

Consider Him - Hebrews 12-3-17

by Anthony Mathenia

The Christian life is a race that requires endurance and perseverance, but with Jesus as our focus and our trust in His sovereignty and love, we can overcome weariness and faintheartedness.

Duration: 46:17

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3, Hebrews 12:11, Hebrews 12:14-17, Hebrews 12:28

Topics: "Christian Perseverance", "Faith And Endurance"

Description

This sermon delves into Hebrews 12, emphasizing the Christian race as a theme, urging believers to endure and run the race set before them. It highlights the importance of responding to trials with faith and focusing on Jesus amidst difficulties. The sermon stresses the need for corporate support, pursuing peace and holiness, and avoiding pitfalls like bitterness and godlessness. The ultimate goal is to run the race well, looking to Jesus as the perfect example and source of strength.

Transcript

Well, in thinking about Hebrews 12 and this great Christian race that we've looked at now for a couple of weeks in some measure, the writer is still not off of that theme, so if you're tired of hearing about the expectations for endurance and the Christian race that we've been called to run, I should apologize from the outset because really through verse 17, which is what we're going to look at, the writer is still in some manner considering the Christian life as a race. He does take a break right in the center and use an illustration of a family in order to help us understand the sovereign love of God, but by and large he's still encouraging us to run this race. And he's encouraging us to do it in a way that we could actually set up as an outline based on the three previous songs that we've just sung together.

When trials come, and they will, I'm willing to bet that everyone in here could say trials have come. Many are in the midst of them now or have been recently. Some of you will wake up tomorrow morning to a new one.

If you haven't experienced any trials in the Christian life, you haven't lived long enough, just wait. But when trials come, our goal is to respond in the way that the hymn writer did in the second hymn that we sang. It is well, whatever my lot, whatever God has called me to walk through, whatever course He has set before me, I will say it is well.

Why? Because He is God. Because He's in control and He loves His people. And the only way for us to respond when trials come by saying it is well is if we are keeping our focus or our gaze on Him, surveying Christ, or as the hymn writer says it, surveying the work that He has done on the cross.

When I survey the wondrous cross, that's the expectation here that the writer is giving to us, that He's laid out for us, a persevering, regulated effort that's progressing. That was last week's message in a nutshell. Laying aside every encumbrance that gets in the way and all of the entangling sin that so often keeps us from running well and fixing our eyes on Jesus.

Now, it's very likely that at this point you're thinking, this is enough stressing on the expectation of endurance. I'm weary already. And the writer of Hebrews has us in mind this week, preventing us from growing weary and being fainthearted.

But think about it. A couple of weeks now, focusing on the expectation of enduring and pressing on. But think about the past week.

To what degree have you really pressed on in the Christian race? Are there any encumbrances that are quickly coming to your mind that you have consciously in the past week laid aside in order that you might run better? Are there entangling sins that you know are there, that affect you so often? Darling sins that you've laid aside in order that you might continue running and not be entangled so easily in them. How many times in the past week or ten days have you taken the opportunity to still your heart and reorient your eyes, the eyes of your heart, to Jesus? How many times have you looked to Him in the past week seeing that He is not only the author, but the perfecter who will finish His work in you, the author and perfecter of faith? How often in the past week have you looked at His life of endurance, looking at the race that He ran? Have you been fixing your gaze on Him? That's what the writer of Hebrews is asking. That's why I can't get away from this theme.

It's incredibly practical. Beginning at the middle of chapter 10, it's been one practical application or implication, we might say, after the next in order that we might see Him. Christ, who for promised joy thought very little of the shame that was before Him in the course that He had to run, even in the midst of the most difficult circumstance imaginable, He ran well.

His Father turned His back on Him. He turned away while He became sin for us, yet He ran well, the Son of the living God, who was God Himself, not clinging to His godness as He ran through this earth, the course that the Father had given, but rather pouring Himself out into the frailty of a human frame. From eternal, majestic King on high to the form of a bondservant.

