

Running with Endurance

3 November 2019 AM – Hebrews 12:1-4 – Heb19 – Scott Childs

Introduction: In an athletic race, the prize is not for those who enter the race but for those who complete the race. The same is true in the Christian life. Living for Christ is like running a race.

Building on chapter 11, the apostle challenges us to *run with patience the race that is set before us ... lest we be wearied and faint*. He then tells us **HOW** we can do this challenging task.

Transition: The apostle proceeds to set out for us two actions that we must perform in order to run the Christian race with endurance.

The first action we must perform is to ...

1. Lay Aside Hindrances

The scores of heroes of the faith who have lived before us ought to help us see that living by faith is possible. Many of them maintained strong faith in God though they endured great trials. If they can have strong faith in God, so can we. Their examples ought to move us to action.

a. We must lay aside every weight

- 1) Every athlete works to remove any weights that may slow him down.
- 2) The weights that weigh down believers in the Christian race are things that hinder his faith in God. We must lay aside EVERY weight. **What might those weights be?**
 - a) A weight may be lack of Bible study. (Romans 10:17) "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" The better you know the Bible, the greater your faith can grow. Remember, faith is "**acting upon trusted information.**" If you do not KNOW what God says, you will not see it as trusted information in which to place your faith.
 - b) A weight may be a sinful habit. A thief does not break his stealing habit by only stealing once a week. He must quit totally. The same is true about any sinful habit. (Romans 13:14) "*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*" Stop making it easy to sin.

b. Jesus is the finisher of the faith

- 1) Not only was Jesus the author of the faith, He is also the finisher of the faith.
 - a) He finished or completed the faith of the Old Testament saints when He died on the cross for their sins.
 - b) He finished or completed the faith of New Testament believers when He died on the cross for our sins.
- 2) Verse 2 continues, "*who for the joy that was set before him...*" We must not overlook the word "*for*". It comes from the Greek word "*anti*" which means opposite, instead of or in exchange for. Look down at (Hebrews 12:16) where it is used again. "*Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*" Esau exchanged his birthright for a morsel of food. Jesus exchanged the glory He had eternally enjoyed with the Father for the shame and pain of the cross.
- 3) Evidence that Jesus finished our faith is that the Father welcomed Him back to His right hand.

c. Jesus is a great example for our faith, v.3-4

- 1) Christ endured great contradiction (i.e., opposition) of sinners against Himself. Being God, He could have avoided this, yet He endured it voluntarily in love. Jesus died in His striving against sin; none of us has done that, v.4.
- 2) We must consider His example that we might not become weary and faint in our minds.

Conclusion: If you are struggling to keep going in the Christian race and your faith is beginning to stagger, these verses are for you. Lay aside those things that are hindering you then focus your eyes on Jesus. He suffered, endured shame, and died to fulfil the Father's will and provide us forgiveness and eternal life. After all He's done for us, how can we do less than give Him our best and live for Him completely?

Chorus: After all He's done for me.

- c) A weight may be bitterness. Bitterness is that festering anger, hatred or dislike for someone who has hurt you or your loved one. (Ephesians 4:31) "*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.*"
- d) A weight may be unforgiveness. Note what Jesus said about unforgiveness. (Matthew 6:14-15) "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"
- e) A weight may be any unconfessed sin. Sin will not rob a true Christian of his *relationship* with God, but it will rob him of his *fellowship* with God.

b. We must lay aside the besetting sin

- 1) Here the apostle zeros in on the sin that *so easily besets us*. This literally refers to a sin that easily encircles us.
- 2) *We might apply this to any sin with which we repeatedly struggle*. There is nothing wrong with that application; however, in context the besetting sin seems to be lack of faith.
- 3) Every one of the heroes of the faith in chapter 11 were humans just like us. They were tempted to doubt.
 - a) Noah was tempted to doubt when God said build a huge ark on dry land, when it had never rained.
 - b) Abraham was tempted to doubt when God told him to offer his son as a sacrifice.
 - c) Moses was tempted to doubt when he chose suffering over enjoying the pleasures of sin in Egypt.
 - d) Joshua was tempted to doubt when God said march around Jericho and the walls would fall down.
- 4) If we lack faith in God, we will not run the Christian race effectively. We will worry. We will fret. We will get distracted. We will question God's Word. We will not obey God. We must lay aside doubt. Believe God!

The second action we must perform is to ...

2. Look unto Jesus

The phrase "*looking unto Jesus*" requires our attention. The word "*looking*" does not just mean look at something. It means to view with undivided attention by looking away from every other object. It means to look away from all else and fix one's gaze upon. A runner who wants to win ignores the other runners and focusses his eyes on the goal. In context, we must turn away from every weight and sin and focus our attention on Jesus Christ.

a. Jesus is the author of the faith

- 1) The word translated "*author*" describes one who is the chief leader, a prince. It also has the idea of a founder or originator. We find this word in Hebrews 2:10 where Jesus is called the "*captain of their salvation*".
- 2) Jesus Christ is the originator of our faith. Note that the word "*our*" in the KJV is in italics indicating that the translators added it. Jesus is not just the founder of OUR faith; He is the founder of THE faith.
 - a) In eternity past, Jesus being God, devised the plan of salvation through which sinful people could be forgiven, redeemed, given eternal life and a home in heaven with God.
 - b) As God, Jesus gave the promise of the Messiah to the Old Testament saints in Hebrews 11 on which they based their faith.
 - c) Jesus became the promised Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, in whom those who believe might place their faith. The apostle Paul wrote, (1 Timothy 4:10) "*For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*"
 - d) There is a sense in which Jesus, while on earth in his incarnation or human body, even lived by faith. He acted perfectly upon the eternal plan of the Godhead.
- 3) We must fix our gaze upon Jesus who is the foundation of all faith.