

“Who For The Joy ...”

“... Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising shame and hath set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not faint, fainting in your souls ...”
(Heb. 12:1b-3)

In the opening portion of verse one the writer calls to the mind of his readers, the noble examples of their ancestors who had given worthy examples of faith, which should have inspired them to continue the same walk of faith they set their own feet upon when they became convinced that Jesus was their long anticipated Messiah. In light of the testimony of those who had gone before, they were urged to run with patience, steadfastness, and unswerving constancy the race which was set before them. If the writer of this epistle was Paul, comparing the life of Christians to a “race” was something he had done before (1 Cor. 9:24-27). When one reads the list of “worthies” in Hebrews 11, some might be disposed to wonder why they are in the chapter, set along beside Abraham, Sarah, Rahab, and others. One such one would be Barak (who had to have Deborah accompany him in battle, else he would not go, Judges 4). Or Jephthah, who vowed a foolish vow; or Samson, whose carnal lusts and weakness led ultimately to blindness, imprisonment, and death for him. We wonder, I say, how these people were examples of faith. Perhaps they were there precisely for this reason, to show not only their weakness, but the indisputable truth that they did have faith, lending encouragement to us that no matter how marred our life, God is the Great Mender and can restore again the broken vessel.

Yet, if there were serious flaws in the lives of some of these in Hebrews eleven, no serious charge could be leveled against Him who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. His was a sinless, flawless life and while none hope to duplicate perfect character in their lives, we can take hope that just as flawed men like David can have saving faith and that one reason of that saving faith is the joy which awaits us at the end of our way.

Jesus, for the joy which was set before Him, endured the cross, despising shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. The writer does not tell us right here what this joy was that motivated Him who is the author and Perfecter of our faith. The consequences of His endurance is stated: God sat Him at His right hand. The Philippian letter reads, *“Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him and given unto him the name that is above every name ...”* (Phil. 2:9). But again, this only tells us the consequences of his actions --

the motive which led Him to endure the cross, the gainsaying of sinners, despising the shame -- the motive, I say is found in Hebrews 2:10: "*in bringing many sons to glory.*" This was the joy which was before Christ, that He could present each redeemed soul (cleansed, forgiven in His blood) to His Father and say, "Father, this one has come to believe in Me, has followed Me through the trials of life, and I present him to You without spot and blemish, because I have cleansed him in My blood." What a joyous day for our Redeemer! What a glorious day for His redeemed! Truly, "*Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in by the gates into the city*" (Rev. 22:14)!

Jim McDonald