From creating the world with a mere spoken word to gasping for His first breath in Bethlehem's now infamous barn. From creator of heaven and earth to passing through this created earth in our likeness. Being tempted in every imaginable way as we are or have been or ever might be, yet He did it without sin.

And as a result of this Christ that the writer of Hebrews is causing us to reorient the eyes of our heart to, as a result of His living in animated dust-type flesh, our style of flesh, in our world of sin and sorrow, in our world of sickness and disease, of trials and death, He can and does sympathize with our weaknesses. He humbled Himself to live in this fallen world that is terribly infected with sin and is damaged by the results of sin. Yet in doing so, He was not polluted by it.

Now, the encouragements that we have here at the outset of chapter 12 are great. The cloud of witnesses. We have to say, it's remarkable, the cloud of witnesses that's recorded for us there in chapter 11.

Those witnesses are very encouraging when we look at their footprints before us and we attempt to follow them. Getting rid of the sin. What an encouragement.

What a help. Getting rid of the extra weight, even the good things, the gifts from God. That's no doubt helpful in running this race, but nothing, absolutely nothing, will stimulate real running in this Christian race like looking unto Jesus.

And the author is convinced of this. In thinking about running, I'm reminded of Bunyan's little poem about running where he says to himself, Run, John, run, the law demands, but gives us neither feet nor hands. Far better news the gospel brings.

It bids me fly and gives me wings. Do you not find that true? We've been provided all that is needed to actively, fervently pursue Christ. And it's Him.

He's all we need to seek the Lord in His strength, to seek His face forevermore. But after these first two verses, oftentimes when we think about Hebrews 12, 1 and 2, the first two verses are all we ever consider. And it's possible for us to leave really pepped up like we've been in some sort of pep rally and think, wow, this is going to be pretty easy.

I mean, look at all the encouragements laid before us. But the writer isn't so convinced of that. That's why Hebrews doesn't end with Hebrews 12, 2. He doesn't sign off, signing whatever his name was, whoever wrote this, and letting it be.

The Christian race that the writer of Hebrews is encouraging us in, even with all of these wonderful incentives, will not be easy. And he's aware of that. And so he offers even more help to us, help that will fight weariness and faint-heartedness.

Verse 3, Consider Jesus, who has endured hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. That's what's around the next corner. If you aren't there already, that's what's coming.

Weariness, faint-heartedness, that's what's before us. So the writer says consider Him. Fix your eyes on Him.

Look with intent to Jesus, considering who He is and how He ran as our pioneer, our leader in this race. Finding Him, getting Him into proper focus, adjusting our focus, preventing any obscuring of the lens at all, so that we might stay in tune with who He is and what He's done. In the simplified version of all that I've said thus far, we might say it this way.

Just look at Jesus and don't stop looking at Him. That's what the writer is attempting to drill into our souls here. Don't stop gazing at the Lord.

This considering Jesus, verse 2 is fixing our eyes on Him, finding Him, getting Him in proper focus, but this considering Jesus is not some quick glance for a pick-me-up at the first of the week to fight the Monday morning blues. That's not the kind of consideration that the writer is encouraging here. It's a long look, a protracted gaze, one that never, ever loses sight of Him.

Ever. Can you imagine that? You have that privilege as a Christian to see Christ today and to never lose sight of Him for the rest of your life. It will only get better.

It ought to be our goal to continue to lay down weights and to get rid of entangling sins so that we see Him clearer and clearer, that we might pick up the pace and run with more rapidity and faster until one day we see Him as He really is. Apart from the presence of sin, we see Him face to face, and we worship Him forever, patiently dwelling on Him, meditating on His life and His work. That's the race that we're called to run.

Now, you may be asking yourself, if that's the race we're called to run, why couldn't it be a little easier? I mean, isn't there a simplified version we can sign up for? Well, let's ask ourselves that question. Why is the race not less difficult? Why is it not an easy race? I'll answer it primarily with two reasons from the text here. One, because we live in a fallen world that's ravaged by sin.

