

# Surrounded by a So Great a Cloud of Witnesses

by Bill McLeod

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*We are called to run the race set before us by looking to Jesus for strength and wisdom, and by trusting in His power to help us overcome our weaknesses and sinful tendencies.*

**Duration:** 1:05:14

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:11-12, Hebrews 12:1-25

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing the opportunities that God places in our lives. He encourages the audience not to be afraid to reach out and help others, as God has placed them where they are for a reason. The preacher also highlights the significance of being ambassadors for Christ and leading others to a heavenly country. He urges the audience to stay focused on their faith and to run the race set before them. The sermon concludes with an invitation for the audience to share what the Lord has been speaking to them during the conference.

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## Transcript

My hearing is not the best and I have my ear amplifiers, which I've been wearing, but I took them out when I went home this morning, so if they tell me to shut up, I won't do the work. Okay, Hebrews chapter 12. Wherefore, seeing we also are thronged above with so great a crowd of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience to rights that set thee.

Let me sit down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider me a man that endured such contradictions and sins. You have not yet resisted unto blood.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with son. For what sin is he who comparteth him chastened unto blood? For they have buried him for a few days, chastened after their own pleasure, but he from many before. When he defines the word wherefore, or therefore, it projects him back into context.

He's saying something relative to what he's already said. We call it the faith chapter. I'm talking to you in chapter 11.

Some, by the way, by faith they say you may have to die for God. You may live for God. But this is held up as an example to us, to live as they live, to give us a case, to die as necessary, whatever.

In chapter 11, you know the world we live in? In the past, in Scotland and other places, where sometimes three quarters of the people were being converted. There was one in the States in 1906. I forget the name of the city now, it may come to mind.

60,000 people. There were not consequences of what was happening around the world. And we need to see this again.

I mean, the moral situation is to see it in its spirit. There's all kinds of destroyed terrorist things going on. People bombing hundreds of others into eternity.

And many times it's done by mob movements who are killing their own people. I can't figure out why. In any case, the revival.

They say that when sin came, when he opened his mouth, infidelity waxed, failed, and atheism developed the most, of course, and died. What do you think? It wasn't sin, it was the power of God and God's spirit. Preventing from praying, from witnessing, from giving to glory.

Lay aside, get rid of it. It's in your way. Lay aside every way, whatever's throwing you down.

And then the sin was God's easily receptive, was open, called out unbelief. He said it was a run, was patient, and that's what he said. The race was set for us.

Running, looking up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Who is he? When he created the planet, the hill of waters, and the hollow earth, he had the dust of the entire world. He weighed the mountains in scales at the hills of the valleys.

And all the nations of the world put together, he said, are one drop from the bucket. And that wasn't enough to run a little further, he said, he's counted them all. He not only counted them, he named them.

I mean, name all the stars in the universe. Have you ever thought of this? Sometimes God has to listen to you. It helps me to see how small I am, and how big Christ is.

That he can do things of this kind. And something else about Isaiah 53. It says, it speaks about his death.

But it was buried on the election and the week. But in the original Hebrew, the word death is death. So he's talking about the death of Christ.

Could this mean this? That when he died on the cross. I think he died, each of us personally. Which would mean that when he was hanging on the cross, he was able to think of every last soul that would be redeemed.

And he died free. Is that impossible to God? No. You know, a lot of people think that's an easy thing to do.

You know. And wait a moment. He was killed because of that.

That would be nothing to do with God. I think Paul saw that. Because Paul said, Christ loved me.

And gave himself for me. So when he died on the cross, he was thinking of you and me. He would do that.

But this is far beyond our ability to think. But that's the one looking at Jesus. The ultimate finisher of our faith.

Is anything too hard for God? The Bible asks the question. And in the same chapter, I believe. There is nothing too hard for God.

There can't be. The hardest is our hearts, young people. And our inability to lay hold of the promises of God.

7,587 promises of God in the Bible. Any time I mention that people have, they say they should be in private conversation. Yes, they're not all for me.

I've heard that a thousand times. They're not all for me. So they're not all for you.

What do we do? Cut them in half? Could we get it down to 2,000 more? If they're not all for you, so 2,000 more for you. Isn't that enough to get you through? 2,000 times. 2,000 times.

I know 1,000 times would be enough. So, for the joy that was set before Him. And I think we understand the joy that was set before Jesus.

The joy that was set before Him. I don't think we have to make up our minds to it. That since Christ and His plan and purpose can expect the same kind of treatment that He got.

