

THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US

Jkroberts_us@yahoo.com

www.pacolethillsbaptist.org

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Hebrews 12:1-2

1. This message is an addendum to the message I preached last Sunday.
2. Last Sunday the three main points of the message were:
 - a. Do not let sin be your master anymore.
 - b. Do be obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you have been committed.
 - c. Do not trust in your ability, but do have total confidence in God's ability.
3. As Christians we must have a proper understanding of the fact that following Jesus Christ will require our full attention, active and ongoing effort, and a willingness to accept hardship. 2 Tim 2:3-7

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 Also if anyone competes as **an athlete**, he does not win the prize unless he **competes according to the rules**. 6 **The hard-working farmer** ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. 7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

NOTE: A soldier understands that life will not always be easy, an athlete knows he must follow the rules, and a farmer recognizes that farming involves work.

4. Each analogy Paul used conveys various realities related to being a genuine Christian.
5. This morning I am going to focus on Paul's analogy of an athlete who is running a race with the intention of winning that race.
6. Every race has a starting point, a defined course, and an eventual finish line.
7. The writer of Hebrews admonished, "Let us run...the race that is set before us with our eyes fixed on Jesus who successfully ran His race and has now sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
8. We must focus on Jesus because He is the author and perfecter of faith, as well as our example related to what must motivate us, and what we can expect to deal with along the way.
9. You and I have a race to run; a race that has been set before us by God.
10. Like any race it had a starting point, involves a predetermined course to be run, and leads to a designated finish line; our transfer from earth to heaven.
11. On the day of our transfer our goal should be to be able to say what Paul said as he approached his appointment with death. 2 Tim 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.
12. As we fix our eyes on Jesus we are to:

I. Lay aside every encumbrance.

- A. An encumbrance is anything that might hinder us from running the race that has been set before us.
- B. An encumbrance is not necessarily sinful, but it is not helpful either.
- C. The word encumbrance refers to something that is prominent, a burden or a weight.
- D. It can be a person, a passion, or a priority that means more to us than Jesus does.
- E. An encumbrance could involve certain attitudes or actions that prevent us from running our race as God intended it to be run. I Corinthians 9:24-27

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. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

II. Lay aside every entanglement or sin.

- A. Notice that the Bible says, "Let us...lay aside the sin which so easily entangles us."
- B. Why is it that sin so easily entangles us, trips us up, or gets in our way?
- C. It so easily entangles us because we let it do so; something we are commanded not to do. Rom 6:12-14

Therefore do not let sin reign (as king) in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

- D. Paul pointed out in Romans 6 that we have died to sin and are now enslaved to God.
- E. The power of sin over our lives has been broken, and by the grace of God and His Indwelling Spirit we are enabled to determine who or what will rule in our lives.

III. Run with endurance.

- A. The Christian life is not a sprint; it is a marathon.
- B. Strong's concordance defines this word as "cheerful or hopeful endurance."
- NOTE: In Christ we are guaranteed winners if we persevere unto the end. James 1:12
Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.
- C. Thayer's definition: Steadfastness, constancy, or endurance.
 - a. In the New Testament 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.
 - b. Patient, steadfast waiting for.
 - c. A patient, enduring, sustaining perseverance.

APPLICATION

1. Jesus pointed out that there are two ways open to us. Matt 7:13-14

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are **many** who enter through it. 14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are **few** who find it."

NOTE: According to Jesus the Last Days of the Church Age will be characterized, for the most part, by an outwardly successful brand of Christianity that is, in reality, a perversion of genuine Christianity. It will produce many "lukewarm" adherents who will be rejected instead of welcomed into the presence of God. Revelation 3:14-22

2. He also stated the following. Matt 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

3. Note also His stern words in Matt 7:21-23.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "**Many** will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"

4. The effeminate, convenient, comfortable, and popular brand of Christianity being sold and practiced in America today has little resemblance to that which impacted the world in the first Christian century.

5. May God help us to be willing to suffer, sow, disciple, and run the race He intends for us to run.