Two, we live in a world that's not only ravaged by sin, but it's governed by a sovereign God. Now, the first reason is understandable. Verse 4, you've not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood, and you're striving against sin.

Sin affects our progress. We've all felt it. Most of us have experienced it this morning already.

We feel it because it's our experience. The world is hostile. I mean, Jesus made this clear when He's talking to His disciples there in the upper room in His last will and testament in the discourse that He gives to them, saying, if the world hates you, know that it's hated me before it hated you.

Or previously in His teaching, saying, a disciple's not above his teacher. If they've called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household? We ought not to expect anything but a difficult course. So the race that we've been given to run is difficult because we're running a course in the midst of a sinful world.

Now, the second point I mentioned could seem a little strange. We live in a world governed by a sovereign God. Therefore, it's a difficult race.

Well, I think if we back up and see it from the right angle, we'll see that it makes more sense if we understand that this sovereign God is fully committed to our absolute conformity to Jesus Christ. And I hope that we will see how these things combine. We've been called to run a course through a sinful world by a God who is committed to us being conformed to the image of His Son, not just in the end, but all along the way.

And before the writer focuses at all on these difficulties and spells them out, he gives us the remedy right from the outset, saying, consider Jesus. Consider His enduring of all that this dark world threw at Him. Do you not agree that Christ had more difficulty thrown at Him than you ever will or could even imagine? None of us are going to be called to run through a course that contains the white-hot wrath of God.

None of us. Consider Jesus, His withstanding of scorn and ridicule from us type sinners. Yet He ran well.

Peter, concerning this course, said, Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. He committed no sin. No deceit was found in His mouth.

And while being reviled, He didn't revile in return. While suffering, He uttered no threats. But He kept entrusting Himself to Him, to His Father who judges righteously.

And the crucifixion is the culmination of this life of endurance. Being found in appearance of a man, He humbled Himself. By becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

That's why the writer of Hebrews says, Consider Him. Encouraging us to be incredibly diligent about consistently using all the means of grace that are at our disposal. Refocusing daily, at the least, if not moment by moment, on the goal, on Christ Himself.

Exercising real dependence on Him and His strength. Following Him who is our leader, the author of this faith. Fixing our gaze continually on Him.

Consider Him because it's a hostile world that's devastated by sin. Sin that will cause, as the writer warns us here, weariness and faintheartedness. It will.

And in your race thus far, the writer says to the original readers, and all of us, because we're still living and breathing, it applies to us as well. In the race that God has called you to run thus far, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding of blood. Or to the point of death.

That's actually what's being, that's actually the intended meaning here. Not one of us have resisted sin to that point. We see this in the life of Jesus.

We see this from the passage in Peter's letter. He resisted all the way to the point of death. He Himself bore our sins, continuing the passage in 1 Peter 2. He bore them in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

It's by His wounds that we ourselves are healed. You've not yet resisted to the point. There's an expectation here from the writer of Hebrews that you are indeed striving in some manner.

That you are resisting sin, at least in some degree. To some degree, you must be fighting against sin. The writer of Hebrews expects it from his original recipients and we ought to expect it among anyone who claims the name of Christ.

He isn't suggesting here with his statement in verse 4 that you haven't yet begun to strive or resist. He's reminding you that you haven't striven to the point of death. The Hebrews had suffered to some extent.

Look back with me at chapter 10, beginning in verse 32. The writer says to them, Remember the former days when after being enlightened you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

They had suffered to some extent, but evidently, based on what the writer says here, none of them had suffered to the point of death. Martyrdom had not yet visited them. Consider Jesus, the writer of Hebrews says.

Yes, you're facing difficult times. Yes, life is pressing in from every angle. The temptation to quit and return to comfort and ease is growing, it's mounting day by day, but the writer here says it could be worse.

