

“The Race Set Before Us”
Hebrews 12:1-3
5/17/26
Message 23

Introduction

- Title Of The Message: “The Race Set Before Us”

- **Remember Context – Running Start**

- **1. Doctrine Ends - Hebrews 10:18**
- **2. Duty Begins - From Hebrews 10:19 until the end of the book**
 - It is NOW DUTY TIME
- **3. KEY - Paul is Writing to Discouraged Believers**
 - Paul is encouraging these discourage believers to keep moving forward in Christ to stay the course
- **4. Paul's Instruction – For Staying The Course**
 - **1. Draw Near To God vv. 19-21**
 - The FIRST thing he does to encourage them
 - Because of what Christ has Done
 - Because He made Himself the Perfect Sacrifice
 - We NOW have BOLDNESS to come before a HOLY God
 - So let take advantage of that
 - **2. The Response Of Those Who Have Access To God vv. 22-25**

- The SECOND thing he does

- **Let Us**

- They Continue to Draw Near to God
 - Hold Fast Confession of our Hope
 - Consider – Others
 - Don't Forsake the Fellowship

- **3. The Problem With Willful Rejection vv. 26-31**

- THIRD Thing he does

- There is no other place to Go

- Jesus is the ONLY WAY

- **4. The Reminder Of The Heavenly Reward vv. 32-39**

- FOURTH thing he does

- Heaven is coming

- Hang in there Jesus is coming to take us all home

- **5. Keep the Faith Chapter 11:1-7**

- Examples Of the Faith

- **Now This Morning - RUN the RACE**

- **There are MANY METAPHORS used in the Bible to describe the Christian Life**

- Soldiers in a Battle

- Farmers Sowing Seed
 - Boxers Boxing
 - Students in a School
- But the one of the most common METAPHORS
 - Is that we are RUNNERS IN A RACE

○ ***NOW WHY does the Bible compare are Cristian Life to a RACE?***

- **1. The Christian Life needs to be lived with PURPOSE**
 - Not PASSIVE
 - Those engaged in a RACE are not passive
 - They have spent many hours with the focus on running that race
- **2. To Emphasize the need for**
 - Just like those in a race the Christian Life needs
 - Endurance
 - Perseverance (Like a marathon)
 - Discipline & Training
 - (Runners must deny themselves and train hard to win)
 - KEEP Focus on the Goal
 - Just as a runner keeps their eyes on the finish line
 - The pursuit of a heavenly reward

- Rather than immediate comfort

- **What are we RACING FOR?**

- **CRITICAL we understand this**

- What is the Goal of our RACE?

- **Is it SALVATION?**

- **NO**

- It is Faithfulness

- It is Reward

- **SALVATION**

- Always a work of GRACE

- Based upon one thing / believing in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord His finished work

- **Is It Perfecting the FLESH by The Flesh?**

- That is asceticism

- Paul dealt with that in Galatians

- Having begun in the Spirit are you now going made perfect in the flesh?

Galatians 3:3 (NKJV)

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

- **The race is about Experiencing THE Fullness of your Christian Walk**

- Experiencing all that the Lord has for you!

- Abiding IN CHRIST
- Surrendering your life to Him everyday
- Knowing HIM fully

Philippians 3:7–14 (NKJV)

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- It is marked by 2 things
 - 1. That I might know Him!
 - Lay aside ALL – to Know Him
 - Gain Him
 - Grow in my Understanding of Him
 - So much of Him to know!
 - He is MY ALL in ALL
 - To get closer to Him

- 2. In v.14 Press toward the Prize of the upward call
 - He is speaking of heaven!
 - Understand we are not running in order TO GET TO HEAVEN
 - But we are running FOR HEAVEN
 - The PRIZE
 - To Hear WELL DONE

○ **We Are ALL In this RACE and We Are Called to RUN**

- Different types of Riders / Runners...
 - Over the years I have been on the BT a lot
 - You see a whole bunch of Riders / Runners
 - The different type of Riders / Runners
 - 1. Rolled off the Couch
 - Not sure what or why they are doing this
 - Want to go back to couch and eat Ice Cream
 - 2. Look Good BUT
 - Got all the Right Gear – Looked Good
 - BUT – in Reality It is all a Show
 - 3. Those a little more serious
 - The Weekenders

