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### Don't Let Your Circumstances Eclipse the Son!

Hebrews 12:1-3

Today is an exciting day as the United States experiences a rare total eclipse of the sun. The last total eclipse was in 1979, the next one will be in 2023. Here in Charleston we will see about a 90% of the sun's light blocked by the moon. Many are driving hundreds of miles to get the full experience.

When we think of our relatively small moon blocking the massive brilliance of the sun from our view, it points us to consider how the trials and circumstances of daily life can eclipse our view of the glories of Christ – of who He is and all that He has done for us.

How is it that our moon can completely block out the light from our sun? The Sun is over 400 times the diameter of the moon. It is a matter of distance and perspective. While the sun is 400 times larger than the moon, it is also 400 times further away. This means both the sun and moon appear to be the same size in our sky. This is what makes it possible for the moon to totally eclipse the light from the sun.

So it is with our perspective of the difficulties, trials and challenges we face. They can seem so big and loom so large in our view they block our view of Christ and all He has done for us.

The entire eclipse will only last about 1 ½ hours. Totality will only last a matter of minutes or seconds. In view of eternity, the trials of this life last but for a moment. Though they seem large while we are in the middle of them, they will pass when we as believers finally experience the life we have in Christ.

This is the reminder we read in Hebrews 12:1-3

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against**

**Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

There is much we do not know about the book of Hebrews. We do not know who wrote it. We do not know exactly to whom it was written. But there are some things we can piece together from reading it. This letter's recipients were facing struggles and persecution because of their profession of faith in Christ. Hebrews 10 tells how they "**...Endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**" (Heb. 10:32-34)

These folks had gone through difficult times to serve the Lord. The readers of this letter also sought to serve the Lord by serving others. Hebrews 6 encourages them that "**God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.**" (Heb. 6:10).

They had sought to serve the Lord and had already stood in the face of great persecution. Yet from the warnings we read in this letter it appears that the great trials and persecution were causing many of these believers to wonder if it was worth it. They were ready to desert their Christian faith. They were ready to leave the faith

because in their minds and hearts the glories of Christ had been eclipsed by their difficult circumstances.

The writer encourages them to keep their faith by reminding them of the glories of Jesus Christ – both Who He is and what He had done for them.

He warns them of the eternal consequence of turning their backs on Christ and leaving the faith.

He reminds them Jesus is the Son of God. He is perfect and eternal allowing Him to become a better sacrifice for our sin and a better intermediary on our behalf.

He closes his argument with a challenge to look beyond the trials and persecution to see the glories of Christ.

### **The Example of those Who've Gone Before**

The “cloud of witnesses” refers to the list of faithful followers recorded in chapter 11. Those who accomplished great things, experienced difficult trials, and even gave their lives because of their faith are examples that can encourage us.

### **The Things that Eclipse our View of Christ**

We are challenged to lay aside every encumbrance and every sin that might hinder our Christian life. The illustration here compares the Christian life to a race. God has laid out a course for us to complete. It may include persecutions, trials, and difficulties.

We are not to get our eyes on those things, looking to the side or looking back. Rather, **we are to fix our eyes on Jesus**. We are to consider Him who endured great trials and suffering than we can ever imagine so that we do not grow weary and lose heart.

### **Seeing the Glories of Christ**

We are exhorted to fix our eyes on Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith. It is when we trust in Christ our sins are forgiven. As the One who suffered, died for sin, and rose again He certainly is the author of our faith. And when life is over and we have eternal life with Him, He will be perfecter of our faith.

What was the joy that was set before Jesus? It was His complete obedience and fulfillment of His Father's will. It was also the salvation of all those who would put their faith in Him.

Now Jesus has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. There He is ruling, reigning, and interceding on our behalf (Heb. 7:25; 9:24; Rom. 8:34). Focusing on these truths will keep us from growing weary and losing heart.

The challenges and struggles of daily life or of life in the capitol may eclipse our view of the glories of Christ. This passage reminds to “**fix our eyes on Jesus**” so that we do not lose sight of Him and all He has done for us. This is what will keep us faithful in living for Him.

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#### **INTERIM BIBLE STUDY**

Monday, August 21 6:00 p.m.

McManus Conference Room – M252

(Located by House Minority Offices)

Dinner will be provided