

RUNNING THE RACE

Int.

1. Aim: To explain what is involved in running the Christian race.
2. Heb. 12:1-2 "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, 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."
 - a. The Christian is to run the race that God has set before him.
 - b. Many professing to be Christians are not really running the Christian race. They are not even crawling, much less walking. They are not moving forward to their Christian goals.
3. God reminds us that we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."
 - a. This "cloud of witnesses" refers to those mentioned in the previous chapter. This heavenly host testifies to the race that they have run.
 - b. The list includes: Abel - Enoch - Noah - Abraham - Isaac - Joseph - Moses - Rahab
 - c. Time would not allow discussing Gideon - Barak - Samson - Jephthah - David - Samuel and the prophets. Heb. 11:1-34
 - d. These testify to a race of faith that was faithfully and diligently run. They were successful in running their race.
4. What can we learn from them that will help us run the race?

Discussion**I. LAYING ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT THAT EASILY BESETS US ** Heb. 12:1,2**

A. NOTE THE COMPARISON TO RUNNING...

1. The runner who seeks to win:
 - a. Loses as much weight as possible without hurting performance
 - b. Wears clothing that is light and allows freedom of movement
2. Excess weight, bulky clothing, heavy shoes, can be the difference between victory or defeat!
3. We as Christians must lay some things aside

B. Too many Christians have too many irons in the fire. Because of useless involvements, they cannot run the race that is set before them.

C. "For centuries before the advent of the electric iron, women ironed with heavy flat irons, which they heated by placing over, or in, glowing coals. The irons retained heat for a very short time; so to accomplish the chore of ironing quickly, women would work with three or four irons. While one was being used, others were getting hot. Sometimes women would use five or six irons to speed up the job. This would usually result in some of the irons becoming too hot and scorching the clothes being ironed. When a person saw scorched clothing, he might say that the woman had 'too many irons in the fire.' This expression has remained with us to indicate any person who has too much going on in too many different areas." We can't do it all !!!

- D. The runners in the Greek races were lightly clad so they could run with no encumbrances. All "weights" which hinder the Christian in his race should be laid aside. We must remove anything that slows down our spiritual progress.
- E. Here are some of the weights (sins) which so easily beset us:
1. Weight of procrastination.
 - a. It is a heavy burden for anyone to carry, that is the burden of "wait until tomorrow". Often it never get's done.
 - b. Procrastination is an evil produced in the factory of Satan.
 - c. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, device , nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." - Eccl. 9:10
 2. Weight of Social climbing instead of spiritual climbing
 - a. The best friends you can have will be those in the church.
 - b. Are you gathering for yourself friends from among the "friends of Jesus?"
 - c. 1 Cor. 15:33 asv "Be not deceived: evil companionships corrupt good morals."
 3. Weight of dishonesty
 - a. "...Provide things honest in the sight of all men." Rm. 12:17
 - b. 2 Cor. 8:21 "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."
 - c. Gambling is a besetting sin that involves dishonesty. Lottery is gambling
 - d. It is habit forming or addictive. Leads to many evils!!

4. Weight of the love of Money

- a. I Tim. 6:10 asv "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
- b. It is the love of Money that causes problem.
- c. Mammon [riches] - Mt. 6:24 -- Two masters God / Mammon - wealth, money
 - (1) God will accept none of our service unless he has it all.
 - (2) Partial service is unacceptable to God.
 - (3) Satan is willing to accept a part because he knows that by getting only a part he really gets all.
 - (4) Jesus said "No man can serve two masters."
- d. Money will be the besetting sin for many Christians.

5. Weight of entertainment craze

- a. Some people find more fulfillment in entertainment than worship
- b. Paul warns about those who would be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." II Tim. 3:4
- c. What a burden or weight to carry - the love of pleasures more than God

F. The Verse calls one particular sin "The sin which doth so easily beset us." It is the sin that trips us. We must lay it aside.

II. THE CHRISTIAN RACE REQUIRES PATIENCE NKJV "Endurance"

A. Meaning of the word Patience

1. Patience - persistence, stamina, endurance
2. NKJV - translates it Endurance
3. Endurance means = perseverance, stability, durability
4. When we use the word patience remember he is talking about endurance, stability, perseverance

B. Patience equips the runner with the things necessary to win a race

1. **It provides him with regularity**

- a. He will run every day of every month of every year.
- b. Patience equips him to not worry about whether the race ends today or ten years from now.
- c. He is content to be regular in the race that he runs.