- They know they need to be out they want to be out
- But only if I have the time
- But not sure they are fully committed
- If the weather is good then I will be there...
- 4. ALL IN
 - The serious one WELL
 - Correct clothing, great shoes, head set on, focused
 - They portrayed the attitude
 - I LIVE TO RIDE / RUN –
- Illustration – to ALL IN Physically
 - Personally, I have always hated running –
 - Back in 2001/2002
 - I felt the needed to start getting in shape
 - 4 laps around the track was enough for me to know NO WAY / So I picked up Cycling / love to ride
 - Started slow, 1 mile then 2 then 5
 - Road Bike - 10, 15, 20, 100 plus
 - Rode when it was
 - HOT / Cold
 - Sick Healthy

- After being hit by a truck
- Could not get me off the bike afraid I would lose
- Result Incredible shape – **Pics**
 - Several century rides triathlons
 - Super-fast
 - Not ride too long not hill too hard
- **Which type are you?! (Spiritually Speaking)**
 - 1. Still on the couch or just rolled off
 - But still not sure what you're doing
 - 2. You're Looking Good BUT...
 - Some are just going through the motions
 - It all a show
 - 3. You're Serious BUT your still lacking full commitment
 - Always need extra motivation
 - Just a weekender
 - 4. ALL IN
 - YOU LOVE TO RIDE / RUN
 - Let me add another category
 - You USED to be all in
 - BUT now you're out of shape

- Encourage you
 - It may be too late physically
 - BUT never spiritually to get back in shape
 - To be ALL in on Fire for Jesus again

• **Let's look at 5 POWERFUL TRUTHS on How To Run The Race Set Before Us**

- Reflect On The Cloud Of Witnesses v. 1a
- Refuse To Be Ensured v. 1b
- Run With Endurance v. 1c
- Remain Focused On Jesus v. 2a
- Remember Jesus' Example vv. 2b-3

Reflect On The Cloud Of Witnesses v. 1a

• **1. Therefore v. 1a**

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

- **1. Therefore**
 - We know why!
 - Takes us back to what Paul has been saying this whole time

• **2. Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses v. 1b**

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

- **1. Breakdown**

▪ **Surrounded**

- Greek: períkeimai
- Means: about, to lie, to put. To surround, to encompass with the dat. of person (Heb. 12:1).

▪ **Cloud**

- Greek: néphos;
- Means: A cloudy, shapeless mass covering the sky
 - A great mass of cloud covering the entire visible space of the heavens, and therefore without definite form, or a single large mass in which definite outlines are not emphasised or distinguished.
 - The use of cloud for a mass of living beings is familiar in poetry.

▪ **Witness**

- Greek: mártus; gen. márturos
- Means: A witness. One who has information or knowledge of something, and hence, one who can give information, bring to light, or confirm something (Matt. 18:16; 26:65; Mark 14:63; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:22; 5:32; 7:58; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28).
- *MacArthur; “The deceased people of chapter 11 give witness to the value and blessing of living by faith. Motivation for running “the race” is not in the possibility of receiving praise from “observing” heavenly saints. Rather, the runner is inspired by the godly examples those saints set during their lives. The great crowd are not comprised of spectators but rather are ones whose past life of faith encourages others to live that way*

- **All Those in the FAITH who have gone before us**

- Have left a huge witness / legacy on how to run this Christian race

- We would do well to follow their examples

- Quick note

- Does this mean heaven is standing by watching us now

- Some believe that I personally do not

- **2. Their testimonies are meant to Inspire is to run well!**

- Examples so far

- Cain And Abel v. 4

- Abel with the RIGHT Sacrifice

- Enoch v. 5

- Noah v. 7

- Abraham vv. 8-19

- Isaac v. 20

- Jacob v. 21

- Joseph v. 22

- Moses's Parents

- Moses

- Joshua / Israel v. 30

- Rahab (Joshua 2)
 - Gideon (Judges 6-7)
 - Barak (Judges 4)
 - Samson: (Judges 13-16)
 - Jephthah: (Judges 11)
 - David / Samuel (1 & 2 Samuel)
- **3. The Secret Of Their Success (Hebrews 11:6)**
 - Living as a Christian cannot be done in our own strength...it's impossible...we must live by faith!
 - What is Faith