You could be being slaughtered, being killed, shedding blood. The first reason that the race is difficult is because we live in a world that we have damaged by sin. And the second reason that we find ourselves weary and faint-hearted, verse 5, you've forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you.

You've forgotten Proverbs chapter 3. In essence, it's what he's saying. He's saying to you, where we have recorded for us, my son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments for length of days and years of life and peace. They will add to you.

Do not let kindness and truth leave you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart so that you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of your produce so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.

My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe His reproof. For whom the Lord loves, He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. What the writer is saying here, you've forgotten.

You've forgotten that God is sovereign. You've forgotten that He's overseeing all that's going on in the world around you, in your life. Don't forget this.

Don't forget that He loves you and He delights in you and He's proving it by disciplining you. At this point in the text is where the writer moves, as I mentioned earlier, from the picture of a race to the picture of a family and he's going to come back and finish up the picture of the race a little later, but for now he is using the family here to describe the sovereign love of God. In verse 7 through 11 here in Hebrews, we could summarize this way by saying this is a commentary on the first 12 verses of Proverbs chapter 3. It's for discipline that you endure.

God deals with you as sons. What son is there whom His Father does not discipline? He deals with you as sons. No discipline means no sonship.

If we are not being disciplined by God, we are illegitimate children and do not belong to Him. Difficulty in life does not equal disfavor from God, but fatherhood. Difficulty in life does not mean remoteness from God, but nearness or closeness.

Or verse 9, respect is given to earthly fathers who merely gave you physical life. So honor should be given to God who gives eternal life. That's the easy flow of thought here.

Or verse 10, they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them. Just build two categories in your mind. Earthly fathers disciplined for a short time.

They're only in your father's house for a short time. God disciplines with eternity in mind. I mean, ideally, we as earthly fathers will do the same with eternity in mind, but typically we're working in one specific area when it comes to discipline.

And oftentimes, as seems best to us, as the writer of Hebrews says, but not so with God. He disciplines solely for our good. No ulterior motive.

No selfishness involved. No laziness on His part. No letting anything slide.

But being careful to point out every little issue that will impede progress and prevent us from complete conformity to His Son. We discipline for a short time, what seems best to us. But He disciplines, the writer says, for our good.

What is our good? That we may share His holiness. That we may be like Him. Verse 11, all of us know this to be true.

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful. I don't think anyone's going to raise their hand and say they enjoy discipline. We enjoy the results.

We know that it works. So we can agree experientially that verse 11 is true. All discipline for the moment seems to be not joyful, but sorrowful.

Yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. If we haven't experienced it in our own lives, we've either seen it in our children or in friends. We could summarize verse 11 this way.

Right now, discipline is pain, not pleasure. But ultimately, it's pleasure absent any pain. John Trapp, the Puritan, said it this way.

He that rides to be crowned will not think much of a rainy day. If we see the goal, if we see Christ, if we understand that God is a loving God who is sovereignly conforming us to the image of His Son, if we see that that's the goal for us, we won't think much of a rainy day. We're riding to be crowned.

Or Habergas' famous hymn. Light after darkness, gain after loss, strength after weakness, crown after cross, sweet after bitter, hope after fears, home after wondering, praise after tears, sheaves after sowing, sun after rain, sight after mystery, peace after pain, joy after sorrow, calm after blast, rest after weariness, sweet rest at last, near after distant, gleam after gloom, love after loneliness, life after tomb. After long agony, rapture of bliss, right was the pathway leading to this.

That gives us a right understanding of how to accept the discipline of the Lord, the difficulties in life. When we begin to see that He's sovereign and that He's loving and that He desires for what the writer of Hebrews is encouraging us to do to happen, when we are reluctant to lay down those weights and we hoard in the deep recesses of our heart those darling sins, God will orchestrate our path to make it a little easier to lay them down, proving to us that we can't run the course all the way to the end, holding on to the weights and the sins. How should we respond to discipline included here in verses 5 and 6, a quotation from Job? Job says this.

