

Run the Race with Patience

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AM Service**

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Text:

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, 2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3: For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Introduction

The Bible compares the Christian life to a foot race.

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,

We are called to run a race. The word “race” in verse 1 is the word in the Greek “agona” from which we get the word “agonize”! That’s the Christian life. The Christian life is not a picnic. It is a life of endurance. It is not a sprint or a hundred-yard dash and it’s over. It is not a short-distance race moving at a full speed and it’s over. It is a marathon. It is a long-distance race requiring perseverance and endurance. The Christian life is a commitment to run with endurance to victory. It demands self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and self-denial. As with any footrace, it does not matter how fast you start, if you do not finish.

In sporting events only one athlete or one team can win. All the other competitors will return home having failed to achieve their goals. And although they may be some of the best athletes in the world many would consider them losers because there can be only one winner. However in the Christian life this is not the case. In the Christian life we can all be winners. We can all bring home the gold. What does it take to be a champion? What does it take to be a winner?

Today we will be looking at how we can finish this race well, even when we feel like giving up. We will be looking at three things everyone needs to do if they want to finish well and hear the Lord say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

I - Remember the Witnesses

If we are to finish well we are to remember the witnesses.

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,

Here is the encouragement to run. We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses that should encourage us to run the race with patience.

Hebrews chapter 12 starts with the word “wherefore” or “therefore”. The word “wherefore” takes us back to Chapter 11. Now what do you have in Chapter 11? This chapter is a whole list of the witnesses who ran the race with patience. The witnesses are the men and women of faith, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets.

The life and faith of these witnesses is saying that you and I can run the race with endurance and know that God will honor us in the end. We have to understand none of these men and women were perfect nor lived an easy life.

Hebrews 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34: Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35: Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38: (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39: And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Are you experiencing problem with your family that you are tempted to run away? Remember Joseph's problems in recorded in [Genesis 37](#)! Do you have responsibility is too big for you? Remember Moses responsibility to bring millions of Jews from Egypt to the Promised Land. ([Exodus 3](#)). Did somebody hurt you and you are tempted to retaliate? Remember how David handled Saul's attempts to killing him ([2 Samuel 16:5, 6, 7, 8ff](#)).

Steven Cole puts it this way,

“I would encourage you to study both the many interesting characters in the Bible and the great men and women who have run the race of faith over the course of church history. You’ll learn how they failed, so that you don’t have to make the same mistakes. And you’ll learn how they ran well, so that you can imitate their faith ([Hebrews 13:7](#)). Many of the battles they fought, whether on a personal level or in their ministries, you will have to fight, too. Knowing that a godly like Jonathan Edwards got voted out of his church, and understanding the reasons why, can be a great source of encouragement to a who is battling in a difficult church ministry. Realizing all of the problems that Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission went through can help you to hang in there when problems multiply. I sometimes think about the disappointments, suffering, and persecution that Adoniram Judson endured in Burma and think, “I can endure a few hardships in the ministry.” (Hebrews 12:1-3 Faith to Run the Christian Marathon)

Remember these faithful witnesses. Their faith and life should encourage us to run the race with patience.

On the basis of how they ran by faith in God; on the basis that they put their faith in God, believed God and went right through the crisis to victory, so should you run the race on the basis of the testimony of those witnesses.

II - Remove the Hindrances

Another thing we need to do if we are to finish well is to remove the hindrances.

[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,

There are many distractions in the Christian life which unless they are removed will hinder one's progress. And here we are told to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily beset us.

The runner who seeks to win loses as much weight as possible without hurting performance; wears clothing that is light and allows freedom of movement. No runner would actually run wearing the weights because they would slow him down. **Excess weight can be the difference between victory or defeat!**

Similarly, the Christian runner must get rid of everything that would be a hindrance to his winning the race. Anything that would hold us back must come off. We are to lay aside every kind of weight, any and every hindrance that would weigh us down. What are the things in your life that impede your running the race?

