

## **Trusting God in Tough Times, Part Two**

**Hebrews 12:1-2**

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### **Trust, Endurance and Expectations**

Hebrews 11 is known as “the faith chapter” in the Bible. Every verse is about faith. It’s awesome! It is often overlooked that this chapter is actually part of a larger theme in Hebrews that stretches from Chapter 10, verse 19, all the way to the end of chapter 12. The theme of that larger section is, in one word: ENDURANCE. There is a huge lesson in this. The “faith chapter” comes right in the middle of a huge section on how Christians are to “endure,” or “persevere” through tough times – because there is a major connection between trust and endurance in the Christian life. This is one of the most important lessons we can learn to grow deeper in our faith and life as Gospel centered Christian believers.

There is one more theme hidden in the midst of all this: our EXPECTATIONS. Evidently the Hebrew Christians – that is, the first recipients of this letter – were going through some extremely tough times. You can see it in the text. Check out Hebrews 10:32-34. These tough times became a severe test of their faith. Their hearts were hurting and their minds were confused. Doubt was creeping in. This is how it always works. Here is a solid principle: *“doubt lives in the gap between our expectations and our experience.”* Having come to faith in Christ, they must have expected that their life experience would be different. They didn’t expect this kind of intense struggle in their lives. They didn’t expect these problems, doubt was creeping in. But The Book of Hebrews calls them back to tenacious trust in the Lord. Well, actually, Hebrews calls them to adopt an attitude of hard core endurance through whatever struggles may come their way in this life. The chapter on faith in the middle is there by way of example – to show us how trust bolsters our endurance. Hebrews 11 is filled with examples of faith. Each example is about someone who had to endure. Each example is about hanging on to faith, even in the toughest of times or circumstances. Here we learn to adjust our expectations. We learn that God’s people have always had to struggle through tough situations – that’s just the way it works in this fallen world. We wait in hope for something better, the ultimate fulfillment of all of God’s promises. These examples are for us. What will we do?

### **Trust, Jesus and the Gospel**

As we come to Hebrews 12 our attention is turned to Jesus. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus as we run this “race” with endurance. You see, Jesus is the “author and perfecter of our faith” – our trust. Note carefully that Hebrews 12:2 gives us both the death and the resurrection of Jesus in one verse. That’s because our attention is being directed to the essence of the Gospel message. The message of the Gospel is transformational. The message of the Gospel, with its amazing focus on Jesus in His life, death and resurrection, is the greatest stimulus to deep faith that the world has ever known. It also helps us to adjust our expectations. It shows us that our life in this world is to reflect His life in this world – a life that was filled with struggles and challenges throughout. But the struggles and trials are not the final word. The final word is the victory of Christ over all things. This is OUR hope. To hope; to hang on – in trust – through real troubles, this is a major affirmation of the truth and power of the Gospel of Christ. This is what we are called to as Gospel believers in our fallen world.

### **Getting a Grip (...and letting go)**

So get a grip on your faith! Hang on. Don’t cast it aside lightly. Don’t fool yourself and think you are hanging on to your faith if you are actually taking the easy way out by making choices that involve sin and compromise. In fact, the thing we need to let go of, to cast aside, is the sin and the stuff of this world that ensnares us and pulls us away from our faith and commitment to Christ (Hebrews 12:1). Keep your eyes on Jesus. We must not measure our lives by the value system of this fallen world. Our pursuit in life must be higher than our own personal satisfaction, relational fulfillment, happiness, material comfort or security. Let the Gospel of Christ renew your perspective and build your trust. We live from the miracle of Christ’s love and the victory of His risen life. We live to love and please Christ. We live in tenacious trust. Does this seem too extreme to you? Then go back and read Hebrews 10 through 12 one more time!