

## Faith to the End

Hebrews 12:1-3

2/18/07

### Intro

There is something very inspiring about watching a race. The runners have to conquer pain, their bodies crying out for them to stop, yet they press on enduring the pain lap after lap.

This section of Hebrews is about running the race of life with faith until the end. The readers were starting to weaken in their faith and this book was written to encourage them, to inspire them, and to instruct them about the importance of enduring.

In chapter 11, we were reminded of great men of faith that lived what they believed. They accomplished great feats because their faith was central to who they were. In the same way, we are challenged to live out our faith as the defining part of who we are, and to live out that faith with endurance until the end.

These are the keys to endurance; the insights we need for staying the course, for fighting to good fight of faith, for being victorious as we run, as we live.

**These are principles and insights for being victorious in faith until the end.**

### **I. Lay Aside Every Encumbrance**

- This is the first key to endurance of faith. A runner would not put weights in his pockets or carry a load while running.
- Too many people are weighted down and cannot run well. This is not sin, here, but other things heavy.

### A. Travel light

- Many people carry so many burdens that keep them from living as God would desire them to live.
- There are many different types of weights and burdens that God wants us to lay aside.

**App – For some it may be pride, or vanity, or fear, or anger, or unforgiveness over a wound, or jealousy or some attachment.**

- Jesus also gave several examples:

**Mark 4:18-19, And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**

- “Worries of the world” is what Jesus mentions first and indeed, these can be a terribly heavy weight.
- But he also offered healing as well...

**Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

**Illus – In Tanzania where we were there was beautiful granite everywhere and I put some in my suitcase... people couldn’t believe that I actually put rocks in my bags...**

- Traveling light means not to carry what God doesn't want you to carry. Let it go...

**Luke 12:25-26, "And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?"**

B. Sin easily entangles

- There is no question that sin can easily entangle us and keep us from running at all.

**Illus – If someone tied your shoes together just before the race was set to begin, you could imagine the disaster. The idea is that you will trip and fall.**

- The key here is in the words, "Lay aside... the sin which so easily entangles."

**APP – There is a contrast here to the weight or an unnecessary burden and the entangling of sin.**

- Lay it aside. Confront it, deal with it. Don't just say, "I guess that's just the way I am."
- There are many kinds of sin and many are obvious. But there is also the sin of unbelief.

**Romans 14:23, But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.**

- Not having faith is a sin because it misses the mark of what God wants for us in our lives. He wants us to believe. He expects us to believe.

**Mark 16:14, Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.**

**Hebrews 10:38, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." NKJV**

- This is what was happening in the readers, they were having unbelief in their hearts...

<b>II. Run the Race Set Before You</b>
--

A. To each one, his own course

- I can't run your course and you can't run my course. Each person must run the course set out before them.
- There is a real problem in the sense that many people would much rather run someone else's race.

**Illus – That is why soap operas or romance novels are so popular.**

- But that distracts many from running their own race.

**App – There is an element of this that can be good if we are inspired to live with more valor, or honor, or integrity, etc. I remember when the Rocky movies first came out...**

- But it is God who gives grace to each one of us to run the race set before us...

**Ephesians 4:7,11, But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift... And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,**

- The men and women in Hebrews 11 were people of great faith who accomplished amazing feats because they had faith to believe that God was able to accomplish what He promised.

**App – They were just men and women like you and me. What made them set apart was their faith...**

**James 5:16-18, The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.**

#### B. Run with endurance

- We have need of endurance. The race set before us is a marathon.
- The key to running a marathon is to remain steadfast and press on without wavering.
- Though many try to run in a blaze of fury and speed.

**Illus – One of the most famous of US runners came from right here in Oregon. Born in Coos Bay, he was undefeated in high school and college and went on to set many world records that still hold today.**

**But Steve Prefontaine's method was unorthodox, he ran flat out the whole race and no one could catch him. "A lot of people run to see who is the fastest, I run to see who has the most guts," he said.**

**Illus – In a race, only one wins the prize, but in a marathon, there is victory simply in finishing with all you have.**

**II Timothy 4:5-8, But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

**Illus – in the 1992 Olympics, Derek Redmond tore his hamstring early in the 400 meter race, but he got up and began limping toward the finish. His father jumped over the railing and helped his son finish.**

**Illus – When we were in Africa, we met a man who had been raised in one of the world's largest slums, yet is running the race well. He started a bible institute and an orphanage. And in that orphanage is Anna Imani.**

**III. Fixing Your Eyes on Jesus**

- First, because of the example he gave us in enduring the cross.
- Secondly, because he is the author and perfecter of our faith.

A. He is the perfecter of faith

- There is no greater example that we could look to than Jesus himself. The relationship He has with the Father is for us to follow. He is the beginning and the end of all examples of faith and faithfulness.

**Revelation 1:8, 17-18, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”**

- But there is power and strength that comes from Him as well. We are to look to Him as the source of what we need in order to persevere.

**Romans 10:17, So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.**

**John 15:4-5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and**

**I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”**

B. Do not grow weary or lose heart

- Consider Jesus, he writes, so that you will not grow weary or lose heart.
- It is very difficult to run well if you lose heart.

**Illus – Matthew is teaching from Exodus and we were discussing why the Israelites wouldn’t listen...**

**Exodus 6:7, 9, “Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage.**

- The motivation of our heart is so key to persevering and the key to that is to *fixing our eyes on Jesus*.
- The key to understanding His example is in the phrase, *who, for the joy set before Him*. The joy of knowing that He was making way for us to have eternal life, eternal fellowship was the joy set before Him.

**Galatians 6:8-9, the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.**