Job knew personally concerning the discipline of the Lord. He said this, Now happy is the man whom God reproves. So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

Don't despise it. Don't think small of it, because happiness comes as a result. Or we could respond in this way, the way that the writer has already suggested, fixing our eyes on Jesus, considering Him, because our assessment of every situation, no matter how dark or grim, no matter how trying or difficult, will make

much more sense if we look at it through the lens of Christ.

No matter how bad the world seems, no matter how trying our life seems, if we look through the lens of Him, it makes all the more sense. God purposes to make us holy in a world of sin, and He uses discipline in love. Now, I hope you can see the connectedness of these two issues that are affecting us.

The race that we've been called to run is difficult. It's not easy, and we are tempted to weariness and faintheartedness because we're running a course that's surrounded by sin, and we're running a course that's being orchestrated or controlled by a sovereign God who has determined that we will run through untainted by the sin in the end. God, as the sovereign lover of our souls, is working out all things for our good.

All things. The discipline that the writer is mentioning here looks and feels tough at times in life. Trying situations, difficult circumstances, which is why He reminds us, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him.

We must not miss this, that the writer is warning us here not to despise those times, not to look for comfort and ease or the quickest way out, not to spend our lives running from the loving hand of God, not to waste our time and effort attempting to escape His kind intentions for our lives. He's reminding us to look at and believe that God's tender hand of discipline is producing holiness and righteousness and peace and eternal life. All of those are listed right here in the text.

We could summarize it simply this way. This is what the writer of Hebrews is saying. If we know Him, really know Him and understand how He works, it changes everything because it affects in us a desire to be like Him, which will affect how we respond to everything in life.

Samuel Rutherford, concerning this very thing, said this. Think not. The miles to heaven are few and short.

There are many heads lying in Christ's bosom, but there is room for yours among the rest. The miles are few and short to heaven. Do you feel that way? Or do you feel like every day drags on and on and year after year? When will it ever end? Or this quote from Rutherford as well.

When you come to the other side of the water, when it finally is over and you've set your foot down on the shore of glorious eternity, Rutherford writes, and you look back again to the waters and to your wearisome journey and shall see in that clear glass of endless glory nearer to the bottom of God's wisdom, you shall then be forced to say, if God had done otherwise with me than He had done, I had never come to the enjoying of the crown of glory. When we finish the race and look back, Rutherford says, then we'll be able to say if God had dealt with me any other way, I would not have ended up finishing. God is in that much control of our lives.

He's that intent on us finishing, and finishing well. Verse 12 through 17, the writer then jumps back to the race analogy, but he's doing so in a way that he's reiterating the corporate aspect of Christianity. Remember, he began really emphasizing this back in chapter 10 when he said, let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

And he continued that theme of this being a corporate race, or we might say a relay that we're involved in when he pointed out that even these Old Testament saints that are listed here in Hebrews chapter 11, that they all have finished in one sense of the word, but yet they have not yet received what was promised because God has promised something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

Emphasizing the corporate aspect here, this great cloud of witnesses that has run the course already. We're looking at their footprints before us.

Christianity all too often in our day, and it appears to me, it may not be true, but it appears to me that it is increasingly becoming more of an individual aspect rather than a corporate. We're losing the sense in our day of a body or a family or the bride of Christ. It is a race, and when we think of races, we're thinking, I mean, the Olympics are right around the corner.

Some of us will see some of the races. The majority of the races, yes, they are individual events, but this race of the Christian life is corporate, more like a relay where they have to pass the baton, where all or none win. If you run your part of the relay and it's faster than any other leg that's been run in the history of the world, and the next person on your team falls on his face, you lose.

That's the way we ought to be taking Christianity, not taking our baton and setting out in a sprint, running as fast as we can, saying, who cares about the rest? Me and mine are going to get there. There's much help needed in running the race. God hasn't left us to ourselves.

