

# Voices: Hymns of the faith: 'Faith of our Fathers'

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*Faith of our fathers, living still  
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword,  
O how our hearts beat high with joy  
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!  
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!  
We will be true to thee till death!*

Many beloved songs that have survived the test of time are rich in theological truth and biblical principles. Some of these songs have amazing stories behind them.

The lyrics to the hymn "[Faith of our Fathers](#)" were written by Frederick William Faber in 1849. [Originally](#), it was a Catholic song but later was adapted for use in Protestant churches. In the United States, the hymnals tend to use a tune written by Henri Hemy.

"Faith of our Fathers" was written in remembrance of the martyrs of the faith. The composition originally was written in honor of Catherine of Alexander, a fourth-century woman put to death because of her faith.

As I thought about the lyrics to this hymn and the reason it was written, my mind immediately jumped to the book of Hebrews. The writer made the case that the people of God are justified by faith. In Hebrews 11:32-38, he gave several examples of people who lived their lives by faith and were justified. They ran the race faithfully.

The people named in Hebrews 11 are the witnesses of Hebrews 12:1-2. They lived their lives by faith, and they bear witness to the faithfulness of

God. Their race is over. Those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior are in the race now.

The Scripture writer made the case that living a life of faith requires the subtraction of anything holding back spiritual progress (Hebrews 12:1-2). According to Hebrews 12, there are two categories of things that can hold back spiritual development—hindrances and sin.

## **Hindrances**

The word translated “hindrances” comes from the Greek word “onkos,” which means “mass, weight, heaviness or bodily fat” (Logos Bible Software). This word is used only here in the New Testament.

Hindrances aren’t necessarily bad things or evil things, but they prevent the runner from running at maximum potential.

There are things in life that can hold the believer back in spiritual development. Though not bad things or evil, such things as a job, a hobby, entertainment, a relationship, personal debt or athletics have the potential to hold the believer back from his or her potential for the kingdom of God.

The following statement may expose hindrances in one’s life: I would like to \_\_\_\_\_, but I can’t because \_\_\_\_\_.

Those areas and things that hinder or prevent maximum potential in Christ need to be laid aside.

## **Sin**

The word translated “sin” comes from the Greek word “hamartia,” which means “wrongdoing.”

If you notice, the writer of Hebrews did not refer to sin in general. He referred to “the sin that so easily ensnares us.”

The word translated “ensnares” comes from the Greek word “euperistatos,” which means “something that impedes movement.”

Everyone is vulnerable to a particular sin that can cause them to stumble. All of us have “the sin,” the thing that might even be a predisposition but is wrong before God to do.

The following statement may reveal “the sin” that needs to be laid aside: \_\_\_\_\_ is hurting my ability to be a witness of Christ to those who know me.

Sin must be laid aside by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **Faithfulness**

We also need to remember, like those who came before us, life is a long-distance race—a marathon, not a sprint. If we are going to run a marathon, we must build up our endurance.

Giving up is not an option for a true believer. Christians don’t quit the race. The Scriptures often talk about perseverance and staying faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2, Luke 9:62, Matthew 24:13). A key marker of a true believer is faithfulness.

Jesus is the example of how the people of God should be running the race. He is the source of the Christian’s faith. Faith is placed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the perfecter—the completer—of a Christian’s faith.

# Joy

Then, for the joy set before him, Christ endured the suffering of dying on the cross for the sins of humanity. “The joy set before him” was knowing people would be brought into a right relationship with God through his sacrifice.

He despised the shame of the cross, meaning the shame of the cross was insignificant compared to the joy set before him. Having completed the faith, he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

## Our example

God has given us the example of Jesus and our forefathers to demonstrate a life well-lived. Just as a race is challenging, life also is not easy. It is hard to do what is right. It is hard to stand on biblical principles when it feels like everyone is against you.

May we be found faithful. May those who look back on our lives find us faithful to God. May the power of our life light the way. May the footprints we leave lead others to believe in the power of the gospel.

May we inspire our children and our children’s children to a life well lived in the service of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. May we be found faithful when Jesus comes.

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