

👉 Running the Race

Hebrews 12:1-3

The scene is that of the Olympic Games. There is a great crowd of people watching and cheering while the competitors run around the track. We are the people currently running in the race.

Hebrews 12:1a

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,

Just before this in chapter 11 the author is talking about the great heroes of the faith from ages past. Some saw the promises in their lifetimes. Others only saw the potential, but the promises would be fulfilled later on. Many have gone before us and finished their race leading up to us today.

👉 **What kind of legacy will we leave for the generations yet to come?**

Hebrews 12:1b

let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

👉 **Throw off everything that hinders...** (KJV = lay aside every weight)

Throw it off; don't just try to filter those things or put a limit on those things; rather, get rid of them...

Ephesians 4:22

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

Colossians 3:5

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:8

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Colossians 3:12

as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

☞ **Don't just remove the sin and hindrances; replace them...** Trade your old beat up boots for some lightweight track shoes...We have a tendency to go back to the old ways if we don't establish new ways. And, often when we go back, we're even worse than we were before.

What comes to mind when I mention "sin?" It prompts different thoughts for different people. But, when thinking about sin in yourself, whatever comes to mind is most likely the thing you need to get rid of. It's probably the Holy Spirit prompting that thought so you can deal with it.

It says that sin "so easily entangles." That's the truth. And, it's exactly what the enemy wants.

According to the St. Petersburg Times, a thief grabbed some sausages in a meat market but discovered to his sorrow that they were part of a string 45 feet long. He lost his balance, stumbled again over the string, and finally became so entangled that he couldn't get up to escape.

☞ **Run. Don't stand still!** There is a finish line to reach. You can't get there by standing still, doing nothing, without moving forward. The word for "run" includes the idea of moving forward and with great exertion. Not just barely creeping forward, but going all out.

--Conrad Hilton... Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. **25** Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. **26** Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. **27** No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

👉 **Run with great exertion. And, also run with perseverance.** This is more than just stick-to-it-iveness. It means “cheerful endurance.”

So, it’s a dogged determination that refuses to give up. And it does it all with a smile and a positive attitude.

On October 18, 1879, a young inventor by the name of Thomas A. Edison sat in his laboratory. He was weary from 13 months of repeated failure in his search for a filament that would stand the stress of electric current. To add to his problems, the men who had backed him financially were now refusing to put up any additional funds. Having tried every known metal in his experiment, Edison was admittedly baffled. Casually picking up a bit of lampblack, he mixed it with tar and rolled it into a thin thread. Suddenly the thought struck him, why not try a carbonized cotton fiber? For 5 hours he worked on the first filament, but it broke before he could remove the mold. Two entire spools of thread were used in similar fruitless efforts. At last a perfect strand emerged, only to be ruined when he tried to place it inside a glass tube. Still Edison refused to admit defeat. He continued to work without sleep for two more days and nights. Eventually he managed to insert one of the crude carbonized threads into a vacuum-sealed bulb. "When we turned on the current," he said, "the sight we had so long desired to see finally met our eyes!" His persistence in the face of the most discouraging odds gave the world one of its greatest inventions -- the electric light!

“Triumph is just umph added to try.”

So, we need to throw off the hindrances and run with exertion and perseverance. But we 👉 don’t just run anywhere. We are to **run the race “marked out for us.”**

👉 The critical question, then, is, **where is Jesus leading us?**

It occurred in the 1929 Rose Bowl. California was leading Georgia Tech 7 – 6 when Roy Riegels took the ball. He became confused when California players began blocking Tech men behind him. He turned and ran in that direction. The crowd roared in amazement. “Wrong way! Wrong way!” Benny Lom, a fast halfback started after Riegels who was headed straight for the opponent’s goal. “Roy, Roy, stop!” he cried. But the noise was so great that Riegels thought the crowd was cheering him on. Just as he reached the goal, his teammate pulled him down.

We don’t want to just go our own way and run with perseverance. We want to go the way Jesus is leading.

Therefore...

Hebrews 12:2

☞ **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,**

The idea is to turn your eyes away from other things and focus on him. So, it's a continuation of the thought that we need to remove those hindrances and sins. We need to get focused on our Lord.

Colossians 3:1-2

set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

This not only means to be thinking about eternity and to be motivated to reach heaven, it ☞ also means to **look for Jesus in everyday situations**. In your normal day, do you ever stop and just ask what the Lord is wanting to say or do? When something unusual happens, do you just think "that was weird," or do you wonder what God is trying to say?

This staying focused on Jesus also means to keep in mind what he went through for us. Those things help us stay on track and keep moving toward the finish line.

Hebrews 12:3

☞ **Consider him who endured** such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Jesus endured! He endured opposition. He endured shame. And he endured the cross. What have any of us endured compared to that? His endurance sets an example and a goal for us. We can also endure by the grace of God.

Philippians 3:12-14

I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. **13** Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Thinking about all that Jesus has done will help us stay strong and determined... "so that ☞ you will **not grow weary and lose heart.**"

So, if you're feeling weary and contemplating giving up, where is your focus? When we focus on Jesus, he helps us keep on keeping on. Are you going your own way, or are you going God's way?

Isaiah 40:30-31

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; **31** but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Plus, there's a great reward for running and finishing the race...

Galatians 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

When we think about Jesus, let's remember he is the author and perfecter (or finisher) of our faith. You started in the faith (this race) by following Christ. You finish this race in the same manner... you keep following Christ. It's the same thing!

☞ Just **keep following Jesus**.

☞ **So, here's the summary...**

- 1. We have a race to run. It's long and difficult, so we need to get rid of anything that will hinder us.**
- 2. Others have already run the race and finished, so we can too.**
- 3. The way to finish is the same as the way we began... focus on and follow Jesus.**