We shouldn't be surprised. We should not walk with Christ. So, whatever God may call on you to do.

I don't want you to see me. The weakness is the sin of God. When people are too big for God.

We don't want to let God have His way. Now, I'm right. We're taking that call to do something.

To be something. To go somewhere. I remember one time.

I'm out of time. It was in the crusade. And he had a little more than that.

And then he said, the chief, he hears a lot of things are happening. Gospel preaching. And he said, I explained it.

My wife and I were going to India. They were going to perform a prayer. And I always got the message.

But they said, there's a lot of pastors who want to come to your meetings. I've set up an India here. But they don't have the money to get a bus fare.

To get to the meetings. And could you send us \$3,000? But we didn't have \$3,000. My wife and I prayed for us.

And sure, we could send that. We didn't know what was coming. We just knew it was coming.

So, we prayed. That was it. If God knows, He also needs to know.

So, we didn't know what money was coming from. That's an amazing thing. The fellow who sent it, was a fellow I had on a duty for a sin a few months before.

I wasn't sent until he responded. So, don't say I'm too small. Don't say I don't have somebody who doesn't have room on his team.

So, surrounded by the great crowd of witnesses. He was a rare angel. And then the world took today's in Jesus Christ until today.

I'm so excited to read about some of these. You know, when the missionaries first went to Chelsea Island, they lived 14 years and never had a convert. They were never touched up to get why that was.

There was a reason for it. But they saw this. They prayed.

They lived. They cried. They wept.

And finally, the Sunday Society in Scotland sent a message on a boat. That was the only means they had for communication in those days. And they asked the missionaries to leave this fruitful field.

And they were sent up to a more fruitful field. You know what happened? That boat coming to Chelsea Island passed another boat coming from the missionaries to the Sunday Society saying, God has broken the revivals of what the thousands have been converted to. Forget about what we're saying.

But 14 years and not a convert. So, one of our greatest problems is impatience. Hey, God, what are you doing? Why is it taking so long? Do something.

Well, God is waiting. The problem is never with God. The problem is always with us.

And maybe we aren't at a place where He can use us safely. Because we're not what we should be. And God uses us.

Because we're not what we should be. That's the spur of the moment in the present. We're running the race.

And God has set us up. It is no problem to God. One of the things we need to deal with very clearly is something that God can't handle.

And God can't change this. There is nothing that God cannot do. But He needs to have faith in us.

With faith, all things are possible. But there was one time when I preached in Washington. Bill Russell was another missionary in the same order.

We'd get together maybe once a year and do a week of meetings. And we had done a bunch of things. And one of the most, I can't say for the time in my experience, but the power of God was so deep in that town.

And I know the problem isn't rewarding us because we did something that we hadn't planned on doing. We keep telling people don't make plans in concrete, make them in sand. Because God may want to blow them aside and do something different.

We have to open that enable for them. And God moves us. Some of you probably heard me share this, but you know, on a plane, I get on this plane.

There are five couples sitting there wearing red suits. They're hooked over their heads. And the only thing sticking up was their face and their hands.

I thought, let's go on to these guys. Great big guys. Now, I'm going to ask you a question before I say this.

Would you mind if I told you how I became a Christian? And you know, if you look and look straight at it, it's funny. And you say, well, okay. And the plane goes by and I'm getting off.

I've done God's work. I took it for the good of the other people. I got up to go over and I put up my hand.

You grab my hand. You turn to the street. Got his face.

And he said, you'll never know what you did for me today. You'll never know. He said it four times.

But you know what? I could have missed that. None of my business. That's what we're out to do.

We just miss opportunity after opportunity. We're trying to reason our way out of trouble. God put you where you are for a reason.

Don't be afraid to give somebody a try. I've even had people offer to pay for it, you know. Let us know if you have.

Because there are some types of that. Anyway. Run the race.

But God will give it to you. You know, you shut up at home. You've got lots of kids.

Okay, I've been captive. I've been broke. The same thing you do with most children.

Have a prayer. There's a prayer list. You don't have a prayer list that you pray for every day.

People that maybe are not converted or missionaries. People that need prayer practice or others. I take an hour every day to pray for other people.

I have a list of 600 people I try and pray for every day, you know. It takes a lot of time. But it's good for some of these people.

They're getting blessed, you know. You praise God. You thank God for it.

Work for it. Grant for it. Work for it.

