"RUN THE RACE!"

Hebrews 12:1-2



INTRODUCTION:

"let us <u>run</u> with patience the race that is set before us!"

3 marks of a long-distance champion:

I. His Heart is <u>ENCOURAGED</u> by past veteran runners (v. 1a)
(Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us… let us run with endurance the race that is set before us)

II. His Body is <u>UNHINDERED</u> by <u>EXCESS WEIGHT</u> (v. 1b)
(let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us…)



III. His Eyes are <u>FOCUSED</u> on <u>ONE GOAL</u> (v. 2)
(…fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,
who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,
and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.)

"RUN THE RACE!"

Hebrews 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION:

Title: Hebrews; An Exhortation to Hebrew (or Jewish) Christians

Purpose: To encourage Jewish Christians to be <u>secure</u> in their relationship to God through the person and work of Jesus Christ

Hebrews is a book of admonishment so as to encourage the Jewish believers not to revert back into Judaism, but to rest confidently in Jesus Christ.

Theme: The Supremacy (preeminence, superiority) of Jesus Christ. Christ is *"better"* than anyone or anything, and His work did that which no man or sacrifice could accomplish; namely: permanently remove the penalty and power of sin.

A key word is *"better"* (occurs 13 times).

Christ is superior to prophets (1:1-4), angels (1:5-2:18), Moses (3:1-6), the Old Testament priesthood (5:1-10:39).

Christ has provided a better *"hope"* (7:19), a better *"testament"* (covenant) (7:22; 8:6), a better *"sacrifice"* (9:23).

Hebrews 1
4 having become as much **better** than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews 6
9 But, beloved, we are convinced of **better** things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

Hebrews 7
19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a **better** hope, through which we draw near to God.

22 so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a **better** covenant.

Hebrews 8
6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a **better** covenant, which has been enacted on **better** promises.

Hebrews 9
[23] Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with **better** sacrifices than these.

Hebrews 10
[34] For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a **better** possession and a lasting one.

Hebrews 11
[4] By faith Abel offered to God a **better** sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

[16] But as it is, they desire a **better** country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

[35] Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a **better** resurrection;

[40] because God had provided something **better** for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

Hebrews 12
[24] and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks **better** than the blood of Abel.

God uses several word pictures to describe the Christian life.

He uses the analogy of warfare (II Tim. 2:3; Eph. 6:11)
He uses the analogy of boxing (I Cor. 9:26)
And now--
He uses the analogy of running (cp. I Cor. 9:24; Gal. 5:7; Phil. 2:16)

V. 1

"Let us run" - A cohortative subjunctive functioning as a rousing, inspiring, encouraging imperative.

"Let us run" - Every one of us must run (including the writer of Hebrews).

***"Patience"* =** Endurance; the ability to remain under pressure without quitting the race, or violating the rules (II Tim. 2:5).

"The Christian race is a marathon, a long-distance race, not a [quick] spring" (MacArthur, p. 373).

Today, we have too many "short-spurt" Christians (who start out fast, but as the race goes on, they slow down, give up, or just collapse), but the Lord wants those who will "make the distance."

"The race" - (*agon* = we derive our English "agony") A race requiring strenuous conflict and "fight to the finish." A race where (as it were) our spiritual muscles contract and stretch, our heart fervently pumps with zeal and enthusiasm, and our running is not hindered by anything that we deliberately allow in our lives that we know would be an obstacle.

"Set before us" - God has a specific race already placed in front of each one of us (Christians) and it is up to us to run it. God has a particular track and race previously marked out for you to run.

He has a "<u>will</u>" for your life. Pursue it! He has a <u>plan</u> for your life. Fulfill it!

Gaining salvation is not a race (self-effort), but the Christian life is! Being saved is a prerequisite to taking part in this race.

In verses 1 and 2, God gives us 3 participles which give us the secret to running and winning the race the Lord has for you. (*"seeing* [having] . . . *laying aside* . . . *looking*" (v. 2). . .)

This year, *"let us <u>run</u> with patience the race that is set before us!"

3 marks of a long-distance champion:

I. His Heart is <u>ENCOURAGED</u> by past veteran runners (v. 1a)

"We are all creatures of motivation. We need a reason for doing things, and we need encouragement while we are doing them." (MacArthur, p. 374).

God's incentive is this: "Others have done it, so you can too!" (they were of like passions [Ja. 5:17], not "super saints").

"The faithful Christian is <u>not alone</u>. Although he may feel destitute, he is assured of the continuing presence of God Himself. . . he is also a part of an army of faithful servants of God." (Pfeiffer, p. 106).

"Wherefore" - In light of chapter 11, God now draws an emphatic conclusion. Therefore, keeping in mind the faithful servants of God just mentioned. . . ***"Let us run."***

"Compassed about" - Surrounded, spread around, encircled.

The picture is of a stadium and an arena or track. Surrounding the race track are a host of people seated in the stands, who are veteran runners and serve as an encouragement to those who are running the race. "The competitors feel the crowd towering about above them" (Wescott, cited by Reinecker, p. 713).

A ***"witness"*** was one who could testify and give an honest testimony to confirm or attest to the truth of a matter.

Who is this ***"great cloud of witnesses"*** - They are the heroes of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 and others who trusted the promises of God and "witnessed" His faithfulness (despite the severe trials they faced).

Do the saints in Heaven know what is going on on earth? (Rev. 6:10 seems to indicate so)

Whether or not the saints in Heaven are watching us is not the point (note: they are called *"witnesses"* not "spectators"). The point is that their faithful examples as mentioned in Scripture (Heb. 11 specifically) should serve as a great incentive for us to run like they did!

