



Your Cloud of Witnesses

Devotion

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. 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.

Hebrews 11:39-12:3

My husband is a runner. He ran the Chicago marathon as his first try at a long distance. I watched him get up early day after day, training for months. The day of the marathon came. A student at the time, I took my books downtown to study while he raced. I watched him line up in his pace group, surprised to find myself crying! I was so encouraged by his persistence and perseverance, his hard work. When the marathon ended, I was so proud. He was proud of himself too and encouraged by my presence to cheer him on.

His second marathon was in Dallas. It was the same day as an event at our church: I couldn't be there to cheer him on. As he came up the second huge hill in a row, he saw an older man from our congregation holding a sign that said, "You can do all things through Him who gives you strength! (Philippians 4:13)" He was so shocked to see the man there to cheer him on and encourage with the Word of God! His smile telling me the story later matched the smile as he saw the man holding his poster. He told me how surprised he was to see both the poster and the gentleman, and how he ran faster, knowing that though I couldn't be there, he still had people who care and support him.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and Rahab were all commended through their faith. We are surrounded by a long faith family history of those who have in faith clung to the unseen promises in Christ. In Hebrews 12, we read that these heroes of faith, including those well-known and remembered. Some we rarely if ever think of. Both the named in Scripture and the unnamed in written history, surround us with a faith in the promise of the Gospel of God.

We know the name of the fulfillment of the Father's promise: Jesus. The cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11 never saw the fulfillment of what God promised them. Their lives point to the one that would come to save us from our sins. These past heroes of faith invite us to trust the promises of God even if we don't get to see them come to pass. By faith they encourage us to endure through the times we live through as well. Not only that, we also look to Jesus Himself, who ran the race of faith perfectly. Through the gift of faith in Him, we can be inspired to endure through all things that face us in this life.

Questions:

- What is God saying to you through the witness of the heroes of old?
- What is God pointing to through the lives of the heroes of faith who surround you today, living faithfully pointing to Jesus in your home and church?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, continue to sanctify me, deepening my faith in Jesus daily. Encourage me with your Word, remind me of Your promises and bring to mind all that I need to endure each day. In Jesus' name, Amen.