jesus could say, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father—that is, everything that is true of the divine Being, the divine essence, resides in Me, so that if you have seen Me, you have looked upon the nature of the Father" (see John 14:7), for He shared fully the nature of the Father.

So the second Person of the eternal triune God took upon Himself human flesh, united Himself with humanity, and in the incarnation He was born of a virgin, so that the eternally existent God was veiled in human flesh. We just sang this—"Veiled in flesh the

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Godhead see, Hail th' incarnate Deity! Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel" (which means "God with us") (Wesley, altered by Whitefield, "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"). So that great hymn affirms both of those profound realities. So while the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, fully possessed His divine nature and attributes and prerogatives, He did not fully express the divine nature, prerogatives, and attributes. Let me say it again: He fully possessed them, but He did not fully express them. That divine nature was veiled by human flesh so that we could not see it all the time, but people who beheld Him caught glimpses of that divine nature. Fully equal with God and in no way inferior to Him, He submitted Himself to humanity and all that that entailed, including death on a cross, so that we can say of the Lord Jesus Christ today, right now, He is fully God, He is fully man, He is the God-man Christ Jesus, and He will be everlastingly. This is what is true of our God, forever and ever now.

There's a great book that I want to recommend to you if you want to do some reading on this. It's a simple book. It's easy, it's thin, it's very accessible, well-written, but it's very profound. It was one of my favorite books I read a couple of years ago. It's called *The Man Christ Jesus*, by Bruce Ware. It is a study of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it will thrill your heart to read that book.

So without compromising the deity of Christ, we affirm also His full humanity, that He has all the essential attributes of humanity without any sin or without any propensity to sin. Now, humanness involves undergoing and not just encountering these things but actually enduring certain things that are the expressions and realities of having a human nature and living in a human body. Like during His life, Jesus experienced birth, growth, exhaustion, sleep, hunger, thirst, anger, sorrow, weeping, compassion, love, joy, temptation, prayer, development, learning, suffering, and death. He was hated by His enemies, misunderstood and doubted by His family, abandoned by His friends. He knew what it meant to experience betrayal, to be disappointed, to be let down, to be lied about, to be slandered, to be falsely accused, to have people attribute to Him evil motives, ignorance, scandal, and even an allegiance with the kingdom of darkness.

Jesus endured all of that. Hebrews 2 says:

17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

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18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Heb. 2:17–18 NASB)

So Jesus had to learn, in His humanity, to submit, to grow, to develop. He had to practice things, study things, learn things. He didn't come out of the womb knowing how to read. He wasn't able to recite the entire Old Testament at four weeks old. He had to learn to speak. He had to learn proper grammar and syntax. He had to learn vocabulary, how to add, how to make furniture, how to walk, how to crawl, how to chew His food. He had to endure and learn all of those things. And if your idea of Jesus is that from the moment of His birth in Bethlehem, that He knew everything in His humanity, had nothing to learn, nothing to develop, or nothing to grow through, then I ask you, how is it that He can sympathize with us, having never gone through those things, if those things are essential to humanity? It's because those things are essential to humanity that He became a man so that He can endure all of those things which are essential elements of humanity. He did not come from the womb fully formed, understanding the Old Testament completely, able to recite it, able to do complex calculus, able to read, able to walk, none of that. He had to endure and grow through all of those things in His humanity.

And listen, the man Christ Jesus learned to trust the Word of God. And He learned what the Word of God said. This is essential to understanding whether or not He had proper faith. How did it happen that Jesus learned all these things? We don't have a lot of information about His childhood, but we do have one glimpse in Luke chapter 2 when Mary and Joseph brought Him back to the temple and then they took off back home and thought He was with the family or among the baggage or in a different caravan or whatever it was, and they got a couple of days away, realized He wasn't there, went back to Jerusalem to find Him. And they found Him holding school in the temple with the scribes and the Pharisees and the religious leaders of His day.

Luke 2:47 says, “And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.” He's a twelve-year-old boy conversing theologically with the leaders, the theological leaders of His day. So Luke 2:48–49 says, “When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.’ And He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?’” At twelve years old, He understood that He had a mission that was different than other men, that He had a relationship with the Father in Heaven that was

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different than other people. He understood this much, that He had come into the world for a certain purpose. Adult Jesus in John 5 said to those who doubted Him, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me” (v. 39).

So in Luke 2, Jesus says, “I have to be about My Father's business. This is My Father's house. I have to be here in My Father's house. I have a different mission than other people. I'm here for a specific purpose.” And in John 5, adult Jesus was able to say, “Everything you're reading in the Old Testament, it was all written about Me.” At some point between the age of twelve and the age of thirty, He came to understand that everything in the Old Testament spoke of Him. That is a profound observation. He had to have learned that at some point along the line.

