

WD March 1, 2021

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“A Fixed Point in an Ever-Changing World”

Today, I'd like to start off with a reading from Hebrews 12:1-3. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

That word perseverance always strikes me as important. It is a word that effectively states that we will be stretched almost to the point of breaking but by the grace of God we don't. Because when we are weak then He is strong. One can certainly look at the previous chapter, usually nicknamed the hall of faith, and see in every example someone who was pushed to their limits but did not break because they remained focused on the Lord. “By faith” Noah worked his tail off building an ark based on the instructions God had given him, applying every skill. And in a world that was utterly fallen, he did everything God gave him to do. “By faith” Abraham, was a hundred years old when he had his son, Isaac. Then he agonized after a very sleepless night having been instructed to take Isaac to a place to be sacrificed. “By faith” Rehab welcomed the Israelite spies in Jericho at great risk to her own life. These and countless others are the great cloud of witnesses that Hebrews 12:1 is referring to.

These witnesses lived in our world too. They didn't have it easier. I would guess that life was much harder. I would imagine Noah would have loved to have had power tools, cranes, and equipment to build the Ark. I would imagine misses Noah, would have been grateful for a convection oven or microwave, or a refrigerator, or a washing machine and dryer. I'll bet Abraham would have preferred to be much younger before having Isaac.

Today most of us would have preferred not going through this last year. Some lost jobs. Some lost their loved ones. School is online. Meetings are online. Too much is online. Gag. Most of us didn't realize what Covid would give us. But this is more evidence that we live in an ever-changing world. This is why we fix our eyes on Jesus and His cross. He is the fixed point when this life is rocking and rolling around, leaving us unsteady and off-balance.

How important is this fixed point? Consider one of the most famous scenes from 1995's Apollo 13 movie. The movie's most famous line is “Houston, we have a problem.” Many in fact. A design flaw caused an explosion of their oxygen tanks which made the ill-fated trip a story of survival. The astronauts didn't sleep much. One ended up with a UTI and without heat the capsule was freezing. Truly these guys were stretched to their limits.

On day six of the troubled mission, the astronauts had to make a critical course correction or they wouldn't get back home. To conserve power everything in the capsule was shut down, including their navigation computer. They had to do a 39 second burn on their main engine. Since the computer wasn't working, they had to steer the ship manually making tiny adjustments to stay on course. It was easier said than done. The key for any of this to work was to have a fixed point to aim for. They needed a fixed point in space. That fixed point was home, planet Earth. By keeping that reference point in the window, the astronauts were able to get back on course and eventually make it home.

So many things on the Apollo 13 mission didn't go as planned. This last year felt a lot like the Apollo 13 mission-- Adapting to very uncomfortable scenarios, all the while hoping that at some point we finally get back to some kind of normal. But most things don't stay normal forever. Just retiring for example, means all kinds of adjustments. Losing a spouse or a parent will change a lot of things. And then we adapt again. But as Christians we adapt with our eyes fixed on home. By keeping Jesus in our line of sight we are aiming at something fixed, that never changes (Hebrews 13:8). Like that capsule we may make a course correction or two, but the momentum of this life is always carrying us forward towards home. We will get there safely; maybe not comfortably; maybe not always according to our plans; but we will get there because Jesus promised a safe arrival for all who believe and don't lose heart.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30