

RUNNING THE CHRISTIAN RACE

Text: Heb. 12:1-4

INTRO. The word "wherefore" used to begin this chapter, connects it with the previous chapter. In doing this, the writer is holding up the great heroes of faith as examples, and is using them as witnesses to encourage both the Hebrews and us to greater faithfulness.

Paul seems to draw from the Roman games, where the spectators gathered in great numbers to watch the contestants.

- A. These witnesses were not literally looking upon the lives of people who were still on earth while they were in heaven (Eccle 9:5). *For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.*
- B. This is a figure of speech to encourage both them and us to act as if we are really in the presence of that great host. I
- C. Remember they are witnesses not Spectators.

After One is save he is to run the Christian race with patience. There are certain rules laid down in the Scriptures which make for a good and profitable race.

- A. First there is obedience unto salvation. Heb. 10:22 *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (1 John 1:7).*
 1. Paul talks about this in Heb 9:14; Eph 1:7 *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*
- B. Second there is baptism *and our bodies washed with pure water."*
 1. Pure water of baptism. Baptism, like washing and sprinklings of the law, is a ceremonial cleansing to Divine service not to salvation. Acts 22:16; 2:38; 1 Pet, 3:21
- C. Third there is faithfulness Heb. 10:23 *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised;)*
 1. Such is required in church members. I Cor. 4:2
- D. Fourth there is love, Heb.10:24 *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:"*
 1. Let us bear in mind one another's wants, needs, weaknesses, character, and individuality, and motivate (each other) to deeds of *love*
 2. Church members must love God and their fellow man if they live successfully (John 13:34-35).
- E. There must be regular church attendance (Heb 10:25). *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*
 1. Disobedience in church attendance usually leads to disobedience in daily prayer, Bible study, giving, and weakens ones resistance to temptation.
 2. Regular church attendance is to motivate and encourage one another in the labors of the Lord, and in a life of holy service.

ONE WHO IS SAVED DOESN'T RUN THE CHRISTIAN RACE TO BE SAVED OR TO STAY SAVED

- A. He runs the race because he is saved.
- B. Unless one is obedient to God and is willing to follow the rules he cannot expect to be rewarded at the finish (2Tim 2:1-5).
 1. Rewards are for those who faithfully serve God (Rev. 22:12). *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."*

IN ORDER TO RUN THE CHRISTIAN RACE EFFECTIVELY, THERE ARE SIX -THINGS WE MUST DO

I. WE MUST CONSIDER OTHERS WHO HAVE RUN v.1

- A. The great cloud of witnesses spoken of in verse one refers to the faithful men-and women mentioned in chapter eleven.
- B. As in a relay race, the baton of the faith has been passed on to us, and we must run the next leg. (Rom. 1:17) "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith,"
 - 1. Old testament covenant to New Testament covenant

II. WE MUST LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT. v. 1

- A. The Greek athletes tied weight to their legs as they conditioned for the races.
 - 1. When the race started they laid aside these weights so that they might run with ease.
- B. Likewise we must lay aside everything that, might hinder us in the Christian race.
 - 1. It may be a life of ease (Heb. 6:12; 5:11). "concerning this we have much to say -which is hard to explain, since you have become dull in your spiritual hearing and sluggish, even slothful in achieving spiritual insight.
 - 2. It might be love of esteem, pride or social ties.
 - 3. Every man must examine himself and strip away the excess baggage which would hinder his testimony and service to God (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

III. WE MUST LAY ASIDE EVERY BESETTING SIN. v. 1

- A. If there is known sin in our lives, we must confess it and repent of it in order to run the race with patience
- B. The Hebrews besetting sin was unbelief.
- C. To others it may be a spirit of compromise.
 - 1. Or a tinge of worldliness.
- D. Whatever it may be it must be laid aside.
- E. When Paul wrote the Galatians he mentioned some who did run well for a time, but were hindered (Gal. 5:7). "you did run well; who did hinder you that should not obey the truth,"
 - 1. Some of them were hindered because they tried to go on in the flesh after having been saved by grace .
 - 2. Others were hindered by trying to go back under the law system (Gal 5:1).

IV. WE MUST RUN WITH PATIENCE. v. 1

- A. Patience is gained through tribulation (Rom. 5:3 But we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience." James 1:3 "Knowing, this that the trying of your faith worketh patience."
- B. When trials, disappointments and tragedy strike, one learns to roll with the punches.
 - 1. One must undergo trials before he can apply patience to his life

V. WE MUST KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS CHRIST. v. 2 "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith."

- A. Some folk quit the race because they get their eyes focused on the wrong things (Col. 3:2). "Set your affection on things above, not on things oil the earth." Matt. 6:24
- B. We have cross eyed church members, one eye on the world and the other on Christ.

VI. WE MUST CONSIDER JESUS. v.3 What did Jesus go through for our redemption?

- A. Opposition of sinners, abuse of religious leaders, ridicule, persecution, torture and death by crucifixion.
- B. What pesecution and trial have you experienced for Christ sake?

Conclusion: verse four "Ye have not yet-resisted unto blood, striving against sin.