Already he's taken so much away of what's not needed. Sin, encumbrances, weights, and now he's adding a few things that are necessary to finish, helps that we need in order to finish well. The first thing he adds here in verse 12 and 13 helps us know how to deal with the stragglers.

Some of us are stragglers. All of us are stragglers at some point in the race with drooping hands, feeble knees, stumbling along, tempted to quit, on a bumpy pathway that's curvy and difficult going. You've been there.

It's our job as believers to come alongside these folks with real encouragement, making the path straight, strengthening the hands that are weak, binding up the weak joints, so as the writer says, they only stay weak and become strengthened and healed again. They don't become completely out of joint, causing someone to go completely off the course. We could look at it this way.

If our encouragement to believers does not result in them picking up the pace and getting back on the course, it's not biblical encouragement. There's a danger in our society of saying things like, we all feel that way sometime. Oh, it's not your fault.

You deserve a break. No. Those are what Amy Carmichael called weakening words.

We ought to be doing whatever it takes to come alongside and help them finish the race. The goal is, the second half of verse 13, that they be healed, continuing to run. Verse 14, two specific pursuits that we're given here.

Pursue peace with all men. Obviously, that's not an individual pursuit. I mean, most of us would have trouble finding peace, even with ourselves.

Maybe not most, okay, but some of you would. Pursue peace with all men. Everything short of compromise to live peaceably with those around us.

Everything short of compromise. Pursue sanctification or holiness. Peace and holiness.

Now, it's true, peace will not be obtained with everyone, but if you don't obtain holiness, you're hopeless. And peace will come as a result of pursuing holiness. In fact, we could go so far as to say that if you're not

pursuing Christ with your whole heart, you run a great risk of being involved in the wrong race, one that's headed to hell instead of heaven.

So, dealing with stragglers, there's these two pursuits of peace and holiness, and then three dangerous pitfalls. First, see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God. Do everything in your power, everything, as a body to be sure that no one comes short.

I mean, think with me for a moment. What care have you taken in the past several days to be sure that no one around you stops short? Or have you been so concerned with you and yours that you're allowing others to stop short without taking notice and aiding them? Not only be careful that no one else comes short of the grace of God, but be careful that no bitterness springs up, the kind of heart that turns away from God to idols, turning back. I mean, that's the primary reason for this letter anyway, to prevent the Hebrews from turning back to the old way, to the shadows, to the emptiness, to the ease and comforts of life that they knew before, and things are getting more difficult rather than more simple, and bitterness can begin to sprout.

And bitterness is contagious. Notice how the writer says, if bitterness springs up, it causes trouble, and many are defiled. We ought to be careful that bitterness doesn't sprout up.

And then the third danger here mentioned quickly. Don't be like Esau. Here's the pitfall.

Immorality and godliness. Be careful that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal. Anyway, it's true, Esau was immoral.

He married two wives on the one hand. On the other, they were both Canaanites. He didn't take the care that his brother did to marry someone who belonged to God.

But others were immoral too. Even from chapter 11, we've noticed David, Rahab. Immorality is not Esau's major problem, though it's a problem.

It was an issue, but the godlessness was the key. Immorality can be overcome, but for Esau, it wasn't. He was godless, or we might say common, carnal, profane, worldly, pragmatic.

And you can imagine Esau. His granddad, Abraham, wonderful promises made to him. He died without receiving them.

His dad, he believed those promises. He died without receiving them. Jacob, his brother, was hoping in these promises, but from Esau's standpoint, it didn't look very promising.

Not Esau. He wasn't going to hope in these ridiculous promises. He was practical.

He was using his common sense. He was godless. You think I'm going to give it all up for some fantasy that granddad had? You think I'm going to give it all up because some god talked to granddad, making grandiose promises that he died without receiving and dad died without receiving them too? I'm not wasting my time with it.

That's where Esau was, and it's proven by his exchanging of his birthright for a simple bowl of stew. Now, his birthright wasn't just his inheritance and the family placed that. The birthright included all those glorious promises that were made to his granddad.

