

Title: The Race of Faith

Outline:

1. We are all in the race of faith.
2. We have our Model Racer
3. The Father is helping us.

Read [Hebrews 11:29-40](#)

Read [Hebrews 12:1-13](#)

Intro: The writer of Hebrews uses the context of those who ran the race of faith before us in the Old Testament. He then instructs us on how we should go about running our own race, with endurance and joy. We are encouraged to consider Jesus' earthly ministry looking towards Jesus who guides us as we straighten our paths walking towards God. As we grow closer to God, he acknowledges us as sons and corrects us through his discipline. His love for us exceeds our understanding at times but we see the fruits of our endurance as we abide in the Love of God.

We are all in the race of faith.

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

Cloud of Witnesses

- Verse 12:1 **"Therefore,"** brings in the context from the passage of Scripture.
- **They surround** us and we are in their presence.
- These OT saints are waiting in an **incomplete state**. There're waiting for us.
- Elijah's and Abraham's race is complete, and they are waiting and watching us. We are surrounded by them.
- (KJV "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses")
- **Their perfection is contingent on our finishing**; for we both seek the glory of the kingdom..
- Moses is a witness, Daniel is a witness, Joseph is a witness.

Run our Personal Race

- We were placed here in exactly this part of the race. COMMENT
- To run in our race efficiently we are instructed to --verse 1b, **let us also lay aside every weight,**
 - o Weight
 - But the ESV's translation of "weight" literally means "arrow barb." (LSJ)
 - The Greek writers also used as
 - body,
 - pride,
 - self-importance
 - o Sin
 - **Then the writer gets to the second thing we need to rid ourselves of verse 2 [lay aside the] sin which clings so closely,**
 - *Which clings so closely (euperistaton) Greek - ensnaring*
 - Sin is a trap; **sin is sticky!**
 - It is coming from every direction / skillfully surrounding/ besetting us
 - **Sin clings** to us to the point where we think it's a part of us.
 - The enemy will trick us into thinking that is just who we are that it is impossible for us to get rid of.
 - The author left "sin" in the largest context possible, MacLaren described it as "All sin" and "every kind of transgression," and "that it circles us round about, that it is always lying in wait and lurking for us." (MacLaren)
 - [Hebrews 11:24-25](#), By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.
- Endurance

- Now being stripped of their weights, the audience is instructed to run the race as God --the race organizer intended. Look at it in verse 1b, **# 3 and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**
- That word “endurance” may mean “steadfastness” and “constancy” also (OBU)
- Notice **THE Race**
- We were placed here in exactly this part of the race. This is our time to run well the race set before us. The race of faith.
- He also instructs us to run the race with endurance.
- In the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings patiently (OBU)
- Paul knew full-well of this race; listen to [1 Corinthians 9:24](#), Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.
 - Paul wanted to make sure the Church at Corinth knew that they should be running in this race. In fact it seems that this should have been common knowledge in the Church.

ILLUSTRATION

Greek runners at this time would run races naked so that no piece of clothing was holding them back.

APPLICATION

- The race is a **marathon where all Christians** are encouraged to run with steadfast endurance.
- Once finished we will join those who ran before us observing the generation behind us and the OT saints are now doing.
- When one is born again, he automatically is a runner.
 - God has described this life as a race to His people in His word. This is how we are to approach this life.
 - We are in the same race as all people of faith. They had to get rid of their weights just as we do now.
 - Races include elements of time.
 - Since we are runners of faith. How are we running? Are we making progress?
- We too must shed our personal “weight”. What is holding you back?
 - God wants us to focus on finishing what is set before us –personally.
 - What keeps us from what God has set before each one of us> These “weights.”
 - Weights can be human pursuits and human indulgences that are keeping out of contention.
 - Even though this weight may not cause you to sin, there is potential that you might stumble.
 - Scroll of doom
 - Sports
 - Money
 - “Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don’t really matter.” – Francis Chan
 - These may be some of the weights hindering us this morning that we need to shed which will hold us back in our race.
- Aso, we fall behind in this race when we sin. Paul wrote about this to the [Galatians in 5:7](#), You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? (NIV)
- We too must run with endurance.
 - Barclay said it best, “In the Christian life we have a means. That means is steadfast endurance. The word is *hupomone* (Greek #5281) which does not mean the patience which sits down and accepts things but the patience which masters them. It is not some romantic thing which lends us wings to fly over the difficulties and the hard places. It is a determination, unhurrying and yet undelaying, which goes steadily on and refuses to be deflected. Obstacles do not

daunt it and discouragements do not take its hope away. It is the steadfast endurance which carries on until in the end it gets there.” (Barclay)

- How is your race going?