Seek. We also surrender to God. We're so great at following witnesses.

Let us do what? We're trying every way. Every way. Anything to slow you down.

And the sin will so easily beset us. I think, as I said before, it's unbelievable. There's more than patience.

The race is set before us. Look into Jesus. The author and the finisher.

It's exciting. It's wonderful. It's marvelous to see the hand of God work.

Did God really do that? If you look at it, how could God do that? People thought it was impossible. God's constantly doing it. Because he found a few people that would trust him and believe him.

You know, people. I've heard of them. I know stories of people who started a church.

Their friends had to talk to mothers. Telling them, she said, if you ever make it, God's not calling you to be a pastor. You know, you shouldn't be doing this.

And they come back three years later, he's got 50 million people in his building now. The same guy, I don't know. But God's called him.

It says in Isaiah 60, the last verse. Listen carefully. A little one should become a thousand.

And a small one, a strong nation. I know what we're facing in this time. I think we're on a sovereign hill.

The silver is mine. The gold is mine. Why are we worried about these things? Then after that, we've got to get into the faith aspect.

Walk with God. Let Him be chastened up and changed out of us as He made His will to a certain way. Just let God have His power.

I'm going to close in a moment. Lift up your hands and hang down on the table. Follow faith for all men, all women.

Without which no man can see the Lord. Lift up your hands. Straighten out your feet.

What place would you raise your center for you? Looking unto Jesus for strength and wisdom, money, whatever. He'll be with you all the way. Let's pray.

Father above, we want to thank you again for who you are. Remembering that you come with the sons and give them all a hand. That you died not one death, but deaths.

You saw us when you hung the cross. I believe that, Lord God. That's what Isaiah meant by what he wrote there.

And in any case, Father, it's a personal thing. We thank you for thinking of us personally when you buried on the cross. Oh, God.

What an example. That God was in Christ to reconcile the world unto Himself. Not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Father, you commit us also to ministry of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors in Christ. And so, Father, we teach you by us.

And we thank you, Father, that we can do that. An ambassador for Christ. Introducing other people to the heavenly country.

And helping them with you. Oh, God. So, thank you.

My Lord, this bless us. Warm our hearts. Breakfast.

Set us free. And help us to make straight paths. To our kingdom.

And to run the thickets through it. That set before us when you prayed, Father, in Christ's name. Amen.

Thank you, God. Have a little bit of time. One of the good things that we can and get to do from time to time is to take a moment or two and give you an opportunity to share.

What is the Lord saying to you in these days of conference? Is there something that God's been speaking to you about that you'd like to share about? So let me just take a moment or two and give you an

opportunity to share. There's a saying in Ireland that always says, don't you all rush at once. I think we should just speak.

What were these little opportunities that come along? And you walk away and say, oh, I didn't really say something. And you look back and the situation hasn't changed. That's a simple little opportunity.

Those opportunities, as they come, we need to recognize them and use them for His glory. Amen. In a service with Billy Graham some years ago, he spoke on staves on the altar.

It was a communion service. And his message was just about the times in his life where he had failed to recognize the nudging of the Spirit of God. And to bring the simple but powerful gospel message individually and to other lives.

What is the Lord saying to you? Anyone else with a thought or a word they'd like to just share? Amen. We thank God for opportunities like this. Come and hear people speak.

And courage has an involvement in the ministry of the Almighty God. Now it is probably my past priority. Always being vandalized.

And to requiring help, requiring a preception. But this is where the Lord has put me to. And I've involved myself in this for almost 15 to 20 years now.

But nowadays, I'm in a tangle with God. I call the things outside of my desire. Because sometimes you allow yourself to be driven by certain circumstances.

And sometimes I think that I'm not able to do as I used to. And so when Jim was talking about, you know, our very own says, God is looking for people. Which may say that it's more a case of God to make excuses.

Of what God has been crying for and hoping to do. Because when God called me, I decided I wanted to do everything apart from reading the Bible. And to do a ministry.

And this is what I was doing. But now, here am I. And so I find myself wondering, right? For what? For am I being forewarned? So I will ask that whoever is in prayer. The Lord has put on my heart to go to a spiritual center for hospice.

Canada. Just in Canada for example. Which at the moment is doing it.

But how much time I have to do this? Right. So we thank God for a gathering like this. Whereby we are encouraged to move on with the Lord's work.

Thank you. Pastor Emmanuel is a member of CRF. And serves in the Presbyterian Church here in Regina.

