

# Hebrews

Hebrews 12:1-2 – Run With Endurance

February 7, 2010

## I. The Necessity of Discipline for Living A Life of Faith

- A. **Hebrews 12:1-2** . . . Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- B. I have said this before, but I want to remind us again that **Hebrews 12-13** focuses on showing us what **we need to do** to live a life of faith. And as we work our way through these two chapters, I want to keep reminding you that the theme of discipline – both **self-discipline** and **God's discipline** – is woven throughout what God says to us here.
- C. Over the past four teachings on **Hebrews 12:1-2**, we have talked about laying aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us.
  - 1. Without question, both are essential actions on our part for getting into and staying in the kind of spiritual conditioning whereby we can run to win this marathon of faith.
  - 2. It is also true that laying aside encumbrances and putting off besetting sins requires some serious self-discipline – not just for a day, but for the duration of our Christian life.
  - 3. Which brings us to today's subject – running with endurance – another quality of the Christian life that requires self-discipline.

## D. Prayer

## II. Let Us Run With Endurance

- A. . . . and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
  - 1. Before talking about endurance, I want to speak about the **race** that is set before us. My hope is that this will further clarify why God says we need endurance.
  - 2. First of all, the Greek word for “**race**” that appears here in **Hebrews 12:1**, is translated as *conflict*, *struggle*, *opposition*, and *fight* in the four other places it appears in the NT. And, the idea

contained in this word “**race**” is that of contending or competing for a prize.

3. To give you a context for the ideas contained in this word “**race**,” let me take you to the four other places it appears in the NT:
  - a. **Philippians 1:27-30** . . . Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; [28] in no way alarmed by your opponents – which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. [29] For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, [30] experiencing the same **conflict** which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.
  - b. **Colossians 1:24, 2:1** . . . Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. [2:1] For I want you to know how great a **struggle** I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,
  - c. **I Thessalonians 2:1-2** . . . For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, [2] but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much **opposition**. [See: I Thess. 1:6]
  - d. **I Timothy 6:12-14** . . . **Fight** the good **fight** of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. [13] I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, [14] that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
4. Now what is my point? The race that is set before us is not a gentle downhill sloop with smooth ground. To run this race you not only have to fight or struggle against yourself – that is, your flesh, your fears, your ungodly cravings, your unholy thoughts, the encumbrances you are tempted to pick up along the way, and the sins that tempt you again and again – you also have to fight or

struggle against the course itself – that is, the race that is laid out before you.

- a. Now you may be thinking this is unfair. Why should we have to struggle on two fronts – against our old nature on the one hand and against the marathon course on the other?
  - b. And my answer to that, is that God is the one who determines the course. He is the One that sets it before us. He determines the terrain each of us will face in running our race of faith. And given that He is the all-wise, all-loving, all-empowering, immeasurably gracious, and perfectly good God, the course He sets before me, and the course He sets before you, is the course we each need to get to the end of the race as conformed to the likeness of Christ as is possible for us to be in this life.
5. So yes, the race course is a challenge, and some days it is a severe challenge.
- a. There are days – and even groups of days – when running is like being in an exhausting, physically battering, mentally sapping fight for your life.
  - b. There are days when running feels like we are being opposed every step of the way – so that by mid-day you don't want to run another step.
  - c. There are days when temptation seem overwhelming – with the same temptation bombarding you time and again, or the same ungodly thought entering your mind over and over – and this even after you have resisted what seems like ten times in a minute or a hundred times in an hour.
  - d. There are days when it is one conflict after another – and you just want to go home, turn on the TV or get absorbed in a book or lose yourself on the Internet and forget about it all.
  - e. And there are days when you take more steps backwards than forwards – and this not the fault of the course God sets before you, but because you slacked off in your preparations for running to win, or let down in your vigilance against temptation, or gave in to feelings and emotions that drew you away from loving and obeying God.
6. So to summarize – the marathon of faith is run on a course that is set before you by God – by a loving, good God who is doing what is best for you and all who you affect – and admittedly, its terrain is often difficult and challenging – which is why it requires perseverance and endurance to cross the finish line.

- B. Which brings us back to the first part of our phrase from **Hebrews 12:1**, let us run with endurance
1. What is endurance? I suspect all of us have some idea of what this word means. But what does it mean in relation to running the marathon of faith, to living the Christian life?
    - a. Endurance is continuing on in spite of momentary or even prolonged adverse conditions.
    - b. It is both stubborn and patient persistence in the face of opposition.
    - c. It is the determination to withstand and overcome hardships such as physical fatigue, mental weariness, tribulation, repeated temptation, the longing and cry from every fiber of your being to stop and pamper yourself, wanting to quit, and pain in order to come out a winner in the end.
    - d. It is remaining faithful in spite of all the fleshly and worldly reasons to be unfaithful.
  2. They give us a scriptural picture of endurance in the Christian life, I want us to look at several places in the Bible where this kind of endurance is talked about:
    - a. **Matthew 24:4-13** . . . See to it that no one misleads you. [5] For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. [6] You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. [7] For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. [8] But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. [9] Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. [10] At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. [11] Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. [12] Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. [13] **But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.**
    - b. **Acts 14:21-22** . . . After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, [22] strengthening the souls of the disciples, **encouraging them to continue in the faith**, and

saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

- c. **James 1:2-4** . . . Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the **testing of your faith produces endurance**. [4] And **let endurance** have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- d. **James 5:10-11** . . . As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] We count those blessed who **endured**. You have heard of the **endurance of Job** and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.
- e. **1 Peter 2:20** . . . For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it **you patiently endure it**, this finds favor with God.

C. What does endurance look like for us as we run the marathon of faith from start to finish? It looks like:

- 1. confident faith,
- 2. submission to God's will and word,
- 3. self-discipline,
- 4. resisting the devil – temptation after temptation,
- 5. an unwavering commitment to repent, confess, make things right, and get back up any time you go down,
- 6. a practical knowledge of God's Word,
- 7. living up to what you know,
- 8. frequent prayer,
- 9. an unquenchable thirst for godliness,
- 10. vigilance in guarding against wrong thinking and unholy thoughts,
- 11. honest and frequent self-examination,
- 12. stubborn persistence – especially when you feel like you need a break or you deserve just a bit of selfishness,
- 13. a love for others at least equal to your love for self,
- 14. a compelling love for God,
- 15. a single-minded focus on Christ and becoming as much like Christ in this life as is possible.
- 16. **All of these add up to running to win!**

- D. To recap, God says in order to run in such a way as to win this marathon of faith – that is, the Christian life – we must (1) put off every encumbrance (excess weight), (2) put off every besetting sin (entangles itself around our legs and either trips us up or prevents us from running), (3) and run with endurance (perseverance).

### III. Conclusion

- A. **1 Corinthians 9:24** . . . Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.
- B. The effect of current endurance is increased strength to bear up under yet greater difficulties and trials, and to gain the victory in still harder, more challenging battles. In other words, even though the course doesn't get easier, current endurance improves everything about you so that you are better equipped and in better condition to win.