

LOOKING TO JESUS AS... HEBREWS 12:2

Check out this month's "Looking to Jesus As" article by Dr. Donald Hubbard where he talks about going the distance with Jesus.

As we are running the Christian race, we need to "Run to Win." See Adam Miller's challenge inside.

Don't miss out on our two free Bible conferences this year. See inside for more details.

In this world of trials and tribulations we are desperate for "Home." See the enclosed insert card for this month's offer.

LTJA: THE ONE WHO RAN BEFORE US BY DR. DONALD HUBBARD

The Letter to the Hebrews sets forth the superiority of Jesus Christ. It was written a few years before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. The letter was addressed to second generation Hebrew Christians who had come under intense pressure from unbelieving family members, close friends, and possibly employers to leave Christianity and return to offering the sacrifices required in obeying the Law.

Since what those believers possessed in Jesus was infinitely superior to anything and everything they had in the Old Testament, how could they even think of reverting back to the old system? The letter sees the believer in a journey from salvation to glory! The author encourages them to go the distance with Jesus. How?

LEARN FROM THE PAST

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..." (Hebrews 12:1a ESV).

The author begins with "therefore" which applies the principles of faith developed in Hebrews 11. The author's readers were not suffering like those Old Testament saints as recorded in the previous chapter. The imagery is that of a Roman stadium; the spectators were the Old Testament witnesses (those cited in Hebrews 11 and more) who have already run the distance in faith and are encouraging other believers to do the same. Believers who understand the past should be able to move forward in the future by avoiding such pitfalls that may befall them now and in the future.

"LIFE'S RACE IS TRULY A MARATHON AND NOT A SPRINT. IT CALLS FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE. WE NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR THE LONG DISTANCE AND REMAIN FAITHFUL."

LAYING ASIDE DISTRACTIONS

"...Let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely..." (Hebrews 12:1b ESV).

The Greek tense in "lay aside" carries with it the idea of laying aside once for all any weight that would burden us so that our progress would become affected. "Weight" can refer to anything that would impede our progress (whether good or bad). The author also admonishes those who want to go the distance with Jesus to lay aside any "sin which clings so closely" (that which would "ambush" or "encircle") causing us to stumble or trip us up.

In the New Testament, several warnings are mentioned that would keep God's people from going the distance. These certainly could be among the "weights" and the closely clinging sin.

► LTJA: THE ONE WHO RAN BEFORE US <CONTINUED>

We are admonished to watch out for...

"False prophets" Matthew 7:15-16.

This is a word to the "fathers."

False prophets are those who are followed because they claim to be leaders of God's sheep but inwardly they spread grievous falsehoods, even heresy. They are recognized by their fruits.

"Savage wolves" Acts 20:28-30.

This is a word to the "young men."

"Savage wolves" are they who will arise within the community of faith seekers to draw believers to themselves by speaking perverse things and pandering to the likes of people rather than teaching God's truth! Their teaching is full of shock values!

"Little foxes that spoil the vines"

Song of Solomon 2:15.

This is a word to the "young men."

"Little foxes" are among the little things that are not dealt with by

immature believers but will eventually damage any fruit. This possibly references the sins of temperament and the flesh.

These are tragic weights that would cause the believer to be distracted and stumble along the journey. There is no compromise here. To run the distance with Jesus successfully requires that they be laid aside, to put away!

LIVE WITH A LONG RANGE VIEW

"...And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1c ESV).

There are no short cuts to spiritual maturity. Life's race is truly a marathon and not a sprint. It calls for patient endurance. We need to be prepared for the long distance and remain faithful. We need to perform personal spiritual check-ups from time to time. Such a check list has been suggested by A. W. Tozer by asking...

What we want most.

What we think about most.

How we use our money.

What we do with our leisure time.

The company we enjoy.

Whom and what we admire.

At what do we laugh.

LOOK UNTO JESUS

"...Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2 ESV).

Going the distance with Jesus requires "looking to Jesus", an unusual word which carries with it the idea of turning away from something else so that we might focus or fix our eyes upon the One who is the "author and perfecter of our faith." He is the One believers are to follow!

The focus of the believer's life should be on Jesus. In chapter

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Keynote Speaker | John Nieder



For ten years, Nieder hosted the Wednesday and Friday programs on Songtime with his prophesy and family themed shows. This year, he is back with Songtime for a special conference on living for Jesus in the season of His return.

Musical Guest | Charles Billingsley



Billingsley is the Worship Leader at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia and is a talented recording artist who is filled with passion for Christ.

three of Hebrews we learn of the failure of the Israelites who sent spies into the Promise Land to see for themselves what lay ahead. They saw only the walled cities and the giants in the land, but they did not see God. They had a failure in focus. If they had brought God into the picture they would have seen that God viewed the walled cities as nothing and the giants as grasshoppers. It is all in having the proper perspective!

In this chapter, The author emphasizes Jesus' death on a cross. On the cross, Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me...?" (Psalm 22:1). This is the only time in the Gospels when Jesus asked God the Father a question. On all other

occasions the Lord Jesus accepted the Father's will with unquestioning spirit of heart and mind.

Forsaken is one of the saddest words in any language. It is composed of three words: to leave, meaning to abandon; down, suggesting defeat and helplessness; and in, referring to place or circumstance. It carries the idea of forsaking someone in a state of defeat or helplessness in the midst of hostile circumstances. Jesus had become our substitute for sin. He has been and continues to be victorious. He despised the shame and is seated on the right hand of the throne of God!

In going the distance with Jesus, knowing that Jesus paid it all, we

trust Him and follow Him wherever He leads. Circumstances may change! Obstacles may appear! Heartaches may be experienced! But our confidence is in Him!

To go the distance with Jesus requires learning from the past, laying aside all distractions, living with the long range in view, and looking unto Jesus Who not only saves but also leads. He must be central in our lives, at all times, and in all situations.



► Dr. Donald Hubbard is a seasoned preacher, teacher and has been a partner with Songtime for many years.



RUN TO WIN BY ADAM MILLER

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjec-

tion, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NKJV

When Paul was writing to the Corinthian Church he used a very familiar metaphor to describe the Christian life. It seems that as long as humans have had two feet, they have been competing to see who could run faster. This measure of discipline along with wrestling, an-

other feat of strength mentioned in this passage, is still present in the olympics today, over two thousand years later.

We are all running a race. We are all driven by our passions. The question for Christians is, are we running effectively for Christ? Paul says that we are supposed to run to win. This doesn't mean that we are supposed to compete against our brothers

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► RUN TO WIN <CONTINUED>

and sisters in Christ, but we are to run as though we have a purpose. This isn't a half marathon we signed up for with our friends so that we could all have a fun adventure together. This race matters and there is a lot at stake.

A COFFEE HOUSE OR GYM

We seek out comfort in community and that often means that we are looking for people who make us feel good about ourselves. In this way we treat our Churches like coffee houses. They are places where we get together with our friends to talk about our problems. Although the Church certainly needs to be a place of refuge and strength for the broken and abused, eventually it should transition us from weakness to strength.

In this way Churches should be more like gyms. They are not simply places for us to hang out and talk about the trials of our past, they are there for us to be empowered to face our fears ahead. If we have a mindset that Church is just a coffee house, we are not going to like it when our trainer shows up demanding we get in shape, but if Paul's analogy is correct, then our churches need more trainers than baristas.

GETTING IN SHAPE

If we are going to run to win then it requires that we keep ourselves fit. We must practice the personal disciplines, we must take up our cross daily (Romans 12:1-2), we

must lay aside every weight (Hebrews 12:1), we must earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3), and we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). We also need an appropriate diet. We can't remain on the high fatty lattes when we are running the Christian race. We need the high protein meat of God's Word (1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Hebrews 5:11-14). This requires temperance and self control, but it is essential if we are going to run the race set before us.

IT WILL BE WORTH IT

When we are talking about the race of life we are not describing our best life now. Although Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30), it does not mean that the Christian life is a holiday or vacation. This race may not result in the immediate accolades we often seek in life; our audience is already in heaven (Hebrews 12:1) and we won't hear their cheering until we arrive. Paul reassures us that the ultimate prize is worth it in the end. Those who run in this race look to Jesus as their prize (Hebrews 12:2). The crown of righteousness will be worth it, if just to hear our savior say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23).

"DON'T NEGLECT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS RACE. WHAT IS ACCOMPLISHED IN THIS LIFE WILL LAST FOR ETERNITY."

DON'T BE DISQUALIFIED

There are many similarities to the Christian life and running a race. Both require a great deal of discipline, struggle, and endurance. That is why Paul's final warning stands out so sharply. He declares, "Don't be disqualified!"

There are many ways to be disqualified from a race. You can cheat by not following the rules, you can fail to meet the basic fitness requirements, or you can just not show up on the race day. The same can be said of our spiritual race. You can cheat by relying on your own righteousness, you can fail by not disciplining your body, or you can be disqualified by not taking it seriously and not showing up on race day.

Don't neglect the seriousness of this race. What is accomplished in this life will last for eternity. Don't be distracted by the temporal temptations of your best life now. Keep your eyes fixed on the prize. Look to Jesus as your motivation. Discipline your body and bring everything into subjection for the sake of the upward call of God (Philippians 3:14). Run to win, and don't allow yourself to be disqualified.



► Rev. Adam Miller is the President and Host of Songtime and can be heard daily on the Songtime Radio Broadcast.

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