John 5: “Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (vv. 45–46). “Moses was writing about Me.” Jesus would read through the Old Testament—and this is sanctified speculation, but there had to come some point in His reading and study and understanding of the Old Testament where He looked at those passages and said, “That passage is written about Me. I'm here to fulfill that. This describes Me. This is My mission. This is what I'm here for.”

“(In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) [I have come] to do Your will” (Heb. 10:7). “A body You have prepared for Me” (Heb. 10:5). The man Christ Jesus came to understand at some point that these words were written of Him. Listen:

3 He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

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7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

10 But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering. (Isa. 53:3–10 NASB)

At some point, Jesus was reading Isaiah 53 and said, “This describes Me. This is what I am to do, to give Myself as a guilt offering.” And when He realized that, the man Christ Jesus realized that, it would have taken faith and trust and belief and confidence in the wisdom and in the good providence of God, who would have appointed that thing for Jesus of Nazareth. But He also would have had faith and believed that the rest of Isaiah 53 was also written about Him.

10 He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days [this is resurrection], and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. (Isa. 53:10–12)

See, Isaiah 53 promised Him that He would die as a guilt offering for His people, and Isaiah 53 promised Him that He would rise again and see the path of life and receive this inheritance, this apportionment by God, all of His people, whom He would justify, because He had rendered Himself as a guilt offering. The man Christ Jesus would have had to believe that and to trust that when He understood that this was His role. There was a time when He, reading Psalm 22, would have read the words of David, “Yet You

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are He who brought me forth from the womb; You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb" (vv. 9–10). David could write that, that's true of David. But guess who it's also true of? The Lord Jesus Christ. Because at some point in reading through Psalm 22, the man Christ Jesus read Psalm 22 and said, "This describes me."

11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

12 Many bulls have surrounded me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me.

13 They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death.

16 For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.

17 I count all my bones. They look, they stare at me;

18 They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. (Ps. 22:11–18 NASB)

Jesus would have understood that that psalm describes Him. And Psalm 16:

8 I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely.

10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

11 You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:8–11 NASB)

In other words, Jesus would be reading through the Old Testament and see all of the passages that would describe His sacrificial suffering and His agony and the anguish of

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His soul, and He would also read in those same passages promises of resurrection and glory and exaltation. And the man Christ Jesus would have believed what the Word of God said concerning Him, and He would have set His face to go to Jerusalem and to endure what was before Him. He also would have read Psalm 110:

1 The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

2 The Lord will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

3 Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; in holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew.

4 The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

5 The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.

6 He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.

7 He will drink from the brook by the wayside; therefore He will lift up His head.
(Ps. 110:1–7 NASB)

Jesus would have read that and said, “That describes Me.” You see, by faith, He would have believed what God said in Scripture concerning the suffering that was ahead of Him, and the results of that suffering which lay beyond the suffering. And He would have believed the written Word of God, which is why in Matthew 20, Jesus said, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up” (vv. 18–19).

Where did Jesus get that idea? You know where He got it? Read it in the Old Testament. At some point in His life, He said, “Those things are written of Me. Moses wrote about Me. The sacrifices point to Me. The priesthood points to Me. The feasts point to Me. Israel points to Me. Creation points to Me. Everything in the Old Testament, the guilt offering, the sacrifices, all of it. God has orchestrated all of these things because He has prepared for Me a body so that I can sacrifice it for My people.” And He would have

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believed that, and then He would have by faith also believed that the Father would give Him the strength to endure that suffering and that as a result of that suffering, His soul would be satisfied. He did all of that for the joy that was set before Him.

So did Jesus have faith? If by faith you mean wishful thinking and things that are not necessarily true, you kind of hope them to be true, you want them to be true, but it's not necessarily based on fact, then no, He didn't have that kind of faith. But Scripture doesn't commend that kind of faith because that's not faith. But if by faith you mean that He read the Scriptures and believed them and acted accordingly, then yes, He had faith. The man Christ Jesus had never seen Himself raised from the dead, He had never seen Himself given the nations as His inheritance, He had never seen Himself exalted to the right hand of the Father. The man Christ Jesus had never seen those things, but by faith those things were substantive to Him, and He was convinced that they were true. Why? Because they were revealed in the Word of God. So by faith, the man Christ Jesus could set His face toward Jerusalem and say, "I am going there to suffer, and I will give Myself as a guilt offering for many. And as a result of that, I will raise Myself up again on the third day. The Father will be pleased with that. He will exalt Me to His right hand, and at His right hand there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore." And for that joy that was set before Him, He endured all of that. How? By faith.