TRANSITION

Now that we see that we are supposed to join the others who have run well by responding to sin and endurance, let's turn our attention to the Model Racer we are supposed to focus on while we are running.

We have the Model Racer

- **2 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.**
 - **Looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith,**
 - We keep our eyes on Jesus. Not what the world has for us instead. Not what the world is tempting us with. We look to Jesus at the finish line; not looking to the right or left.
 - He is the founder and perfecter of our faith
 - Founder = (some translations “author”) = leading, furnishing the first cause or occasion (Thayer)
 - He started our faith and He will complete it in glory.
 - He is doing the work
 - **Phil 1:6** “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
 - **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross**
 - “For the joy” to follow.
 - He joyfully endured the cross. **Luke 14:26**
 - **2b despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**
 - He endured the cross, giving glory to God, because he knew it was his purpose here. And He was rewarded.
 - Despise the shame of the death on the cross.
- He ran for the prize as we ought to.
 - Reward
 - We are running as one body toward the God's reward –His inheritance to us.
 - **Hebrews 11:13** **These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.**

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

- His joy did not come easy --from an earthly perspective.
- Consider = case study
- Here we have what Barclay called “The Standard Of Comparison.”
- Consider GREEK: “contemplate ponder”
- Endured from sinners > resulting in death.
- REASON: **so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.**
 - We are to be encouraged because he lived a perfect life yet received the worst punishment from the world.
 - We can endure because Jesus endured.

v 4, In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

- Greater to the lesser.
- “He pleads with them to compare what they have to suffer with what Jesus suffered. He gave up the glory which was his; he came into all the narrowness of the life of humanity; he faced the hostility of men; in the end he had to die upon a cross. So, the writer to the Hebrews in effect demands:

"How can you compare what you have to go through with what he went through? He did all that for you--what are you going to do for him?" (Barclay)

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- "The word ["struggle" in the ESV] is the Greek word] *antagonizomai* 'to fight agonizingly against. It speaks of a terrific fight." (Wuest, 217)
- Lesser to the greater. Our Hero Jesus suffered to death. The Hebrews needed encouragement to suffer much less.
- Sometime the Church is destined to struggle as the Lord did in persecution at the hand of sinful man.
- The Hebrews –at this point—didn't experience persecution as Jesus did.
- We do not know what the Hebrews are facing, but it was bloodless.
- Common persecution in the 1st Century involved
 - Imprisonment.
 - Run out of town.
 - Lost their job.
 - Mocked.
- "For them the struggle of Christianity has not yet become a mortal struggle. ... When they think of what the heroes of the past went through to make their faith possible, surely they cannot drift into lethargy or flinch from conflict." (Barclay)

APPLICATION

- We too are bloodless.
 - 21st century to persecution as least
 - What are our problems. Are they not small to the first century Church? Are they not miniscule in comparison to what our Lord endured.
 - How do we suffer here? Now?
 - Time? Frustration Energy.
- We too are not to grow weary or be faint of heart
 - If we are tired of the Christian faith, our eyes are not on Jesus.
 - Keep our eyes on Jesus despite the trials and tribulations.
- Keep living the faith.
 - "In the Christian life we have a goal. The Christian is not an unconcerned stroller along the byways of life; he is a wayfarer on the high road. He is not a tourist, who returns each night to the place from which he starts; he is a pilgrim who is for ever on the way. The goal is nothing less than the likeness of Christ. The Christian life is going somewhere, and it would be well if, at each day's ending, we were to ask ourselves: "Am I any farther on?" (Barclay)
 - We are encouraged to keep the Kingdom at the **forefront of our minds.**
 - We are to endure easier circumstances because our Lord endured the hardest. Coming from heaven to a Roman cross.
 - "He pleads with them to compare what they have to suffer with what Jesus suffered. He gave up the glory which was his; he came into all the narrowness of the life of humanity; he faced the hostility of men; in the end he had to die upon a cross. So, the writer to the Hebrews in effect demands: "How can you compare what you have to go through with what he went through? He did all that for you-- what are you going to do for him?" (Barclay)

TRANSITION

Now that we have seen that we are to be looking to Jesus and executing the race the ways He executed His ministry on earth, let's turn and look at how the Father is helping us.

