

Jesus And the Better Race - Hebrews 12:1-4

Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Have you ever run so hard your side began to ache and you thought your lungs would explode? Maybe it was running a race, or maybe during a conditioning workout getting ready for a competition. How did you keep going? Where did you find the encouragement to complete the race or the workout?

The author of Hebrews begins chapter 12 by letting us know we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses as we run the lifelong race of the Christian life. The race that has been "set before us." The word "witnesses" refers to those champions of faith listed in chapter 11. In the traditional or legal sense of the word "witness", we are reminded that their faithful words and actions provide a tremendous testimony about God's faithfulness. They acted on faith in God's promise of restoration and redemption, even though they would never see (in their earthly life) the ultimate object of their faith, Jesus Christ! But many biblical scholars believe the word "witnesses" as used here in verse 1 has a dual meaning. The image of us being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses suggests the setting of a stadium filled with spectators watching an athletic event. And that the Hall of Faith champions are cheering us on, watching us run the race that they themselves ran in years gone by. And this race is not a sprint. It is more like a lifelong marathon relay race.

So how should we run this race? This passage gives us three keys to running the race of the victorious Christian life. The first key? To run freely. If you have ever watched the Olympics, I'm sure you have noticed when the athletes warm up before their race, they are wearing hoodies and sweatpants. But when the race is about to start, they strip down to the lightest, least restrictive clothing like shorts and tank tops. This is what the author is referring to when he says we should "lay aside every weight and sin". We should run free from things that would weigh us down. Sometimes we let sin weigh us down and inhibit our running. Sometimes though, we let other things hinder our Christian life even though they may not be sinful in and of themselves. The first key is to cast those things aside and run freely.

Second, we must run with our focus on Jesus. We spend so much time in today's culture focusing on ourselves. Have you ever tried to run a race while looking at your own feet? Please don't try because you will end up running into something and not finishing the race. It is notable that while the author spent so much time in chapter 11 telling us about the Hall of Faith, when it comes to running our own race of the Christian life, he tells us to focus on Jesus! The Hall of Faith can provide encouragement, and they are cheering us on, but to run this race we must focus on Jesus.

And finally, we are to run with faithful endurance. The examples from chapter 11 should be an encouragement for our endurance. Noah worked on the ark for years before the promised rain started. Abraham and Sarah were well beyond their child-bearing years before Isaac was born. But when we focus on Jesus, He is the greatest encouragement of all for He endured the cross! And as far as witnesses go... Jesus is the greatest witness in this passage! It will be His witness to His father one day on our behalf... that insures our eternal life! He is the founder and perfecter of our faith! In this great race set before us, He has run the first leg and the last leg of this marathon relay race!

Friends, the great news of the gospel is the that the outcome of your race does not depend on your performance! To win this race you only have to keep running! Jesus has secured the victory! Praise God, the outcome has been determined!

So when life knocks you down... get up and keep running! Keep running! Keep running!

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Genesis 30	Genesis 31	Genesis 32	Genesis 33	Genesis 34	Genesis 35	Genesis 36

Reading from this past week's sermon: Hebrews 12:1-4

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Hebrews 12:5-11

Family Worship

Song - *Holy Forever*

<https://youtu.be/0O7HHH9yziU?si=-wMkUSXBnUf1o-mA>

Gospel Project

Unit: God is Gracious

Story: The First Judges

Big Picture Question: What is repentance?

Answer: Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Scripture: Judges 3

New City Catechism

Question 15: Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?

Answer: That we may know the holy nature of God, and the sinful nature of our hearts; and thus our need of a Savior.

Verse: Romans 3:20

Hebrews 12:1-4

- What is weighing you down in your race to live the Christian life?
- Where is your focus? How can you do a better job of focusing on Jesus?
- How is your endurance? What can you do to keep running when life knocks you down?

Prayer

*Pray that we would run the race before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.

*Pray that we would see Easter as a great opportunity to share Jesus with others and invite them to church. As you pray, think of people you can invite to Easter Sunday.