



Samson was one of the Judges of Israel and a man of exceptional human strength (Judges 13-16). However, the source of his power was not in himself but in God.

Samson's defeat was the result of a very important principle: he lacked the power within to be able to counteract the pressure without.

Most of us create New Year resolutions but tend to see many of those well-intentioned goals drift away in time. We need the power of God *inside* to be able to counteract the pressures and distractions *outside*. (Psalm 127:1-2; 1 John 4:4)

HEBREWS 12:1-2

The Command — *Therefore* (refers to Hebrews 11), *since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses* (the pillars of faith in chapter 11), *let us lay aside* (put away) *every weight* (bending under the load), *and the sin which so easily ensnares us* (impedes our strength and speed),...

The Means — *...and let us run with endurance* (cheerfully patient) *the race that is set before us*, (attentively) *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith*,...

The Crown — *...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising* (belittling) *the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

1. In Hebrews 11 we have examples of people who believed God in difficult, challenging situations and overcame! They made God's purposes their main goal in life. *They were not distracted.*
 - Abraham's focus in life — Hebrews 11:9-10 *By faith he*

(Abraham) dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for (expected, anticipated) the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

- We tend to go in the direction of our focus. Paul's co-worker, Demas, loved the world and deserted him. (2 Timothy 4:9-10; see also Genesis 13:10-13)
3. They, the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, not only believed *in* God, they acted *on* that belief and were commended by God. True faith is active! (James 2:14-26)
 - Their faith did not all have the same results but they *never stopped believing!*
 4. They had a determined faith that focused on God and on His will, not on whether the outcome was necessarily in their favor.
 - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the furnace in Daniel 3:16-30 *...If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."*
 5. Make your faith active and intentional this year!
 - Most of us want to better ourselves in some way. The problem is that we attempt to change in our own strength. This usually ends in defeat because we may lack the power within to be able to counteract the enemy's pressure without. *But there is a better way!*
 - If we find out the changes that God wants to make in us and focus our faith *on those changes*, we will be assured of His power in the process.

Ephesians 5:15-17 *...Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* (1 John 5:14-15)