

# We See Jesus (9): Never Give Up

---

(Hebrews 12:1-3)

## I. Introduction

- A. Paul Simon's classic "*The Boxer*" tells of boy whose dream brings him to the city
1. But the reality of the city contrasts with the dream of success that had led him there.
    - a. Dream crashes on that reality; dream is abandoned and so is he, "*Laying low, seeking out the poorer quarters where the ragged people go, looking for the places only they would know.*"
    - b. He decides that his only option is to give up on his dream and just go home,
  2. But one night he meets an old boxer and he sees in the boxer the inspiration to go on  
*In the clearing stands a boxer and a fighter by his trade, and he carries a reminder of every blow that laid him down  
Or cut him till he cried out in his anger and his shame, "I am leaving, I am leaving!" but the fighter still remains.*
  3. There's something haunting in that old song, isn't it? Sadly, it is also out of date.
- B. We don't meet too many boxers in our world, do we? *Too many today just give up.*
1. It used to be common for companies to give workers a gold watch after 30 or 40 years
    - a. How many people work that long for the same company? *People just don't remain*
    - b. Companies lay off people at drop of a hat; employees walk down the street for buck
    - c. Having a company and worker "*remain*" is a pretty rare thing in workplace today!
  2. How many people remain in same church over time? People move a lot, but not point
    - a. I mean people changing churches like socks! Get mad over something & off you go
    - b. Church is supposed to be a spiritual family; you'd think the fighter would remain!
  3. Later this year, Lynn and I will celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. *Thank you very much!*
    - a. Hardest part of getting to that anniversary used to be just living long enough, right!
      - 1) Between childbirth and industrial accidents... and car accidents—many didn't
      - 2) We're thankful to still be here to still be fighting.... OK, not the best metaphor!
    - b. Married people today have options; often if there are options, fighter won't remain!
    - c. So couples married for 40 years together get applause because that seems a big deal
- C. The Hebrew Christians we've been studying were thinking about giving up & going back
1. Faith in Jesus had gotten hard; so they we're leaving Christ to go home to synagogue
    - a. They made a good run at faith, but they're going back. To use words Simon's song "*I have squandered my resistance for a pocket full of mumbles, such are promises...*"
    - b. Writer assures them Jesus is no pocket full of mumbles— *He is better than the OT!*
    - c. Last week in **Heb 11**, he pointed to heroes of faith who were able to see the unseen
  2. Now he points them to Jesus and heroes one more time (**Reading: Hebrews 12:1-3**)

## II. Never Give Up: Two Main Things to Consider

A. **First**, we need to consider the great **cloud of witnesses** watching us (**Heb 12:1**)

1. The text compares Christian life to a long-distance race in a great stadium
  - a. It is not a sprint; it's a marathon that pushes spiritual endurance to the limit
  - b. We must run the race for ourselves; we don't have to run the race by ourselves
    - 1) We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses—the hall of fame of faith
    - 2) These are people who have completed the race and now they cheer us on
2. During the One City Marathon, we gather in front of the building to clap and cheer
  - a. The runners all smile and wave back; they're not doing that when we're not there!
    - 1) They smiling because we're there to clap and cheer and shout encouragement
    - 2) The rest of the time their wondering why in the world they decided to do this!
  - b. The writer reminds us that we're not alone; the faithful of the ages cheer us on!
    - 1) Noah, Abraham, Moses didn't just run race of faith—they're cheering for you!
    - 2) Paul didn't just write "*I have finished the race.*" He wants is to finish ours too!
3. People usually go to family reunions to see people that they haven't in (long) awhile
  - a. Every time I went to family reunions in Arkansas, I'd meet people I'd never met!
    - 1) At one of family reunions, they counted 45 preachers in 12 family branches
    - 2) Great-great aunts once said, "*I feel sorry for everyone who isn't a Copeland*"
  - b. There is a family heritage there; to lose that would be losing something precious
4. This cloud of witnesses is our family of faith heritage; we don't want to give that up
  - a. Give up on our faith to go back to world would fly in face of our family tradition.
  - b. He points to the witnesses, the people of faith who went before—think about them
  - c. If nothing else, you don't want to give up that tradition and disappoint your family!