2. **Patience provides strength.**

- a. There is the possibility for you to "be wearied and faint in your minds." - Heb. 12:3
- b. The church at Ephesus was commended because they had patience. - Rev. 2:3
- c. They had labored and had not fainted.
- d. Patience will provide strength.

C. Patience helps us keep our eyes on Jesus.

1. We are commanded "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"
2. To whom do we look ? ourselves, families, or Jesus
3. "Formula For Spiritual Success"
 - (1) If you want to be distressed -- look within
 - (2) If you want to be defeated -- look back
 - (3) If you want to be distracted -- look around
 - (4) If you want to be dismayed -- look ahead
 - (5) If you want to be delivered -- look up - Col. 3:1-2
4. Jesus is the creator of our faith and in patience He will be the finisher of it. He will make it complete, entire, lacking in nothing.
5. How often in the day do we look unto Jesus?
 - a. He should be on our minds in the earliest moments of the day.
 - b. Jesus should be strongly in our minds as day fades into night.
6. We should look unto Jesus more than we do unto old age, or retirement.
7. The strength of Jesus at the end of our way should be stronger than the fear of feebleness of old age.
8. Do you look unto Jesus? If not, to whom are you looking?

III. THE CHRISTIAN RACE REQUIRES SPEED

- A. The term that God uses to describe the race is the word run,
1. It is not walk, not crawl, not stand still, not watch,
 2. It is not "Excuse me for oversleeping,"
 3. It is not "Let me shoot the gun to start the race and you do the running"
 4. But he uses the word "run" and it applies to all who have been born again.

- B. Run as if your life depended upon it, for your spiritual life does.
1. It is common for a Christian to say "I do not feel that I am getting anywhere with my Christian life."
 2. How can you if you do not run the race that is set before you?
- C. Isa. 40:31 describes the strength and pace that is set for the Godly man. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."
1. In the historical context, when the news would reach the faithful that they were allowed to return to the land (Ezra 1:1-4), they would soar to heights of joy.
 2. The person who trusts God has the ability to soar over the problems of this world.
 3. As long as we are depending upon our own limited knowledge and resources we will be frantically flapping just to stay on top of things.
 4. Instead of having the feeling that I must scrape, scrap and struggle, Christians having the blessing of soaring.
 5. I can soar because I know that God is behind the scenes working and that He has the power to turn any hardship or potential disaster into success (Romans 8:28).
- D. Feet that are not running in the paths of righteousness will be soon found to be running to mischief
1. Pro. 1:16 "For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood."
 2. Pro. 6:18 "These six things doth the Lord hate: ...feet that be swift in running to mischief..."

E. How do you describe the speed of your Christian Race? If it is not running, then you need to make some improvements.

CONCLUSION

1. We are all going somewhere.
 - a. If we are running in the Christian race, we are heaven bound.
 - b. If we are standing still, we are headed for hell.
2. These terms are used to describe Christians who are not running the race..
 - a. Turn away - 2 Tim. 4:4
 - b. Overthrow - 2 Tim. 2:18
 - c. Made shipwreck - 1 Tim. 1:19
 - d. Overtaken in a fault - Gal. 6:1
3. When a Christian has shed his weights and is running the race, these terms will not describe him.
4. Some have described our generation as in "the rat race".
 - a. There are so many things going on and nothing happening.
 - b. People are running here and there and not getting anywhere.
 - c. The only real race that we must run is that race that leads into the streets paved with Gold.
 - d. This is the right race for all of us.
5. "Running The Race Of Faith" requires both negative and positive elements
 - a. Negatively, we must lay aside things which would hinder us
 - b. Positively, we must keep our focus on Jesus who has made our salvation possible

6. In both cases, the Word of God (the Bible) is crucial...
 - a. For in it we learn what sort of things we must lay aside
 - b. In it we learn about our Lord, what He endured, how His example should inspire us.

Sermon idea from C. Myron Keith

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