

Run with Perseverance!

Hebrews 12:1-13

As followers of Jesus we know that it's a joy to be a disciple of Jesus; however, this doesn't mean that everything will go well with us in this life. To follow Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as a race you enter in. At times you may feel very good in how you run and progress in your walk; but at times it turns out to be very difficult and the temptation to quit or give up will always be there. ***Perhaps you know people who stopped running their race; they stopped following Jesus because it got too difficult.*** Where do you find the motivation, to continue running your race for God? ***When do you get encouragement and strength to run?*** The author of Hebrews wrote to Christians who were going through lots of trials and persecution; their being Christians cost them their very lives. He encouraged them to keep themselves focused on running their race. He exhorted them to persevere.

Hebrews 12:1-13 Where you find motivation to run your race.

Remember those who ran before you; (cloud of witnesses) In chapter 11 the writer of Hebrews talks about people throughout Scripture who displayed great faith in the midst of uncertainty; in the midst of persecution. ***Their faith was worthy of mentioning because they ran their race well.*** Their lives and example speak to us telling us to persevere, to not give up trusting. We are surrounded by lots of people who ran their race well and they can be in our faith hall of fame. Will you be in the faith hall of fame for others tomorrow who would consider you an example of someone who ran well?

Since we are surrounded by a cloud of hall of famer when it comes to their faith.

Let us throw away anything that hinders our progress in our race.

What is it that is weighing you down? Anything that doesn't allow you to progress or move forward in your walk with Christ; you must lay aside. Whatever is hindering you from running well must be thrown away: a relationship, your job, family, entertainment; attitude etc.

-Sin can weigh you down in your running your race.

The sin that so easily entangles us. (So easily cling to us) Where there is sin, there is shame and guilt and these things will keep you being ineffective in the kingdom of God. The temptation to sin is always present and when we give up to the temptation, we tend to go backward in our running the race; we get stuck in a ungodly pattern.

IN order to show progress in our Christian race we must lay aside whatever hinders our running well.

Keep your focus on Jesus. (fix your eyes on Jesus)

In order to run with perseverance you must keep your focus on Jesus. The founder and perfecter (the one who will complete our salvation) **Why Jesus?** He also had to endure lots of things in order to accomplish the mission of redemption. Jesus endured the cross and its shame, pain and agony. He knew the joy of this victory despite the suffering. NO pain, no gain. **-Think of Jesus (consider Jesus) v.3** when you are tempted to give up or grow weary. When it's painful, think about Jesus. When you feel downcast, tired and ready to give up look to Jesus. Remember what he did for you.

In any struggle we may have, we have not yet resisted to the point of shedding our blood. But Jesus did and this is why we must look to him when tempted to give up. (v.4)

In running your race, you must always remember who you are:

You are God's child. (v.5-11) He is your father, who put you on this race and expects you to make him proud as a runner.

God disciplines his children: We like all the benefits of being a child of God, but we don't like the discipline part.

-As his children, we must never disregard (esteem lightly) God's discipline.

-As children of God we must not give up or lose heart when rebuked by the Lord, but we are told to endure it.

God has a plan in disciplining us: discipline is for the legitimate children. He does it so that his children would share in his holiness; God calls his people to be holy and when they are not; discipline and rebukes will come.

This discipline can come in the way of trials, hardships that God allows to come to us to develop endurance, character. **James 1:1-4**

The word for discipline is the same word for training. God takes us to training camp; to the gym so that we can build some serious spiritual muscles as we run this race for his glory.

God's disciplining his children produce a harvest of righteousness, justice and peace. The outcome is righteous living for God. (v.11)

Therefore, because of what I told you before. Discipline is not pleasant, but it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace. For those who have been trained by it. Then

Strengthen (lift up your drooping hands) and strengthen you weak knees. The picture here is of someone whose hands and legs are for some reason out of action. In other words, spiritual paralyzed. The exhortation is to get back in action, strengthen your hands and knees and continue running your race.

Makes straight paths for your feet, (A quote from **Prov4:26** (Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm).

So that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Where the Christian life is in any way "out of joint" steps should be taken to revitalize it. To bring healing to what seems to be lame.

This race may be painful at times, but we must find the strength to continue running it for God. Many have run it and they are an inspiration to us; keep that in mind as you run. Be aware of what may hinder progress in your walk with the Lord. **Keep your focus on Jesus** so that you won't grow weary and lose heart. **Remember our God and father disciplines us to make us more like Jesus;** he does it so that we build spiritual muscles to face other things in this life. This is why you are being trained for; **therefore, strengthen your arms and legs and get ready to run for the race is not over yet. Don't you dare quitting!**