

HEBREWS 12:1(A)

“WHEREFORE SEEING WE ALSO ARE COMPASSED ABOUT WITH SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES, LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, AND THE SIN WHICH DOTHSO EASILY BESET US...”

“I NEED TO LOSE SOME WEIGHT”

This is the time of the year when people celebrate the current upcoming holiday on the calendar (Christmas) while in anticipation of another year or another New Year celebration.

For some it's a time of hope – that next year will be better than the current year;

For some it's a time of transition – that next year will heal some of the wounds and emptiness from this year;

For some it's time of pain – after hearing the prognostications of next year, there is an inner preparation or bracing of ones self unlike the current year;

And for many of us it is a time of reflection and planning.

I don't know who began the tradition, but someone must have sat down and said "I'm going to make me a list of things that I didn't accomplish, didn't do, didn't finish, didn't participate in, not for right here and now – but for next year!"

I've come to suggest that people plan to change jobs next year, change residencies next year, change cars next year, change hair styles next year, change banking institutions next year, change favorite sports teams next year, change families next year, change churches next year, change cities, change states, change weaves, change clothes, change shoes, change husbands, change wives, change names, change this, change that, change change –

And in the midst of all of their changes they miss the best opportunity and the best place to make real, substantive change.

They make plans to change all of these outside things – but they don't want to touch themselves!

Not the outward appearance – but the inner man, who is full of so much that is negative, so much of that which is unpopular, childish, immature, unfavorable, temperamental, ungodly and sinful that no matter what kind of new clothes you put on –

You're putting them on the same old person; no matter what kind of new car you purchase –

You're putting the same old person in the drivers' seat; no matter what kind of new man or woman you date –

They're going to be stuck with the same old person that the last person you hooked up with couldn't stand, the person before them avoided, the person before them cursed out, the person before them ran away –

In other words you don't need a new year's resolution – you need to make some NEW YOU resolutions.

I'm trying to help somebody this morning and tell you that some of us are satisfied where you are –

*I'm not satisfied with some things about me –
I want to go deeper in the Lord,
I want to be somebody that God will be pleased with and proud of,
I want to be somebody that when the Devil hears my name he shakes and remembers that Ronald Boykin doesn't fall for the stuff he used to fall for.*

So, my first of several resolutions is not for you, it's not for public consumption, it's not for competition purposes –

*I want to be a better man in the Lord,
I want to be a better believer in the Lord,
I want to serve God with my whole heart –*

So the first thing that the writer of Hebrews says that what I and some of us need to do in this room is lose weight!

For the benefit of those who think I mean physical weight, I must correct you now!

I'm not talking about your physical weight and appearance – no, I want to go deeper than that.

In our text the Hebrew writer – whoever he is – up until the 1880s, it was widely believed that the Apostle

Paul was the author, but now there is a theological debate about the authorship.

Scholars point to the difference in the writing style, the lack of a Pauline introduction to the letter, the lack of a mention of the writer – however the Book of Hebrews has been described as the second most important book in the New Testament compared to the Book of Romans.

The writer of the Hebrews compares us in this text vividly as the most popular people of that day.

In that day the games played in the Roman coliseums drew literally thousands of people to their venues.

Only a remnant of those coliseums are still standing today, but they were architectural marvels

And those who ran or fought or wrestled or jumped in the coliseums were considered to be more than human.

They had abilities that the common man did not possess.

They had received physical training that the common man did not possess.

They had a devotion to their sport that the common man did not possess.

It is a perfect analogy to that of being a believer.

Every day we've got to go into the arena.

Every day we've got to stand up for the Lord amidst people who don't love Him like we do.

Every day we've got a devil to fight that's trying to destroy our reputations, our families, our finances and our future.

Every day we've got to put our war clothes on.

Every day we've got to smile when we're sad, pray when we want to cuss, hold our peace when we're lied on, walk worthy when temptation is all around us.

The writer of the Hebrews says that since we've established that we're just like the athletes in the Coliseum – and we've got a great cloud of witnesses – in heaven and on earth – those who have gone before us, those who watch us today – the writer is interested in you and I doing well in the Coliseum of life.

Before I go any further, I need to tell you to toughen up – because there are some people out there that don't want to see you succeed!

