

## DON'T LOSE: YOUR FOCUS OF FAITH

**THESIS:** Don't Lose Focus

**TEXT:** Hebrews 12:1-3

**OPEN:** Every submarine is equipped with a periscope by which it seeks those things which are above. It travels down in the water, but the well-being of those in it depends on knowledge of what's above.

In **Hebrews 12** let's discover how to focus our faith for God's glory, the good of others and ourselves.

### DON'T LOSE YOUR FOCUS OF FAITH INSTEAD PERSEVERE TO PRODUCE FOR GOD.

**Hebrews 12:1-3** "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, the prophets, etc—Hebrews 11), 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. <sup>2</sup>Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

***Historical:*** The picture of a cloud describing a crowded group of people is a common classical figure. It expresses not only the great number of people, but also the unity of the crowd in their witness (*Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, p. 713). Surrounded by a vast crowd of those who, in former ages, had run their race for God victoriously, and who were now gazing with interest at the initial struggle of the new-born Church. Believers in Christ are urged to keep their eyes on the goal, and strain (persevere) to win" (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 655)

A. *Persevere to produce for God by throwing off that which hinders your faith.*

1. **Luke 8:13-15** (parable of the sower): "Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a good crop."

a. *Quote from Abraham Lincoln:* "I will prepare and then perhaps my chance will come."

b. **Upcoming:** Let us help you prepare to be a finisher of the faith. Keep your focus of faith through Wednesday Bible study (verse-by-verse) Galatians 5. Topics include what the Bible says about sexuality; evidence of God working in your life; Scripture's warning about witchcraft; is the theology "once saved, always saved—no matter what you do" a Biblical doctrine, and much more. Men's breakfast fellowship (10/02) devotional series "Today Matters" w/ John Maxwell's DVD segments; Ladies Friday Bible study (Genesis 1-11); Friendship Groups (small groups) season premiere this February.

B. *Persevere to produce for God by throwing off that which entangles you in sin.*

1. **Colossians 3:5-10** "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of

- these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”
- a. **Illustration:** Throw off/rid yourself of sinful entanglements—don’t put yourself back in those situations. If you do, it’s like a person who takes off a sweaty, and stained shirt but puts it right back on after taking a shower.
  - b. **Illustration:** *Hee-Haw* television show skit w/ Doc Campbell—broken arm in 2 places.
  - c. **Application:** “Watch and pray” (*Matthew 26:41*)—anticipate vulnerable situations & pray.
2. **1 Corinthians 9:22b-27** “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings...Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat (discipline) my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”
- a. **Insight from Knofel Staton:** “While Paul relates to the people around him, he refuses to allow them to sway him to become a different person morally than he is. He recognizes that being with such people automatically brings temptations. However, he refuses to live a life of isolationism from other people. Instead, he takes the more serviceable approach—relating to people who are different—and at the same time, the most spiritual approach—strictness and putting his body as a slave under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul’s goal is not just temporary—relating to people in the now, but also for the eternal—winning God’s (Heavenly) prize in the future” (*Standard Bible Studies: First Corinthians*, p. 178)
- C. *Persevere to produce for God by running your life according to the race He marks out for us.*
1. **Luke 6:46-49** “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to Me and hears My words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears My words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”
    - a. **Illustration:** A Florida news crew interviewed a man who was cleaning up debris after a hurricane. The reporter asked, “Sir, why is your house the only one still standing? How did you manage to escape the severe damage of the hurricane?” The man replied, “I built this house according to the Florida building code. When it called for 2x6 roof trusses, I used 2x6 roof trusses. I was told that a house built according to code could withstand a hurricane. I did, and it did. I suppose no one else around here followed the code.”
    - b. **Application:** Before problems crash your life like a hurricane, ask yourself: “Am I building my life according to the ‘code’ of God’s Word—in every aspect?” Let me suggest King David’s method of examining oneself.
      1. *Pray the Scriptures:* “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (**Psalm 139:23-24**).

2. *Weigh (meditate on) the Scriptures*: “Let me understand the teaching of Your precepts; then I will meditate on Your wonders. My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to Your Word” (**Psalm 119:27-28**).
  3. *Obey the Scriptures*: “I hold fast to Your Word, O Lord; do not let me be put to shame. I run in the path of Your commands, for You have set my heart free (swelled it with joy—**Psalm 119:31-32**).
- D. *Persevere to produce for God by thinking about the endurance of Jesus and His eternal victory.*
1. **Hebrews 10:35-38** “So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. For in just a very little while, ‘He who is coming will come and will not delay. But My righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.’”
    - a. *Insight from Zondervan NIV Study Bible Notes* (p. 1913): “The Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race rather than a short sprint.”
  2. **James 1:12-16** “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers.”
    - a. **Illustration: Karl Marx: From Christianity To Communism & Satanism**  
(<http://alerts.worldnetdaily.com>)

Did you know that Communism founder Karl Marx was once a professing Christian? Did you know the architect of communism later joined a satanic cult? Those are among the shocking revelations of a book called “Marx and Satan” written by the late pastor Richard Wurmbrand. Wurmbrand was the leader of the underground church of Romania. He spent 14 years in a prison under the palace of former Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. He also spent three years in the prison hospital ward from which no one else ever left alive.

In May 1966, Wurmbrand testified in Washington before the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee and showed 18 deep torture wounds covering his body. Here's an excerpt Wurmbrand found in Marx's first book titled, *The Union of the Faithful with Christ*: "Through love of Christ we turn our hearts at the same time toward our brethren who are inwardly bound to us and for whom He gave Himself as sacrifice." Marx's comrade, Friedrich Engels, was also a believer, and became a conservative theologian. He wrote against the liberal theologians of his time who criticized the Bible as the absolute word of God, and he also wrote a number of very sound Christian poems and hymns.

Why did Marx become a God hater who invented not only one of the worst tools of oppression to Christianity, but also to all of humanity? Why did Engels become his accomplice? Wurmbrand says the turning point in both of their lives occurred at the universities they attended when they learned of a new "Christian doctrine" called "liberal theology." Wurmbrand exposes how Marx, a former Christian, went on to become a hater of God and the Christian. Marx eventually joined the satanic cult of his closest comrades, and this book explains in detail the evidence of that decision.

3. **2 Peter 1:10-11; 3:17-18** “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things (add to your faith), you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...Be on your guard so that you may be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”

**CLOSE:** Don't lose your focus of faith instead persevere for the glory of God, the good of others and yourself.

