



28: Run With Endurance

We've been convinced — we should be by now — that to follow Jesus is the best way, the only way. That's why we must each "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" and it's why we must encourage each other to do the same (10:19 – 25). If we turn back there is no other hope (10:26 – 32).

We must persevere in faith and the writer of the Book of Hebrews has just given us a whole chapter, packed with examples from the Old Testament, to make sure we know what faith is and what it's like to persevere in it. Now he draws an inevitable conclusion:

"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, 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.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin."

Hebrews 12:1 – 4

He's drawing an analogy with a foot race. We're led to imagine ourselves running in front of a crowd that includes all the men and women of faith mentioned in chapter 11. We're told that we must "Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us" (12:1).

- ◆ *List as many examples as you can of things that could be an encumbrance when you are striving to persevere in faith.*
- ◆ *Think of some times when you have been easily ensnared by sin. How did it happen? How could you have avoided being trapped the way you were?*

We're told to "Run with endurance the race that is set before us" (12:1).

- ◆ *In what ways is persevering in faith like running a race?*

- ◆ *What lessons can we learn from the analogy as it's used here and in other parts of the Bible?*

"Looking unto Jesus" (12:2) is an example of one of those Bible terms that has become an evangelical cliché.

- ◆ *What does it mean to "Look unto Jesus" in practice? What clues are you given in verses 2 – 4?*
- ◆ *Have you ever become "weary and discouraged"? What was that like? How would looking onto Jesus help at times like that?*

Jesus is described in verse 2 as "the author and finisher of our faith." The New King James translation isn't the most helpful. The New International Version captures the thought better with "the pioneer and perfecter of faith." Jesus is the pathfinder or trail-blazer of faith and He has done everything that's necessary to make faith work: He has lived a life of flawless — perfect — faith.

- ◆ *Explain in your own words what the writer of the Book of Hebrews means when he says that Jesus is the "author and finisher of our faith."*