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

- Faith = Trust
- Substance = Foundation = Jesus
- Evidence = We have not seen BUT we KNOW

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- To Please GOD = Must have FAITH
- Must Believe = That He is GOD
- Diligently Seek Him = With ALL your heart

- And it's not the AMOUNT of faith you have
 - It's the OBJECT of your faith
- **4. The Suffering That Many Endured (Hebrews 11:36-38)**
 - So many believers have gone thru tough trials
 - Life is not a bowl of cherries
 - We may have to struggle in our race
 - Go through hard trials
 - Guess what were not alone so did many others before us

Refuse To Be Ensured v. 1b

- **1. Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin v. 1d**

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

- **1. Breakdown**
 - **Lay Aside**
 - Greek: apotíthēmi;
 - Means: to lay. To renounce, lay off or down To lay aside, put off in a figurative sense “cast off the works of darkness”
 - **Weight**
 - Greek: ógkos;

- Means: A tumor, mass, magnitude, weight, burden, impediment (Heb. 12:1 where the apostle speaks of our Christian course under the similitude of a race).
- **Sin**
 - Greek: hamartía;
 - Means: to sin. Sin, missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is God. An offense in relation to God with emphasis on guilt.
- **Ensures**
 - Greek: euperístatos;
 - Means: well, easily, Easily surrounding or encompassing, easily besetting, as sin
- **2. We are told to Lay aside the Weights**
 - **One of the greatest problems riders / runners face is weight**
 - The Bikes are made with carbon fiber
 - Every part are made to be as light as possible
 - Reason
 - Too much weights will slow us down
 - **Spiritually Speaking - Weights are**
 - **NOT SIN**
 - **BUT** Are things that we can add to our lives that hold us down

- Things that impede our progress or burden down our hearts
- But it weighs us
 - Down
 - Diverts our attention
 - Saps our energy
 - Dampens our enthusiasm for the things of God
 - EVEN A GOOD THING, CAN BE A BAD THING, – IF IT KEEPS US FROM THE BEST THING
- Examples Common Weights
 - Our weights will differ from person to person
 - 1. Weight of People / Relationships before God
 - Yes people can be an idol
 - God is to be number one on a list of ONE
 - God must come before all human relationships
 - Don't HIDE behind People
 - Don't allow people to pull you back into your OLD life
 - 2. Weight of MATERIALISM
 - Added more & more stuff to our life that has slowed you down
 - Now your
 - Bills are High

- Indebt
- Stressed out
 - Fatigued
- Remember
 - It is NOT how MUCH you OWN?
 - It is how much OWNS you
 - Travel LIGHT

• 3. Weight of Conformity

- Being Conformed to this world
- Anything that can suck you back into this world
- TV / Movies / Hobbies, etc...
- Things that have caused you to spend more time playing
 - Less time Running
 - Pursuing worldly – Entertainment / than heavenly pursuits

• 4. Weights of bitterness and Anger

- Holding on to attitudes that are weighing you down
 - Impeding progress
 - Stifling growth
- We cannot win if we are weighted down

- Unloaded, we shall find the race taxing all our powers; but weighted, we shall be doomed to failure.
- **3. We are told to lay aside the SINS**
 - Some Christians try to run with Secret Sins
 - Nobody knows - where I am at - what doing.
 - Adultery / Drugs / Pornography / Compromise
 - SIN of SELF-PITY
 - Chambers *"If we give way to self-pity and indulge in the luxury of misery, we remove God's riches from our lives and hinder others from entering into His provision. No sin is worse than self-pity, because it removes God from the throne of our lives, replacing Him with our own self-interests. It causes us to open our mouths only to complain, and we simply become spiritual sponges—always absorbing, never giving, and never being satisfied. And there is nothing lovely or generous about our lives. "*
 - Solution
 - REPENT
 - Turn from the sins
 - Turn to the Lord
 - Get right with God! "We cannot win heaven and wear sin."

