

KEEP RUNNING!

Hebrews 11:32-12:1

Popular misconception:

Christians are God's people,

=> **Christians never suffer tragedy.**

Tell that to Heb. struggling because of their faith in Christ.

"Those who live godly lives will suffer persecution"

Affliction & adversity is fact of life for God's people.

EXAMPLES OF FAITH 11:1-40

People who trust God in face of adversity,
encourage us to follow in their footsteps.

Exx. continue: * Joshua 30 * Rahab 31

After heroes among Patriarchs & Conquest, summary of how faith is seen from judges, kings, & prophets, to present

Includes intertestamental period, even people **they** knew

Lists some by name.

Then categories of people who trust God in adversity.

You can point to failures in each of their lives!

Yet, **each trusts God & remains faithful**, expecting God to fulfill His promises

Each battles against overwhelming odds

All these give testimony to value of faith.

Some are miraculously delivered;

God's glorified by rescuing them. **11:32-35a**

Conquer kingdoms

Escape the sword

Administer justice

Made strong out of weakness

Obtain the promises

Become powerful in battle

Shut the mouths of lions

Put armies to flight

Quench the power of the fire

Raised to life from the dead

Even death couldn't defeat them!

BUT others pay for their faith with their lives

God is still glorified! 11:35b-38

These witness God's power to persevere, in affliction—even death!

They're tortured (don't renounce faith to escape)

They could've been released if they'd give up their faith, or at least publicly renounce it, but they refuse

They make statement: assurance of their hope is preferred to temporary relief.

Experienced jeers, floggings, chains & imprisonment

Stoned

Sawn in two

Put to death by the sword

Because of extreme poverty, they went around in
sheepskins & goatskins,
destitute, afflicted & mistreated

Wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, & holes in ground

Though not appreciated by contemporaries, the faithful were of greater worth than rest of humanity combined

So much for "prosperity gospel." Here are saints so holy & full of faith that the world isn't worthy of them, yet they endure persecution & deprivation, to remain faithful

Some are delivered; some suffer for their faith.

But they're "***all commended for their faith.***"

**God used each according to His purpose to further
His program & glorify Himself.**

11:39-40 *"These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect."*

God doesn't always do what we expect!

Sometimes God intervenes & frees His people;
sometimes He doesn't.

God may desire to be glorified by delivering His people,

God may desire to be glorified by not delivering them

Don't conclude lack of deliverance = lack of faith!

Program doesn't end with them.

None of these received the promise.

God's program continues, because **God wants to include us**.

Includes godly men & women: Corrie ten Boom, Jim Elliot,
Hudson Taylor, 1000s of faithful homemakers & professionals,
teenagers & sr. citizens—not one perfect, each committed to
trusting God & remaining faithful

He wants to use us the same way!

God wants to use our lives similarly,

so that, by our faith, He may be glorified

Exhortation to remove all obstacles & follow their

example 12:1 *"Since we're surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders & the sin that so easily entangles. & let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."*

The value of faith has been amply attested by cloud of witnesses—to God's faithfulness.

NOT looking over edge of heaven to watch us.

It's their witness to us of their lives

They witness to value of persistent faith.

Follow their example. 3 exhortations:

Remove every obstacle—take off all weights that work against us & cause resistance

Even GOOD things—they may bog us down!

Get rid of the sin which entraps us

Any sin can trip us up & keep us from running race,

Temptation we're prone to when facing affliction: **unbelief**

Run with endurance race before us.

Not sprint to goal, 100 yds away

It's *marathon*; requires endurance.

Don't allow *anything* to impede goal before us

We're urged to hang in there — keep running.

Only have vague idea of how this applies in 21st C.

Christians in many parts of world are persecuted for faith: India, Sudan, Iran, China, *et.al.* suffer for “the Name.”

What does the future hold for us?

Author of Heb. anticipates additional suffering

He stirs us to stand with those who've gone before.

It's time for US to run the race!

Our race may include suffering for our faith.

Call for race is given. Athletes gather round.

They've been well-trained for the race.

All *good* things that might get in way must go: things that take our time, trappings of affluent lifestyle; things that keep us warm & comfortable, must go!

It's time for us to run our race. Are we ready? *Get ready!*

Get set! . . .

Run with patient endurance race before us

Must I be carried to the skies
on flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
and sailed through bloody seas.

Sure I must fight if I would reign,
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'd bear the toil, endure the pain,
supported by Thy Word.