

**Thought for Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021**  
**Pastor Gordon Hamilton**

**Hebrews 12:1-29**

So we come to our penultimate look at this book of Hebrews. Last week we looked at the last few verses of chapter 11 which talked of persecution, and chapter 12 begins with that word; 'Therefore,' so we have to reflect back to what was said last week, and, because of that, the writer says; *'since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles.'* The great cloud of witnesses, is not only the people we see round and about us, family, friends, neighbours, people we work with, people we see when we go shopping. It is also the angels that we don't see, that see everything we do. Psalm 139 as I have said before, tells us there is nowhere for us to hide from God, **read Psalm 139:1-12...** When we are aware of that, we can feel intimidated, that we are not good enough, we are not worthy, but let us remember Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:9; *'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'* Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.' The writer to the Hebrews tells us to; *'Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.'* Every time I read that verse it reminds me of the hymn; O Soul are you weary and troubled, because the chorus goes; *'turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace.'* The big problem that many of us have is that we don't begin by; turning our eyes to Jesus, we try and do things in our own strength. I remember when being offered the position as pastor at Copthorne Chapel, we had prayed about the situation and had felt God had not said yes, but he also had not said No, so we laid a fleece, and nothing appeared to have changed, until we, Chris and I, said *'I suppose we should pray about it,* and God spoke with a very definite Yes. And not surprisingly we know it was the correct decision, turn your eyes upon Jesus, or as it says in Hebrews 12; *'Fix your eyes on Jesus.'* That way you don't turn your eyes away from Jesus. We can know real joy in our Christian faith if we recognise the fact that Jesus knew the joy set before him in enduring the cross, scorning its shame. Last weekend Sue and I watched a bit of film about Evan Roberts, the Welsh revivalist preacher, thousands came to faith through his preaching, but more so through his prayers, because he believed in the power of the Holy Spirit to change people's lives. We are very fortunate that so far 'we' haven't had to shed blood for our faith. You may think I am being over emotional, but it has happened, and in some countries it is still happening, Christians are being persecuted, even to death, for their faith. In the UK, disciplining your child is frowned upon by many people, and I don't believe we should be beating our children. The truth is children still need to be taught the truth. To put your hand in burning coals will hurt, so children need to be warned of the dangers of life. We have the duty to warn our children of the danger of turning away from the living Lord Jesus Christ. Many people say we have to allow our children to make up their own minds about what they believe. I have to ask the question, are you happy for your child to miss out on heaven because you haven't given them the opportunity to hear the truth? Verse 15; *'See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.'* In fact Jesus says in Matthew 18:6; *'If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung round their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.'* Some people say they are allowing the young people to make up their own minds, but by not saying anything, we are not helping their decision making. People need to know the truth. Verse 14 says; *'Make*

*every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord.* 1 Peter 3:15 puts it slightly differently; *‘Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.’* And that means living out your Christian life 24x7. Don’t give anyone any reason to question your faith. If you like, your answer should be the way you live. Rich Mullins wrote a chorus we says; *‘Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above, with wisdom, power and love, our God is an awesome God.’* I wonder if we believe that? In verse 26 we see the writer quoting from Haggai 2:6; *‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’* It is possible that the writer is referring to the end of time, and we say that because of what is written in the last two verses of this chapter; *‘Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’* As Christians we can be eternally thankful for the saving grace that we have known, but as David Bosch once said; *‘Christianity which does not begin with the individual, does not begin, but Christianity which ends with the individual, ends.’* We are called to share our faith, we are called to *‘Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.’* Something to think about: People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. So let’s make them want to know about Jesus, because He is our Saviour, our Lord, but also our friend. Amen.

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound,  
and time shall be no more,  
And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;  
When the saved of earth shall gather  
over on the other shore,  
And the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.

*When the roll is called up yonder,  
When the roll is called up yonder,  
When the roll is called up yonder,  
When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.*

On that bright and cloudless morning  
when the dead in Christ shall rise,  
And the glory of His resurrection share;  
When His chosen ones shall gather  
to their home beyond the skies,  
And the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.

*When the roll is called up yonder...*

Let us labour for the Master  
from the dawn till setting sun,  
Let us talk of all His wondrous love and care;  
Then when all of life is over,  
and our work on earth is done,  
And the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.