

# **RUNNING THE RACE**

## **TEXT: HEBREWS 12:1-3**

### **Introduction:**

1. The New Testament often compares the Christian life to a race (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 5:7; Phil. 2:16; II Tim. 2:5; I Peter 4:4).
2. Here in Hebrews 12:1, we are told that a great a cloud of witnesses” is up in heaven watching us run the race (cf. 11:4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 20, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31, 32).
3. These witnesses are not merely spectators. These are believers who have already successfully ran their race and they are now up in the heavenly grandstands watching the race down here on earth.
4. They are crowned contestants who have honored seats among spectators (AT Pierson). They have successfully finished their race and they have triumphed.
5. There are two words found often in the book of Hebrews let us.”
  - “ Let us therefore fear (4:1).
  - “ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest (4:11).
  - “ let us hold fast our profession (4:14).
  - “ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace (4:16).
  - “ let us go on unto perfection (6:1).
  - “ Let us draw near with a true heart (10:22).
  - “ Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (10:23).
  - “ Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works (10:24).
  - “ Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us (12:1a).
  - “ Let us run with patience the race that is set before us (12:1b).
  - “ Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (12:28).
  - “ Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach (13:13).
  - “ Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually (13:15).

**I. LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT**

**II. LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE**

**III. LET US LOOK UNTO JESUS**

## **I. LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT (12:1).**

1. There is a distinction between a weight and sin. Some things may not necessarily be sinful, but if they are slowing you down spiritually it would be wise to lay them aside.
2. To effectively run a race, all weighty encumbrances must be laid aside. A runner (especially a long distance runner, and we are in a long distance race) would not run with a heavy backpack.
3. What are these weights? It may be some habit, or attitude of the heart that impedes spiritual growth, hinders prayer and Bible reading, etc.
4. For example, there are many devices and inventions in our modern day and age that hinder Christians from serving God distractions like the radio, television, the Internet, the telephone, etc.
5. These things may not in themselves be sinful (and sometimes they can be very helpful), but if they are hindering you from growing spiritually they must be put aside (Heb. 12:1).
6. I heard a preacher say he used to listen often to talk radio while driving in his car. Talk radio can be very informative and entertaining. However, most of these talk show hosts are not saved, and some of them are very worldly. Some are very angry.
7. Proverbs 22:24 says, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go."
8. Proverbs 29:22 says, "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression."
9. This preacher felt convicted about the worldliness of talk radio and decided that while driving in his car it would be far better to listen to preaching, good Christian music, the Bible on CD or MP3, etc.
10. This preacher wisely laid aside every weight (Heb. 12:1). We need to give this some serious consideration. Some weights can be good things love of home and family, love of country, a good job, etc. But these legitimate things can become weights if they slow us down in the race God has set before us.
11. Furthermore, all known sin must be dealt with. Repentance is essential. Our Lord said to the impotent man by the pool in Jerusalem, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." (John 5:14).
12. Our Lord told the woman caught in adultery, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more (John 8:11).
13. First John 2:1 says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

14. The Bible is very clear that Christians must make a clean break from all known sins. In fact, the Bible says we are dead to sin (Romans 6:2).
15. I have conducted many funerals over the years. I have never seen anyone want to jump into the casket with the deceased. We understand that death means separation. “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7).
16. Romans 6:11 says, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.””
17. Reckon here means to believe what the Bible says. The Bible says we are dead to sin. Believe it. Consider it a fact. Whenever a Christian says, ”I can’t help myself, he is calling God a liar because God says he is dead to sin.”
18. In fact, that is the sin which doth so easily beset us (Heb. 12:1).
19. Bible teachers say the definite article the sin which doth so easily beset us indicates that the Word of God is speaking about one particular sin, one terrible sin the sin of unbelief.
20. The sin of unbelief is the constantly besetting sin. Hebrews 12 is a continuation of Hebrews 11, which is all about faith (cf. 11:1).
21. Psalm 78:41 says, “Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.””
22. Are you guilty of limiting God by your unbelief?
23. Our Lord said that when the Comforter would come, He would “ reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me (John 16:8, 9).
24. It is not just sinners that are guilty of this terrible sin of unbelief. In Matthew 17:20, our Lord rebuked His apostles because of their unbelief.
25. In Mark 16:14, we read that our Lord appeared unto the apostles and upbraided them because of their unbelief and hardness of heart.”

## **II. LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE (12:1b)**

1. We have need of patience; this is no 60-yard dash. It is a long distance race we cannot even see the finish line up ahead.
2. There are many unexpected twists and turns and obstacles to overcome in this race.
3. The apostle Paul referred to his race as a course, and he was determined to stay the course. He said in Acts 20:24, But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.”
4. And he did finish his course with joy. Right before he was executed, he wrote to his good friend Timothy, I have fought a good fight, I have finished

- my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:7, 8).
5. We have need of patience (Heb. 10:36). Notice, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God."..."
  6. Each and every Christian should desire God's perfect will for their life. And there are many things in life which will have to be set aside if we would realize God's will for us.
  7. And Christians should not be satisfied with anything less than the perfect will of God.

### III. LET US LOOK UNTO JESUS (12:2).

1. We are told that the Greek word translated here as looking literally means, looking away from everything else and looking at that which fills the heart."
2. In other words, Looking away from this world and all it has to offer, and looking unto Jesus (12:2).
3. The great a cloud of witnesses (12:1) is important. The beautiful crown will be glorious. But far more important is we are looking unto Jesus.

*Oh, what glory awaits me in heaven's bright city,  
 When I get there such sights I'll behold!  
 A million scenes of rare beauty will demand that I view them,  
 Still Jesus will outshine them all!  
 Mansions will glisten on the hills of glory.  
 Happy reunions on streets of gold.  
 Angel choirs singing glad praises forever  
 But Jesus will outshine them all. – Gordon Jensen*

4. Author (12:2) means leader. The same Greek word is translated captain in Hebrews 2:10, where our Lord is called the captain of our salvation."
5. Our Lord has been down this course, and He knows how we are to run it. Our job is to follow Him closely. He knows where the obstacles are, and He will guide our steps if we let Him.
6. Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame (12:2). Our Lord's course was far more difficult than any other, yet He endured to the end for you and for me (12:2, 3).
7. Many a runner, and many an athlete, and many a fighter has been greatly encouraged to press on because some dear loved one was up in the stands watching.

8. Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is up in heaven watching you and me. Hebrews 12:3 says, "For consider him..."
9. Consider Him when you feel like quitting, and don't quit.
10. Consider Him when you are tired or discouraged or impatient or lonely or frightened. Consider Him (12:3).

**CONCLUSION:**

1. We are told to lay aside any weights that would slow us down or hold us back in our race. Sometimes there are certain things we refuse to give it up. In fact, some Christians steadfastly resist any efforts to get moving in their race.
2. In that case, God often has to bring pressure upon us to help us get rid of cumbersome weights and besetting sins (cf. 12:5-11).

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