The point here is not that they are looking at us, but that we are looking at them!

We see that they did it, and that motivates us.

Rom. 15:4 - *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."*

"If you are having problems with your family, read about Joseph. If you think your job is too big for you, study the life of Moses. If you are tempted to retaliate, see how David handled this problem" (Wiersbe, p. 135). If your whole life is one big trial, read about the patience of Job.

II. His Body is UNHINDERED by EXCESS WEIGHT (v. 1b)

"The will to win is worth nothing without the will to prepare"

"Lay aside" - to put off and remove away. The picture is of stripping off and throwing away -- Like a man would take off the long, baggy pants and wear short pants to play basketball or run a race.

"Weight" = bulk, mass, or encumbrance. Anything that would weigh you down and thus slow you down.

"An athlete would strip for action both by the removal of superfluous flesh through rigorous training and by the removal of all his clothes" (Hughes, cited by Reinecker, p. 713).

"Every weight" - EX: ankle weights, the heavy bat collar, the bar bells.

A "weight" is not necessarily a "sin" but it is a hindrance to your being all you can be for Christ.

A weight is anything that restricts or comes in the way of your fulfilling God's will for your life.

"Weights" can be those questionable areas that may be okay for people to have, but they are not "expedient" for the child of God.

This weight is often "something perfectly innocent and harmless. But it weighs us down, diverts out attention, saps our energy, dampens our enthusiasm for the things of God" (MacArthur, p. 376).

These weights "might even be 'good things' in the eyes of others. A winning athlete does not choose between the good and the bad; he chooses between the better and the best" (Wiersbe, p. 135).

A weight can be an obsession with:

1. Sports
2. TV
3. Food
4. Laziness
5. A yard; a house
6. A job
7. A girlfriend or boyfriend
8. A hobby

9. Any worldly pleasure
10. An area of Christian liberty that does not edify (I Cor. 10:23)
11. Books

"Every" - not just the ones we don't mind discarding, but any and every thing that ensnares us! Everything that robs us of precious time, energy, and resources that could be used for God's glory and the Gospel ministry.

For the Hebrew Christians, the weights were perhaps some of the excess baggage of religious ways and legalism of Judaism (cp. Heb. 6:1-2). Like a "ball and chain," such religious ritual and regiment hindered them (cp. Gal. 3:1-3; 4:9).

"The sin" - There is a specific or particular sin (usually there is only one major area of weakness that trips you up).

"The sin" - An area of missing God's mark or standard for our lives.

This "sin" is any lack of conformity to the moral law of God either in act or attitude.

"Easily beset" - *euperistatos* (*eu* = good, well; *peri* = around; *statos* = standing).

This word describes a sin which seems to be always hanging around; one we like to give in to; one that seems so easy to give in to because of its proximity and appeal to either the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life (I Jn. 2:16).

What is *"the sin"* which hinders your race (growth, service, devotion)?

Is it unbelief (note context urging *"faith"*)? Lust (a perversion or covetousness)? Pride? Unforgiveness? Some substance abuse (alcohol)? Materialism? Selfishness, etc.?

III. His Eyes are <u>FOCUSED</u> on <u>ONE GOAL</u> (v. 2)

In running. . . "nothing will thrown off your stride or slow you down like looking at your feet or the runner coming up from behind or the crowds in the stands" (MacARthur, p. 377).

"Looking" - To look away from all distractions so as to keep one's eyes focused on the goal.

"Unto Jesus" - Keep your eyes on Him!

Paul's goal was singular as he ran the race. *"For to me to live is Christ"* (Phil. 1:21).

His focus was singular. he said: *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 3:13-14)

The Author and Finisher
The Architect and Builder
The Originator and Creator
The Beginner and the Ender
The Designer and the Doer
The Pioneer and Perfecter
. . . Christ initiated the work for our salvation and completely finished the work of our salvation.

"It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30).

It is totally presumptuous for man to plan his salvation (Prov. 14:12; 16:25) and think he can do enough to earn it by himself (Ti. 3:5; Eph. 2:8).

"Our faith" - Our faith or beliefs is not our idea; it was Christ's. What Christians believe -- Christ authored it and finished it.

"Our faith" is summarized by Paul in I Cor. 15:3-4.

"For" - for the sake of; because of. One day the "shame" of the cross will be replaced with the "joy" of what it accomplished.

"The joy" - this is what motivated Christ to put up with the humiliating shame of Golgotha. It was the joy of fulfilling His own plan; doing the will of the Father; and making payment to acquire a Bride, that gave Him endurance to the finish line.

That which motivates you ought to be to please your Heavenly Father, to fulfill His plan and hear His *"Well done thou good and faithful servant"* (Mt. 25:21).

As Christ *"ran"* the course His Father had for Him,t he focus that allowed Him to drink the bitter cup of suffering and torment (Mt. 26:39) was the *"joy"* of acquiring a Bride by His bloody death (Eph. 5:25; I Pet. 1:19).

Paul spoke of his converts as his "*joy and crown"* (Phil. 4:1; cp. I Th. 2:19).

"Endured" - the same word translated *"patience"* (v. 1)

"The cross" - He became a curse for us on Calvary's cross (Gal. 3:13).

"Set down" - Christ is pictured as seated because His work of salvation is completed! It is done! It is finished! His mission is accomplished!

"The right hand" -
the place of power (Exod. 15:6, 23; Ps. 89:13, 118:16; Is. 48:13)
the place of pleasures (Ps. 16:11)

Christ serves as the ultimate model so that we don't quit our race due to weariness and opposition (v. 3).

CONCLUSION: