

The Race Set Before Us

Hebrews 12: 1-4.

1. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, 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.
2. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
3. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
4. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.



Here we see the Christian life described as a race. This is a fascinating statement for usually in a race there is a competition between those who are in the race. We don't see that to be the case here. We see a race that does have a starting point and a finish line as well as a prize for those who complete the race. The race described is not a quick sprint but a marathon with many obstacles and difficulties. It is a race that is intentionally set before us—and as we will see later—it is for our good.

As we have discussed previously, the letter to the Hebrews was written to two specific groups of people: A small group of Jewish Christians and a group of religious Jews who intellectually had embraced Christianity—or were at least curious. The author was encouraging the later group to get in the race, and he was encouraging the Jewish Christians to get on with the race that was set before them. The application is similar for us today—it is written to those who have an intellectual or curious interest in Christ, and to those who believe he is the Christ and seek to follow him.

The word used here for “race” is near to the word used for “agony.” The race before the Christian is one that requires endurance, self-sacrifice, and is hard training for the course. It is a long race by some standards—difficult- involving suffering and agony. It is a path that once you step foot onto it you have stepped into great suffering as well as great joy.



In this race there is a call to throw off everything that hinders or weighs the runner down. These are things that distract the runner from the race or slow him down like one running through deep sand. It is important to note that the author does not say to throw off some of the things that hinders – he says to throw off everything that hinders. To throw off everything that gets in the way of running the race and receiving the prize. The writer obviously sees the race as the most important action for the believer to be engaged in. He obviously sees everything else as secondary and perhaps unimportant in comparison.



The author states the believer must also “cast off the sin that so easily entangles” Notice that the “sin” mentioned here is singular and not plural “sins.” This sin referred to here is the sin that the author has been referring to throughout the book of Hebrews. It is the sin of unbelief which leads to disobedience and rebellion against God. In this race, the sin of unbelief will entangle the runner and cause him to fall down and eventually be destroyed if left unchecked. In this race, the believer is to hold fast to the truth and keep his eyes securely on the Lord. He is to run the race with the prize before him—not looking back or to the left or the right.

This race requires training and great preparation. The runner must prepare himself for what lies ahead on this path that is often difficult. What is needed is faith to be able to overcome any obstacles along the way. The Scriptures tell us that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” To build faith the runner must study the word diligently in order to prepare for the race. It is this word committed to the heart that comes forth at the appropriate time.

We have seen previously that just reading the word is not enough. The believer is to combine the word with faith. The believer is to stand firmly in the word in order to overcome whatever obstacle is before him. God’s word is characterized by commands, teachings, and promises. In every situation along the way there is a command, teaching, or promise that is available to help the believer be an overcomer. The Scripture tells us that Jesus has already overcome the world. Let us follow him through to the prize—so that we may sit down along with Christ in the very presence of God.



1 Corinthians 9:24-27. 24. **“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.”** The one who gets the prize is the one who endures to the end of the race.

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.”**

The prize is beyond measure and requires strict discipline to see and receive it.

26. **“Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.”** Those in the race have their eyes firmly fixed on the prize—and are not distracted by the temporary gains of this temporal world.

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.”** Those in the race bring their mind and body under the authority of the Spirit of God in order to live and breathe within him alone.

What's Your Next Step?

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