Jesus's faith was a trust in the Word of God and an obedience to it, and that is the exact same kind of faith that you and I are called to. We are to read in Scripture what Scripture says concerning us, and we are to believe it and to live our lives according to it. That is faith.

Now, what was the joy that was set before Him? Generally speaking, we can say that it was the reward for His suffering. He endured because of this joy—that is, He endured with His eyes fixed on the joy. Now there's something set before you and I, right? In our passage, Hebrews 12, what is it that is set before us? The race. We are to run the race set before us. There's a race that is set before us. There was a joy that was set before Him. Now, I think the joy that is set before Him, and the joy that is before us, these things are connected. And I'll give you the answer right up here at the front. The answer is this: these things are connected because He is our source of joy, He is the One who has secured our joy. So we are both really running, the Lord Jesus Christ and us, for a joy that is set before us. But He had a joy available to Him, a joy that was not available to Him and would not have been enjoyed had He not endured the cross and despised its shame. Namely, the joy of His exaltation, the joy of His resurrection.

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This occurred to me this last week. The Lord Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure, Scripture says. He was indwelt by the Spirit. Do you think that Jesus was a dour, joyless person, kind of wandering around the countryside with a frown on His face all the time, looking for people to criticize, looking for things to be upset about? Do you think that that would describe the Lord Jesus? I don't think so at all. I think in His person He radiated joy. Even in the midst of great suffering and affliction and disappointment and trials, I think there was a joy there that would have been visible to people who just observed Him. If He had all of that joy, He had more joy than you and I have, He had the joy that is the fruit of the Spirit, and He had the Spirit without measure, that's a lot of joy, isn't it? I mean, I'd be content with just some of that joy. I'd be content with a small measure of that. But there was a joy that was set before Him that He would not have if He did not endure the cross and despise the shame. There was a reward that He would get for His suffering. And that reward is the exaltation and the glory that came after Him. "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). That is the joy. He gets that ultimate prize because He offered the ultimate sacrifice, humbling Himself in the ultimate way. He died the death, suffered even death on a cross. "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, . . . and . . . every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9–11)"

The suffering is connected to the exaltation. And the joy that was set before Him was all that came after His suffering. It was His exaltation. It was His resurrection. It was His glory. Notice the reference in verse 2 [of Hebrews 12], that He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. This order of suffering and enduring the cross and then getting the exaltation that follows, this has been the order that the author of Hebrews has used as he references the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not the first time that He has mentioned Jesus being exalted to the Father's right hand. Hebrews 1:3: "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Notice the order. He made purification of sins and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hebrews 1:13: "But to which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'?" Hebrews 8:1: "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Chapter 7 ends with an explanation of the death and the suffering of Christ, chapter 8 begins with

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“And just remember, we have this high priest exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.”

So why is it that Jesus is exalted to the Father's right hand? Why was He given this joy? Because He is the only one qualified to take that position because of His divine nature. God never said to any of the angels, “Sit at My right hand.” He is qualified to take that position because of His finished work. He has made purification for sins, and therefore He has been exalted to the Father's right hand. He is qualified to take that position because of His priestly role, because He intercedes for us and He does that work. He is able to sit at the Father's right hand because of His work. And He is qualified to take that position because He has endured faithfully and obediently. And therefore, having suffered the ultimate hostility and the ultimate indignity, He is rewarded with the ultimate exaltation. And because He has done this faithfully and He has done this obediently, He is given that position at the Father's right hand.

All that resulted from His suffering is the joy that was set before Him. And I have Scripture references that I could have included for this, but I just want to rattle off for you a number of things that all would have been the joy that the Lord Jesus Christ received. He purchased salvation for all those for whom He died, gathering in His sheep, preserving His sheep, giving them eternal life, glorifying the sheep, just as He described in John 17. His own resurrection is part of that joy. Defeating death, no longer being subject to death, and then delivering those who, all of our lives, were tortured by a fear of death. He gathers in His sheep, making them one fold; that's John 10. He builds in us and in His church an eternal dwelling, He is made one with His people, He gets glory from His bride, the church. He receives and gathers to Himself all that the Father has given to Him, raising them all up on the last day. He is worshipped, and He is adored even now by the angels in Heaven and by the saints in Heaven—Old Testament and New Testament—He is worshiped and adored by them. And He is receiving praise and adoration for His great work of redemption and the purchase of our salvation. He dispenses spiritual gifts to His church as He builds the body of Christ, and He will, in the future, receive all of the nations as His inheritance. Psalm 2, the Father says to the Son, “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance” (v. 8). He will receive all of that, and He will rule this world on David's throne, as promised. The government will rest upon His shoulders, as promised. He will reign in a kingdom of perfect truth, justice, and righteousness. He will be worshiped by the nations in that kingdom. All peoples will come and offer sacrifices to Him, and He will dwell everlastingly with His people in a new creation, a new heavens, and a new earth in which there is no sin,

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sorrow, or unrighteousness, and no unrighteous thing will enter into it. And He will eternally lavish His people, you and I, with His goodness, with His joy, and with pleasures forevermore. That is the joy that is set before Him.

