

The challenge: **BUILD VISIBLE FAITH**

MATTHEW 5:1-12 (ESV)

*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

HEBREWS 12:1-4 (ESV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

How two MEN experienced suffering:

Man #1: STEPHEN

ACTS 7:54-60 (ESV)

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.⁵⁶ And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Man #2: DEMAS

COLOSSIANS 4:14 (ESV)

Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

PHILEMON 23-24 (ESV)

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

2 TIMOTHY 4:10 (ESV)

For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

Make two CHOICES in preparation for suffering:

1 PETER 4:12 (ESV)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

Choice #1: TREASURE Jesus.

The Reward of Heaven belongs to the Citizens of Heaven.

MATTHEW 6:19-20 (ESV)

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

Choice #2: SHARE my treasure.

Citizens of Heaven seeking to win Residents of Earth to Jesus.

MATTHEW 6:21 (ESV)

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”