Run With Endurance v. 1c

- **1. Let us run with endurance v. 1e**

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

○ **1. The Word Endurance**

- Endurance
- Greek: hupomoné;
- Means: To persevere, remain under. A bearing up under, patience, endurance as to things or circumstances. This is in contrast to makrothumía (3115), long-suffering or endurance toward people. Hupomoné is associated with hope (1 Thess. 1:3) and refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.

○ **2. It Reminds Us This Isn't A Sprint**

- **Endurance speaks of a steady determination to keep going**
 - It means continuing even when everything in you wants to slow down or give up
 - Illustration
 - Tahoe Sierra Century
- **The Christian life is filled with mountain tops and valleys**
 - YOU NEED TO KEEP GOING
 - When Everything inside of us wants to stop...GIVE UP
 - There's a lack of endurance in the Church today
 - Too many people quitting their

- Walks
- Marriages
- Ministries
- We must hang in there

Acts 20:24 (NKJV)

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

- **3. It Realizes That Our Races Are Different**
 - Notice it says, “the race that is set before us”
 - The word race speaks of a course...not like an oval track
 - It’s a course that’s been set before each of us
 - Guess who did that? The Lord!
 - The course/race set before me will be different than the one set before you

Remain Focused On Jesus v. 2a

• 1. Looking To Jesus v. 2a

- **1. We’re encouraged “looking to Jesus...”**

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV)

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2 (NASB95)

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.

▪ The New American Standard Version translates

- Fixing our eyes on Jesus
- We can only run the race successfully, as we look to Jesus and have our eyes locked on Him
- He is our focus, our inspiration, and our example
- Like a child looks to their parents
- Spurgeon “The Greek word for ‘looking’ is a much fuller word than we can find in the English language. It has a preposition in it which turns the look, away from everything else... Fix not thy gaze upon the cloud of witnesses; they will hinder thee if they take away thine eye from Jesus. Look not on the weights and the besetting sin-these thou hast laid aside; look away from them. Do not even look upon the race-course, or the competitors, but look to Jesus and so start in the race.”
- Example
 - Peter walking on the water
 - When we get our eyes off of Jesus...that’s when all kinds of problems can sweep in

• **2. Letting Jesus Work v. 2b**

- **He’s “the author...finisher of our faith”**

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV)

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

○ **1. Realize We Need His Help**

- Jesus is
 - The Author - Originator
 - Finisher – Perfector – Completer

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

John 14:16–18 (NKJV)

16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV)

5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

○ **2. Recognize He Knows What’s Best For Me**

- How do I know I can trust Him?
 - Because of WHAT HE KNOWS

Psalms 147:5 (NKJV)

5 Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.

- His understanding is infinite...I am finite
 - My understanding is severely limited...but God’s understanding is limitless
- So TRUST GOD

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NKJV)

*5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*

Remember Jesus' Example vv. 2b-3

- **1. Consider Jesus vv. 2b-3**

Hebrews 12:2–3 (NKJV)

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

- **1. Who for the joy that was set before Him**
 - Jesus did not regard the cross itself as a joy.
 - But He could look past the horror of the cross to enjoy the joy beyond it.
 - The same mentality would enable these Jewish Christians (and we ourselves) to endure.
- **2. Endured the cross**
 - Knowing all the good that would flow from this most agonizing experience, Jesus was able to do it and to endure it with triumph. Through the ordeal of the cross:
- **3. Despising the shame**
 - One of the most prominent elements of the torture of the cross was its extreme shame.
 - Jesus did not welcome this shame – He despised it – yet He endured through it to victory.
- **4. Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself**

- Even in their difficulty if they would consider Jesus they could be encouraged, not discouraged, knowing that they were following in the footsteps of Jesus.
- As Paul wrote, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:17)
- **5. Lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls**
 - Knowing that Jesus doesn't ask more of us than what He has Himself experienced, and that He knows exactly what we are going through keeps us from becoming weary and discouraged in your souls.

Closing

- Jesus is OUR Example
 - He Loves you with Everything
 - Follow Him With Everything