B. **Second**, we need to keep our eyes fixed on **Jesus** Christ Himself (**Heb 12:2**)

1. What does it mean that Jesus was the “pioneer and perfecter” of our faith?
  - a. We already saw “pioneer” or “champion” (NLT) in **Heb 2:10**, *archegos* or “hero”
    - 1) It originally was one who establish a city or opened up a new territory
    - 2) Jesus went before us; He ran this race before us and we follow in His footsteps
  - b. He is also the “perfecter” of our faith; Jesus both began and finished race (*Message*)  
*Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in.*
    - 1) And Jesus didn't just finish the race, he finished it... perfectly without sin
    - 2) Doesn't someone say He was tempted like we are without sin? (**Heb 4:15**)

2. Why were Hebrew Christians were giving up on church to returning to synagogue?
  - a. Why did Paul Simon’s poor boy want to give up and go home? Things got hard
  - b. If you have your eyes on Jesus and His story—it got hard for Him too (**Heb 12:3**)
3. It hadn’t gotten that hard for the Hebrew Christians, not THAT hard! (**Heb 12:4**)
  - a. OH, that and had it rough, but they hadn’t had it “go to the cross rough” right
  - b. When I was hard on my sister and my defense was, “*I didn’t kill her...*” Pretty hard!
  - c. What does he say about suffering? He says, “*We see Jesus!*” Look at Christ
    - 1) Look to the cross and Jesus who “*endured cross, scorning its shame*” (**12:2**)
    - 2) You have it bad? “*Consider him who endured opposition from sinners*” (**12:3**)
    - 3) You see, our struggles in life always bring us back to the way of cross.
      - a) What did Peter tell slaves who suffered at hands of sinful masters (**1 Pet 2:21**)
      - b) What did Paul say in addition to knowing the power of resurrection (**Phil 3:10-11**)
  - d. We think difficulty and hardship is a proof of God’s abandonment and lack of love
    - 1) Job looked at his terrible suffering as God’s attack, “arrows of the Almighty”
    - 2) God owes us sweetness-n-light; we give in & give up if the going gets too hard
  - e. Hebrew writer sees things in a totally different light altogether (**Heb 12:7-8, 11-12**)
4. Suffering difficulty and hardship takes on a whole new light when seen that way
  - a. The writer says, “*Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners...*”
  - b. He’s talking about the cross; when we suffer, we walk in the way of the cross!

### III. Conclusion

- A. There are two messages of cross here—*first*, there is the **doctrinal** message of the cross
  1. The cross assures us that we are saved by God’s grace, and not by our works
    - a. No one is ever saved by the right end-time theory or pattern of church porganization
    - b. No one will be in heaven by doing worship right or understand Book of Revelation
    - c. Every person who gets to heaven will be there because of one reason—the cross
  2. We sure act like it all of these little things and 1000 others that save us, not the cross
    - a. I once preached a 7-part series (*start with 6; I stretched it*) on the meaning of cross
      - 1) Someone told me to my face, “*I’ll be glad when you get back to preaching!*”
      - 2) OK, that’s where the 7<sup>th</sup> lesson came from, but come on! What is the gospel?
    - b. People will threaten to leave a church over all kinds of silly things (*pews to chairs*)
    - c. Any ever threatened to leave over the cross—the only part Paul stressed (**1 Cor 2:2**)

- B. **Second**, there's a practical message—the way of the cross is one of denial and death
1. If we are going to follow Jesus, then we must follow him in that way (**Luke 9:23**)
    - a. Writer begins by calling us to throw off the sin that so easily entangles (**12:1**)
    - b. Later he calls us to live in holiness and not to fall short of God's grace (**12:14b-15**)
    - c. He will even call out people by name—OK, it's Esau, but the sin is specific! (**12:16**)
  2. Grace is never a carte blanc get out of jail card that lets me live as I please
    - a. Grace calls us to run the race surrounded by cloud witnesses... very carefully
    - b. We have to run so as to please God; what pleases God is our holy living
  3. This won't be easy; it will be get hard because all of hell will fight against you
    - a. Satan will do everything he can to get you to give up, to lay down, to quit
    - b. The only way grace can fail you is for you to give up— *it won't give up on you*
    - c. Never give up! The writer pleads with us today, "*The fighter still remains*"
- C. I ran across this inspirational video and motivational using recent movie clips... ([video](#))
1. Never give up. That is the message of the Hebrew writer as he close his book here
    - a. You might want to object, "*But not every story has an happy ending like that!*"
      - 1) The poor boy in Paul Simon's song may have never make it in New York city
      - 2) The old boxer he met may have lost every single time he climbed into the ring
    - b. Hard work, persistence and "remaining" are not guarantees of a storybook ending!
  2. But that's the message of the cross! We don't have to win our battle against sin.
    - a. Jesus already did that! All we have to do is just remain, stand firm, hang in there
    - b. Jesus has won the battle; our part in the great battle plan is to stand (**Eph 6:10,13**)
  3. Two things to keep in mind when things fall part and Satan's attacks seem all around
    - a. **Bad News:** Fighter must remain! You can't run away; you must stand your ground
    - b. **Good News:** You don't do anything except stand there; Christ does the heavy lifting
- D. Don't give up your battle against sin! Consider Him and don't grow weary and lose heart.
1. Never give up; never give in. Remember that you are never alone running this race
  2. The writer points you to the great cloud of witnesses— to two great churches
    - a. The Church Triumphant: The saints who have gone on before who cheer you
    - b. The Church Militant: Church here on earth ready to fight with and for you now
  3. The writer most points you to Jesus Himself. Won't you consider Him today?