1. Weights

What then are the "weights" that we should remove so that we might win the race? They are anything and everything that hinders our spiritual progress. Some of these weights are not necessarily sinful and in fact some of these things may be "wholesome and good things". But if they hinder our progress, distract us, saps our energy, they have to come off.

Not all of our choices are between good and evil. Not all of our choices are between what is right and what is wrong. Paul talked about this in ...

[1 Corinthians 10:23](#) All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

There are things that are not sinful but they are not beneficial. There are things that are not sinful but they are not good for us. There are things that are innocent but they do not build up.

Many of our choices are between what is good and what is best. Those are the really tough choices. Sometimes we have to give up what is good in order to win. To become a world-class athlete one must realize that good isn't good enough. You need to be willing to lay aside even some things that may be considered "good" in order for you to become great.

To be a world-class Christian there are things we have to give up to win. There are things that you will have to say no to while everyone around you indulges in them. There are sacrifices that you will have to make and things that you will have to go without. **Choose what is great over what is good.**

2. Sin

Another thing that we need to lay aside if we are to make progress and really win is sin that easily besets us. Each one of us has their own weaknesses. Each one of us has a particular sin that so easily trips us up. Each one of us has a particular sin that so easily entangles us. But what is the sin that the writer of the Hebrews has in mind here?

The book of Hebrews stresses belief. The sin that easily besets us is unbelief.

Hebrews 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13: But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Unbelief is sin. Faith means active belief and trust in God's word. Unbelief is lack of faith and trust in God's sure word. There is nothing that hinders our growth and progress more than unbelief.

“Obviously all sin is a hindrance to Christian living, and the reference here may be to sin in general. But use of the definite article (the sin) seems to indicate a particular sin. And if there is one particular sin that hinders the race of faith it is unbelief, doubting God. Doubting and living in faith contradict each other. Unbelief entangles the Christian's feet so that he cannot run. It wraps itself around us so that we trip and stumble every time we try to move for the Lord, if we try at all. It easily entangles us. When we allow sin in our lives, especially unbelief, it is quite easy for Satan to keep us from running.” (MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press or Logos)

III - Reflect on Jesus

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3: For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4: Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

But the best help in the race of faith does not come from this cloud of witnesses. The writer of Hebrews said if we are going to run the Christian life with no distractions and not get off track, we must keep our eyes carefully focused on Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith. Jesus Christ is the ultimate and supreme example of one who ran the race of life with patience and endurance.

When we become weary and faint in our minds, reflect on the Lord Jesus Christ who endured the cross and despised the shame to save us. By frequently and steadfastly looking unto Jesus our faith would be strengthened, our love for Him would be enflamed, our service would be enhanced.

It is possible that some of the Jewish Christian readers had begun to take their eyes off their Messiah and to fix them instead on the hardships they were encountering for the sake of Christ.

Don't look at your fellow Christian stumbling along. Don't look at any great Christian that you admire. He might take you in a different path. Note well that the eyes are very important in any athletic endeavor. Looking unto Jesus - that is our occupation!

*Keep your eyes on the Lord
He never takes His eyes off you.*

Closing Thoughts

What are weights in your life?

Not everyone's weights are the same. What may be a weight for you may not be a weight for someone else. So be careful comparing.

What are you putting ahead of God in your life? What is consuming so much of your time that you don't have time for church or for serving in ministry? What is taking up so much of your budget that you don't have enough left to offer your tithe? You have to give up to go up.

How is your faith in God and in His word?

It is impossible to have faith unless we first hear God's word.

[Romans 10:17](#) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Remember the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11 is saying to us *"God can be trusted! Put your faith in His Word and keep running the race!"*

"Looking unto Jesus." Who do you look to? Who do you watch? Jesus Christ. When you run the race, keep your eyes on Christ. The obstructions are thrown away, the weights are thrown off, the race is under way, we have the encouragement of all those who ran the race in the past and went right on through trial and crisis after crisis and there we are running this race and we are looking at a perfect example of faith and that's Jesus Christ.

AMEN!