Good to have him here. It's lovely to hear honesty from a Christian leader. And I just wonder if we might not do a couple of things.

First of all, if two or three, we just pray for Pastor Emmanuel. Emmanuel Upiah is his name. And let's ask the Lord just to restore that passion.

That touch for souls. And to lead him in the building of that center in Ghana. And then after we pray for our brother.

I'll lead us in a short prayer. And we'll pray for one another. I get itchy feet.

When Bill sometimes talks about his mother. Saying I went a whole month and I haven't ran anybody to Christ. That really gets to me.

Sam came to think. The burden for souls. The desire to see the rich for him.

So maybe we should just pray for each other. One of the HeartCry conferences, Gordon MacDonald was preaching about, you know, revelations. As we sometimes quote it.

As I've lost my first love. But revelation actually says I've left my first love. And there's a big difference between the two, isn't there? Sometimes we don't leave it on purpose.

But we leave it because things get in the way. And busyness and other projects. All these things.

So we pray for one another before we wrap this session up. But let's just go to prayer. And with two or three people praying for Pastor Emmanuel.

And just lift him to the throne of grace. Thank you Father for our preaching. For our services.

For our salvation. For us to be blessed. For to be flesh and heart.

And to be free. Peace. In the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. That cannot be pushed away by busyness.

But that can only be satisfied. As we see others. Finding, then, peace with you through our Lord, Jesus.

Father will you just continue in the ministry of your spirit. To stir us here at the place of prayer? Perhaps, o Lord, many or most of us would have to confess that it isn't that easy and It's been a while since we lent someone to Jesus, and this is a good place for us to deal with that. To come to the cross and freshen again, and to seek His face.

So, Father, just continue to work with us in these moments. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

I just turn to someone there close to you and say, Can I pray with you and pray for one another, that the Lord would enable us and strengthen us, even as He was stirring this passion in our hearts. That we would not go away from here and forget it or lose it, but that we would go away from here. Walking in the desire of God, to bring the gospel to honor.

Let's take a few moments, and then we'll certainly take our break, and pray for one another, even as the scriptures exhort us. Father, as we said to you in these moments, we're thinking about our need to know more of you and less of ourselves. We're thinking, Father, of the way in which you're impressing upon our hearts, our need for scripture, our need for time with you, our need for the fullness of your Spirit.

We're thinking, Father, of that which is on your heart, the salvation of souls. Father, we want to, just before we conclude, say thank you that you are in the business of saving souls. This is a faithful saving that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Father, as we just rest in this moment of prayer, seeking your face, there are those that are on our hearts day by day, perhaps family members, perhaps people that we work with, perhaps neighbors who live close by, good people, sometimes troubled people, sometimes disturbed, but all in need of a Savior. So, Father, as we linger at your throat, we want to ask, Father, you've taught us that it's good to be specific in prayer. Even as we've been praying in a general way, Father, we want to just ask that you would grant each one of us the privilege of leading someone to you in the next seven days.

Teach us how to be sensitive to your Spirit, Lord. Teach us that little nudge that brings forth a word. Lord, they are so much more ready to receive it than we are sometimes to give in.

So, forgive. Breathe upon us with the breath of God that we might be able to recognize these little opportunities and take every one of them and use them for your glory. Father, as we wrap up this session, we are grateful for all that you have spoken into our hearts.

Thank you for Bill and for his message so clear to our heart. Again, we ask Holy Spirit be the after speaker, bringing back to our hearts and minds so often in these coming days. Lord, as we go to a break, help us to encourage one another in the things that we know of Jesus.

We want to lift to you also our brother Al, with a new as he will come in just a little while to once again open the word. Father, prepare our hearts. We open wide to you, Lord, and ask, fill us with the word of the Spirit of God that this might not be just another conference, but that we might go home with something more of Jesus and less of self.

We think of those great words of John the Baptist as he spoke about Jesus. He must increase and I must decrease. Lord, help us to know.

I shall apply that great truth and use our brother wonderfully in the coming time. Thank you for your love, your forgiveness, your grace, your spirit that enables and upholds and strengthens and comes alongside.

Bless each of these, my dear brothers and sisters in this room and enable us, Lord, by your Spirit to encourage one another.

In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. You may want to linger at the place of prayer.

I'm not sure if our brother Ron has finished the session over there, but let's be sensitive to that. We can always wait for a coffee if they're not done. If you're free also to go, just return at 3.15, please.

God bless you.

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