He secured all of that by His death. And now from His position at the Father's right hand, He joyfully is going to lavish all of that on His people for all of eternity. Psalm 16 says:

8 I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely.

10 [Here's the promise of resurrection] For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

11 You will make known to me the path of life [that's the promise of resurrection, but there's more, because that's not the end of the psalm]; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:8–11 NASB)

What's the joy set before Jesus? To be in the presence of the Father at His right hand, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. That is where He is seated, and that is the position of power and authority and worthiness from which He will dispense to His people eternal goodness and eternal joy and eternal glory. That is the joy that was set before Him. Now, you and I are not called to set our eyes on that kind of a joy, because we can't expect that if we endure affliction and hostility in this world, that we also will be exalted to the Father's right hand in the way that Jesus has been. But we instead are called to fix our eyes on what or whom? Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the One who, for the joy that is set before Him, endured the cross.

So remember the racing analogy? The runner runs his race, looking forward to the finish line, realizing the finish line is a lot closer for us than we think it is at this point. Looking forward to the finish line, we fix our eyes on Jesus. Why on Jesus, and why not some other joy? Because He has secured all of the joy that we will ever enjoy. He has secured all of that. So He is at the finish line, holding our reward, beckoning us to run, praying for us. His eyes are fixed on us, and He's calling us to fix our eyes on Him, to meditate upon Him and to place our hope in Him, to trust Him who is the author and the finisher

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of our faith, that we will be able to run the race, endure the race, cross the finish line, and receive what? All of the joy that He has secured for us through His death, His burial, and His resurrection. And now He's been exalted to the Father's right hand where there is fullness of joy and everlasting joy forever, and He is saying to us, "Run the race, cross the finish line, do it faithfully, and all that I have secured is also yours. And I have initiated and authored the faith that you have in Me. I will persevere to the end. You will persevere to the end. I will drag you across the finish line. But you must run."

Now, with that in view, I can run. Can you not? You can. Listen, I'm convinced that if we could go forward, fast-forward ten thousand years, and if we could just experience two or three seconds of the joys, the delights, the pleasures, and the thrills that will be revealed to us and manifested to us and that we will be experiencing ten thousand years from now, if we could experience that for just two or three moments—I don't think our mortal bodies could handle that, but say that they could—if we could experience that for just two or three moments, I am convinced of this: that we would bear any burden, we would gladly sacrifice any pleasure, we would mortify any sin, and we would run our race, and we would never look back. If we could just get a glimpse of that.

So how is it that we are to follow in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ? Some of you here must see that reward by faith and endure. You have to look upon that reward. You're going to have to make your mind and your heart to meditate upon and to chew on these things continually. If you will never set these things before your eyes, if you will give no thought to them and never have them before you as a motivation, and you don't think about the resurrection or the new heavens and the new earth or the new creation or the kingdom that is to come or being free from sin or your glorified body, if you're not giving a thought to any of those things and all that you ever think about, all you're ever concerned about, is the things of this world, that's not fixing your eyes on Jesus. You and I have to diligently, intentionally, purposefully set these things before our eyes and give our attention and our meditation and our thoughts to these things so that the truth can inform our affections. So that the truth can inform our minds. To be diligent, to have these things in our mind's eye and to say to ourselves "This world is not our home. This is not all that there is. There is more beyond this. There is more that awaits me. He has secured it all. It is there waiting for me. I just have to run my race and cross the finish line and get to it. And everything, the kingdom and all that He has secured for me, it is all mine, it is all ours together."

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And it is setting those things before our minds and our mind's eyes by faith that we look upon Jesus. We're reflecting upon those things, we're meditating upon those things. Those are the things that inform the heart. That is what it means to speak truth to ourselves, to our hearts. We have to set these things before our eyes. That is what it means to put Jesus in front of you. To meditate upon these things. Confront your apathy, confront your unbelief, confront your lack of passion, confront your lack of zeal. Count them as sin and meditate upon holy things. Give some time and attention to this, because things in this world are important, but not everything in this world is more important than those things. There's ultimately nothing in this world that is more important than those things, and none of it will last in this world. Those things are eternal things.

You have to portion out a portion of your time. You have to carve out a section of your life, a portion of your time, and say, "I'm going to set these things before my mind and my mind's eyes so that they can make my heart rejoice. The fullness of joy is in His presence, and I will stand there someday and experience all of it. With that in mind, I can run my race and I can live accordingly."

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