They ain't nothing but haters –

*And listen, all haters don't live in the house next door,
All haters don't shop at another store,
All haters don't work in another office,
And all haters don't go to another church!*

Sometimes the same people you shout with are the same people that run down your name, talk about you, cut your throat – while trying to look holy-holy;

They can't find their kids, but they talk about your kids;

They talk about your man, but they don't have a man;

They make suggestions about what you should do with your money and they are broke and busted and can't be trusted;

They have the audacity to watch you shout and while you're shouting they get on Facebook and talk about you, "there she goes again, church is boring, the sermon is long, the choir's too loud," but they have never raised a holy hand, never shouted for joy, never worshiped the Lord –

They are more concerned about their church jobs than they are about Jesus Christ!

The writer of the Hebrews wants YOU to succeed, but baby you've got to want to succeed yourself!

Stop running around here looking like you're Sad Sack and Woeful Wilma and Beat Up Betty and Jacked Up Jeff.

You've got to want to succeed for yourself.

I've decided that I'm going to keep on serving God – if my family doesn't want to serve Him,

I'm going to serve Him; if my Stewards don't want to serve Him,

I'm going to serve Him; if my Trustees don't want to want serve Him,

I'm going to serve Him!

Is there anybody here that wants to succeed?

If you want to succeed the Hebrew writer says you need to . . . GET NAKED!

Runners in the games back then did not run with Nike shoes. They did not have Reeboks or Converse or Under Armor – they ran naked.

They figured that the less stuff they had on, the less resistance they would face –

And therefore, in order to run well, you had to strip down to nothing!

The writer is not suggesting that we change our church and embrace a culture of nudism.

But what he is suggesting is that there are some things that are weighing us down – individually and corporately – that are so prevalent that we could be winners or even further down the road by now – but we've got some stuff in our lives that is weighing us down.

May I suggest a few things that may be weighing you down?

Pride

Envy

Jealousy

Hater

Hatefulness

Mr. Big Shot

Always after another man

Always complaining

Talk to Too Much

Talking about other Members

<i>Non-Supportive</i>	<i>Late for everything</i>
<i>Ego-maniac</i>	<i>Never dependable</i>
<i>Two-faced</i>	<i>Bitter</i>
<i>Anger</i>	<i>Sexually out of control / Freak</i>
<i>Alcohol</i>	<i>Always high</i>
<i>Weed</i>	<i>Talking about your Pastor</i>
<i>Gambling</i>	<i>Stealing</i>
<i>Nosiness</i>	<i>Lying</i>
<i>Stingy</i>	<i>Messy</i>
<i>Can't Encourage Nobody</i>	<i>Starting Trouble</i>

All of this JUNK is weighing you DOWN . . .

No wonder you can't praise God – you're weighted down . . .

No wonder you come to church late and want to leave early – you're weighted down!!!

What's interesting in this text is that the writer breaks it down and says it's the stuff that's weighing you down AND the sin in your life.

Which means that you're not only weighed down horizontally with other people, you're weighed down by your disobedience and transgressions against God.

Sin will weigh you down.

It's hard to worship God when you're out of pocket with Him.

It's hard to praise God when you've stepped out in disobedience to Him.

I've found out that even though I can't see Him, I still feel Him in my heart.

I know when I've let Him down.

I know when I have failed him.

The writer of the Hebrews says that it's not a dead end – I still have the ability to make peace with God.

*I still have the ability because God is a forgiving God.
God will take my sins and forget them by separating them as far as the east
is from the west.*

When I have my relationship right with God – I can praise Him freely!

When I have my relationship right with God – I can lift up my hands!

When I have my relationship right with God – I can shout for joy!

Because we have peace in our relationship!

*I don't know about you but that is my new you resolution –
I want to have peace with God, even if I have to put away some things!*

I want to have peace with God, even if I have to tell some people goodbye!

*I want to have peace with God, even if I have to sit in another seat in
church!*

*I want to have peace with God, even if I have to get rid of my old sinful
ways.*

*When I have peace with God – then the Lord opens doors for me!
When I have peace with God – then the Lord can use me in His service!
When I have peace with God – no weapon formed against me prosper!
When I have peace with God – the Devil can't stop me!*

I'm so glad that He's already done His part.

*One Friday at Calvary – He died with me on His mind!
He was buried with me on His mind!*

Early Sunday morning . . . He rose up, with me on His mind!

(CLOSE)