

As Runners with Endurance

Hebrews 12:1-17

Introduction

5K Race through Beautiful Neighborhood

Read Hebrews 12:1-17

Exposition

I. Running with Faith in Christ (Vss. 1-6)

The writer of Hebrews is employing the language of a race to reveal something about the life of the Christian. Faithfully obeying God is like running a race. Running a race is hard. It requires discipline. It requires patience. It requires passion. It requires resolve. It requires an eye on the finish line. Without these things, you will neither win nor finish the race. The author of Hebrews knew this and felt like a race was the right metaphor for the Christian life.

How, then, are we to run the race? We are to lay aside everything that would prevent or restrict us from running the race and then set our eyes on Christ! Notice what the text says, “laying aside every weight and every sin that so easily entangles us.” According to this passage, we are to lay aside sins for sure, and then, anything else that would prevent us from running the race of faith. This means that there may be something that you need to lay aside because of their impact on your running that do not need to be laid aside by others. For some, it may be television. For others, it may be music. For others, it may be the internet. For some, it may be political news. For others, it may be sports. For some it may be affirmation and advancement at work. Weights can represent a host of things that entangle us. Often time, we only ask if an action or activity is a sin, and if it is not a sin, then we assume that we not only can do it, but should do it. This passage, however, tells us that it is not just sin that we have lay aside to run with Christ, but also little weights that slow us down.

Are there weights in your life that slow you down in the race of faith? Are their innocent things that you obsess over that keep you from praying and reading God’s Word? I can remember John Piper mentioning make a statement a few years ago that said, “One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time.” Now, are Twitter and Facebook inherently evil? No. Can they distract us from pursuing Christ? Absolutely! And this is not up for you to decide for others. Just because you have a particular struggle, that does not mean that others have that struggle. You need to determine what the weights are in your life that need to be laid aside in order to run the race with faith in Christ.

How do we do this? By looking unto Jesus! We look to the example of Jesus for our faithful running! We look to Jesus when we need to see an example of what it means to lay aside everything and pursue obedience to our heavenly Father! Jesus “looked to the joy that was set before Him.” He “despised the shame.” He “endured the cross.” He “endured hostility from sinners.” Why? Because He would not be deterred from faithfully obeying His Father. And the reason why He would not be deterred is because He knew our salvation, our faith depended on His faithfulness! He endured so that “we might not grow weary or fainthearted.” Our perseverance depends upon Christ’s perseverance. His endurance is our hope for endurance! For He is “the author and perfecter of our faith.” Apart from Christ, we have no faith! But because of Christ, we can trust and obey God!

T.S. – This brings us to the second point that we find in Hebrews 12...

II. Running with Discipline for Christ (Vss. 7-11)

We run the race of faith in Christ with discipline. Our heavenly Father disciplines us because He loves us and wants to make sure that we finish the race that He has set before us. This means that when we get off course, when we set our eyes on things or people other than Jesus, when we sin, God is faithful to discipline us as sons and daughters! He loves us enough to not allow us to run headlong forever into destructive rebellion. The point here is simple yet profound. If a person never turns back from their sin, it is because they are not children of God. Period. God will not allow His children to forever run from His grace, to live in a perpetual state of “backsliding.” God disciplines those whom He loves. And it is through His discipline that we endure in the race of faith.

How does God discipline us? He disciplines us in various way. One of the ways that He disciplines us is through formative discipline in the church under His word. So, this morning, God is disciplining you through hearing His Word. This is not a punitive discipline, for the penalty of sin has already been paid by Jesus. However, discipline remains. Not only is there formative discipline, but there is also circumstantial discipline, which our passage speaks of in terms of hardships faced in this life. Again, this discipline is not punitive. God’s discipline is never punitive. He is not punishing us. He is refining us. Finally, another form of discipline could be called restorative discipline, which is what we see in passages like Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, and Galatians 6, where God uses fellow believers to pursue us when we stray from the path of righteousness. Like the previous forms of discipline, this discipline is also an expression of God’s love that He has ordained in our lives for the sake of our endurance. He corrects us that we might “share in his holiness.” If God did not discipline us, it would be because He does not love us. Yet, we know that He loves us.

T.S. - What, then, should we do? Verses 12-17 tell us...

Conclusion

We ought to resolve to run the race that God has set before us! Embracing the difficulties, inviting the discipline, laying aside everything that would get in our way, and run with our eyes on Christ!

We do this by faith-filled striving to live holy lives by faith in Christ, the founder and perfecter of our faith!

Are you a passionate runner in this race of faith? Or do you need to “strengthen your weak knees” and “lift your drooping hands” while “making straight paths for your feet?” Are you distracted by all the attractions along the racepath or are you running to win the race?

The only way to be a passionate runner in this race of faith is to look unto Jesus! Would you look to Him today, the One who for the joy set before Him, redeemed us, freed us, empowered us, and called us to follow Him? You can’t run this race in your own strength. In fact, you won’t run this race at all if you try to do it on your own. You need Jesus! So, would you call upon Him this morning to help you? To strengthen you? To make your paths straight? To give you the faith and endurance you need to run the race to win the prize?