

Hebrews 12:1—Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

It is generally understood that this verse refers to those who have gone before. Those who have stood for the faith of God and have declared it fearlessly and many of whom have suffered for this faith. The 11th chapter of Hebrews gives a catalogue of many of these. The first verse of the 12th chapter includes those names in the 11th chapter and runs on to include all the heroes of the faith up to our own time. Of these witnesses who have come between those names in Hebrews 11 and our day, I would like to present two to you to-night for your special attention. The first of these is Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria in the fourth century. Athanasius faced many of the problems which we face today though perhaps not in as acute form. As a young man he saw the Arian movement sweeping across the church. To the outsiders this movement struck at the very heart of Christianity. It denied the essential deity of our Lord, while claiming to be orthodox in most other respects. To the unintelligent observer it seemed to be an argument of a mere difference of one letter and something that could well be laid aside and forgotten but Athanasius saw that it struck at the very heart of Christianity. Through his whole life unwaveringly he opposed this evil and refused to compromise with that which was contrary to the Word of God. Driven from his home, compelled to hide in the desert, wandering destitute and a fugitive he refused to surrender or to compromise with error. At times he seemed to be standing all alone against the whole world yet in the end his persistence and his faithfulness won out and the truth for which he stood triumphed in the Christian church. The courageous stand for truth which Athanasius maintained, his single eye which sought the approbation of God and counted all things human but lost that he might be true to the divine mission, his persistence in the face of such discouragements and opposition as would have