Verse 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

- "A father always disciplines his child. It would not be a mark of love to let a son do what he likes and have nothing but an easy way; it would show that the father regarded the

son as no better than an illegitimate child to whom he felt neither love nor responsibility.” (Barclay)

- **Reason: verse 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises [lit: scourges] every son whom he receives.**
 - o “disciplines” = primary meaning: to train children (Thayer)
 - o AND “chastises” = Greek: *mastigoō* = *literally: [it has only ever meant] scourging, lashing, or flogging.*
 - o Interpreted as (correct/train/discipline) AND (beat as punishment)
 - o He does not view us as criminals taking stand to receive punishment, because Jesus has atoned for that, but there is a new relationship of father and child where he nurtures us and puts us in position to grow.
 - o HERE: “The word does not have in it the idea of punishment, but of corrective measures which will eliminate evil in the life and encourage the good.” (Wuest, 217)
 - o God’s corrective actions in our lives are a **whisper and a whip.** They refine us and make us stronger.
 - o Often, we fail to hear the whispers and the counsel of others and end up with painful corrections of God.
 - o **He does not cast us off,** which we deserve, because we are his children.
- Remind of verse 3 ... similar to verse 6 >>> At times the Body has been persecuted because of the Lord’s discipline. Sinful man is the tool. It is clear that this is the case with the audience of Hebrews.
- God’s purpose enforced: **7 It is for discipline that you have to endure.**
 - o **God is treating you as sons.**
 - o **For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?**
 - The word 'endure' is *hupomeno*, literally, 'to remain under.' That is, the recipients of this letter are exhorted to remain under the chastening hand of God, for the purpose of this chastening is disciplinary. (Wuest, 218)
 - Those who are **called to correction**

You and I better hope we are disciplined, look at verse **8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**

9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

- We often take discipline the wrong way and get mad at God. Here the author warns against this.
- Remember The Father’s discipline is divine, therefore perfect, so we are to have faith that it is for our good.
 - o David Guzik wrote, “We all do not know by *experience* what a model father is, but we all know by *intuition* what a good father is. God is that perfect Father, and He gives us that intuition. One feels cheated or disappointed by a *bad* father because they intuitively compare them to our *good* Father in heaven.”

11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- o The writer of Hebrews continues to explain that a father who loves his children will put in effort to correct them.
- o His inactivity is never due to ignorance or a lack of initiative, as may be true with a human father.
- o Life has no value apart from discipline.
- o It is God’s responsibility to discipline His children when we sin, if not Him then who?
- o If withstanding scourging makes us sons, we should rejoice in chastisement.

- He does not cast us off, which we deserve, because we are related to him, and the proof is His discipline.
- Trust that his discipline is growing us even when we don't see how.
 - "The greatest anger of all is when God is no longer angry with us when we sin."(Jerome?)
 - Earthly fathers are fueled by passions and the heat of the moment when disciplining us, but God disciplines for our greatest good and to save us for eternity

APPLICATION

- Discipline done wrongly by our earthly fathers is due to their lack of insight.
- But God's is perfect. It is ...
 - Painful not pleasant
 - It makes us fruitful and keeps us from failure
 - It trains us and doesn't taint us.
 - those who have been trained by it have peace and righteousness
 - Those that haven't been trained, faced affliction and gained nothing
 - *The presence of God's discipline is a sign of God's Love in our lives.*
- "It frequently requires a long time before all the results of affliction appear - as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden orange." (Albert Barnes)
- Our response to God's discipline determines our fruit. Our lack of response determines our failure.
- We must mature in our faith through suffering so that we may share God's holiness

(Landing Applicational Point) 12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

- Therefore, connects what has been said to what is about to be said.
- Here is the author's conclusional application to the audience.
- Lift your dropping hands and strengthen your weak knees ties back to running with endurance = Pull yourself together and run straight conserving your energy and staying focused
- Instead of drooping hands and weak knees, the audience is encouraged to handle the discipline they are receiving from the Lord as motivation towards correction.
- "In every congregation and in every Christian society there are those who are weaker and more likely to go astray and to abandon the struggle. It is the duty of those who are stronger to put fresh vigor into listless hands and fresh strength into failing feet..... To help these people we have to make their ways straight. A Christian has a double duty; he has a duty to God and a duty to his fellow men." (Barclay)
- **so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.**
 - "What is lame" = What is lame = sinfulness
 - "May be" = It's still a choice: out of joint or healing.
 - The Lord's discipline should lead to healing. But the disciplined must choose and respond.
 - Mind and will
 - Obey discipline to be healed.

CONCLUSION

- "... If we would run well, we must run light; if we would run light, we must look to Christ." (MacLaren)
- We need to run the race with good form, conscious of how we are moving towards God or away, not swaying or wavering but going straight in our paths and finishing at the finish line.
- Jesus has restored our relationship with God through his sacrifice, not so that we can stay broken but rather healed. Not just so we can just walk by faith but to run by faith. As

we run, we must identify when and where God is helping us and respond to this with faithfulness.