

Hebrews 12:1-3

Intro: Good teachers use figures of speech as an effective tool for teaching. They use everyday things, events, or practices to help their students understand that which is being taught. For example, Paul compared the Christian life to warfare, 2 Tim 2:3; Eph 6:11. He compared it to boxing in 1Co 9:26; 2 Tim 4:7. He often referred to himself as a slave, Ro 1:1; Phil 1:1; Tit 1:1. Jesus referred to His followers as lights and salt in the world, Mt 5:13-16. Peter refers to Christians as babes and living stones in 1 Pet 2:2, 5. Paul was fond of sports and often related the Christian life to a race, 1 Co 9:24; Gal 5:7, Phil 2:16. The writer of Hebrews uses the race also in our passage.

XXXIII. Run for Your Life - vs 1-3

A. The Event- vs 1

1. Key Phrase - and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

a. let us – the author often identifies himself with the group whether or not they are believers

i. in Heb 4:1, 14, 16, unbelievers are being addressed

ii. Similarly in 6:1, they are being encouraged to go on to the maturity of salvation

iii. In 10:23-24, he references both believers and unbelievers

b. in 12:1, the truths could apply to both

i. for the professed believer - the race starts with salvation of which the writer is calling them

ii. for the believer - they are already running the race

c. If you are not a Christian, get in the race; if you are, run the race with endurance, don't give up!

i. some in the church are not in the race

ii. Others could hardly be described as running the race

- some are jogging

- others are walking slowly

- some are sitting down

d. race - *agōn* - a place of assembly (as if led), i.e. (by implication) a contest (held there); figuratively, an effort or anxiety:—conflict, contention, fight, race.

i. where we get the word agony

ii. A race is not a passing luxury,

- it is grueling, agonizing,

- it requires self discipline, determination, and perseverance

iii. Amos 6:1 Woe to you [who are] at ease in Zion,

e. endurance - *hypomonē* - cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy, enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting).

i. steady determination to keep going

ii. Even when everything in you wants to quit

f. the race that is set before us,

i. God is the one who is sovereign over every detail of what enters one's life, even the pitfalls that the enemy of our soul would put in front of us

ii. The Hebrews had started well - Heb 2:4

iii. Under persecution, the new began to wear off, they began to lose their enthusiasm and confidence

2. A regular problem even in Paul's day

a. Prove yourselves

- i. Phil 2:15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,
- ii. 1 Co 9:24-25 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain [it]. And everyone who competes [for the prize] is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a perishable crown, but we [for] an imperishable [crown].
- b. in a race with no desire to win
 - i. God has already put within us the desire to please Him
 - ii. Christ laid the foundation for desire by teaching about rewards
 - iii. The Christian life is different from competition
 - we are not competing against other Christians
 - not a race of works, outdoing others
 - a race run by faith, believing what God said against that which Satan says as he tries to trip us up using the world system against our own sinfulness
 - our strength is not in ourselves, but from the Holy Spirit - Ro 8:2

B. The Encouragement to Run - vs 1a

- 1. We all need motivation
 - a. one of the greatest motivations for Jews would have been all the great believers of the past, their heroes
 - b. a cloud of witnesses - all those faithful saints of Chapter 11
 - c. we are to run the race of faith like they did;
 - d. it can be done if you run like they did
- 2. we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
 - a. not people in heaven watching us and rooting us on
 - b. they are witnesses to God, not of us
 - c. they are examples, not onlookers
- 3. The God who was their God, is our God
 - a. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever
 - b. He has not weakened, or lost interest in His people, nor lessened His love and care for them
 - c. We can run as they did

C. The Encumbrances that Hinder Us - vs 1b-c

- 1. greatest problem for runners is weight
 - a. weight - *ónkos* - a mass (as bending or bulging by its load), i.e. burden (hindrance):—weight.
 - i. can be something innocent, not necessarily bad in itself
 - weight limit in sports
 - clothing
 - ii. Slows down or diverts attention, saps energy, dampens enthusiasm for the things of God
 - iii. The problem is not the thing, it is what it does to us
 - keeps us from running well
 - keeps us from pleasing God
- 2. In context, the weight spoken of is probably Judaistic legalism, hanging onto the old religious ways;
 - a. the same things Paul dealt with in Galatians
 - i. Gal 2:20-21 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by

faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness [comes] through the law, then Christ died in vain."

ii. Gal 3:1-3 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

iii. Gal 4:9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how [is it that] you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

b. let us lay aside

i. *apotithēmi* - to put away (literally or figuratively):—cast off, lay apart (aside, down), put away (off).

ii. Used the same way in

- Ro 13:12 let us cast off the works of darkness,

- Eph 4:22 put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man

- Eph 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying,

- Col 3:8 put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

- Jas 1:21 lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness

- 1 Pet 2:1 laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,

3. and the sin

a. a more significant hinderance

b. has an article "the"

i. indicates a particular sin

ii. Context would point to the sin of unbelief, doubting God

iii. Doubt and living in faith contradict one another

4. which so easily ensnares us

a. *euperistatos* - well standing around, i.e. (a competitor) thwarting (a racer) in every direction (figuratively, of sin in genitive case):—which doth so easily beset.

b. doubt entangles so that one cannot run - Jas 1:6-8

D. The Example to Follow - vs 2

1. Focus determines outcome

a. preoccupation with other things cause believers to stumble or not run well

i. self - paying too much attention to mechanics of running

ii. What others think or do and how we think it affects us

iii. Specific doctrines instead of Christ the person

b. looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,

i. *archēgós* - a chief leader, originator, chief example, author, captain, prince.

- Heb 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all [points] tempted as [we are, yet] without sin.

- Jo 5:30 "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

ii. *Teleiōtēs* - a completer, i.e. consummator:—finisher.

- Jo 19:30 it is finished

- Lk 23:46 Father into your hands I commit my Spirit

2. endured the cross, despising the shame

E. The End of the Race - vs 2b

1. Competitive races for a prize - Isthmian races

2. This race that we have been called to run is an “agon” race

a. if you have nothing important to look forward to at the end of the race

i. you will not start it

ii. You will not finish it

b. Christ’s motivation to leave the glories of heaven, come here to die

i. please His Father and do His will

ii. who for the joy that was set before Him ... and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- His high priestly prayer - Jo 17:4-5 "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

- Jesus declared the Father, Jo 1:18, showed forth what the Father was like

c. What is our motivation

i. Heaven? Already ours if we belong to God

ii. We should be running for the same reason Jesus ran

- the promise of exaltation as we glorify God here on earth

- we glorify God as we are to show forth what the Father is like

F. The Exhortation - vs 3

1. looking unto Jesus and remembering the cloud of witnesses

a. easy when things are going well

b. necessary when your tired and want to give up

2. what we endure compared to them

a. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself,

i. Mat 10:24-25 "A disciple is not above [his] teacher, nor a servant above his master. "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more [will they call] those of his household!

ii. John 15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

iii. Gal 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

b. lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

i. a real possibility in an “agon” race

ii. We have been called to be overcomers by faith - 1 Jo 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

iii. Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.