If he thought they were true, he would have never traded them for one meal, ever. Are you exchanging the promises of God for something else? Something temporal, something passing? Anything else? Esau rejected God. Now, as an old man, he attempted to get it back, all that he had forfeited, but he didn't get a bit of it because he didn't really repent.

He had what we would call, from Paul's word of the church at Corinth that Mark dealt with a few weeks ago, worldly sorrow at best. He was sorry that he had lost all that stuff, but he didn't care about his offense to God. He was more worried about the here and the now than he was about what God had promised.

More worried about the worldly and temporal things over holiness and eternal things. If you are more worried about the here and the now, you don't stand to lose a birthright. You stand to lose your soul.

That's what Esau lost. This race that we've been called to run together is a race that we cannot run well if our hearts are entangled in all this world's stuff. But we've been called to run.

And I think we would have to all agree together that the writer of Hebrews has given us just fabulous incentives to run. The great cloud of witnesses, the great high priest who sympathizes with us, who endured hostility, who endured shame, who endured the cross, who ever lives now to make intercession for us, who has run perfectly all the way to the end, who sits at the Father's right hand now, lovingly reigning among us. Since we have Jesus, the writer says, let us run together.

Run the course that He's marked out for us. Avoiding weariness at all costs. Avoiding faintheartedness around every corner.

Let us run. And let's do it together for the glory of Christ. This morning, we're going to begin running together, responding, if you will, to this passage by proclaiming His death.

Proclaiming this Christ who went to the cross for us. Proclaiming His death collectively as we take the Lord's Supper together. Proclaiming that His body was broken and His blood was shed in order that we might know the forgiveness of sins.

His body was broken and His blood was shed for all who believe. For those who are seeking their all in Christ, the table is for. For those who are fleeing the wrath to come and seeking refuge in Jesus alone, the table is open.

An opportunity to identify with Christ who said, this is my body. Take and eat. This is the cup of the new covenant of my blood.

Take and drink. And just like in the Christian race, there are sins to be laid aside and weights to be left alone. We want to examine our hearts as we come to the table this morning, confessing to God, others if required, and turning from even the small, hidden sins that impede our progress of conforming to Christ Jesus our Lord.

In just a moment, I'm going to pray. And after we do that, we'll stand and sing together. After singing, Greg will ask us to be seated.

Lindsay will continue to play. And then you're welcome to come, fouling in around by the windows and back up the middle aisle, eating and drinking at the table, then returning to your seat. And from there, we'll stand and close in song.

Before we stand and sing, let's pray together. Our great and glorious, unchanging God, we come again now, after having spent far too little time considering this text, praying that you would fillet open our hearts and that you would pierce the deep truth of the reality of Christ Jesus our Lord so deep in our soul that it affects every fiber of our being, every bit of who we are. God, we thank You that though we, in our sin, ravaged this world, affecting everything in it save You, that You've come and rescued us from that very sin and that You've given us a course now to run and that You, by Your sovereign hand, are guiding and leading and correcting and instructing and discipling us, Your children, in order that we might not merely finish, but that we might run well and finish strong, looking unto Christ Jesus our Lord.

God, we thank You that not only is He the author, but the finisher of the faith that You've granted us as a glorious gift. God, we pray now that You would give us grace to examine our hearts, that You would reveal sins, sins that we're involved in committing and the sins that we are guilty of as a result of forsaking to do what You've commanded us to do. And God, that You would grant repentance in those areas and that You would aid us as we come alongside each other attempting to run the race that You've called us to run, following the example of Christ Jesus, despising the shame, enduring every small hardship in order that we might know the glory of Christ Jesus.

God, we thank You that You've called us to a life of not only believing You, but suffering for Your sake. We thank You that it's not only good for You and glorious for You because it brings honor to You, but it's good for us because it conforms us into Your image. We pray now that You would use these moments to that end, God, as we worship You in song and through the table for Christ's sake.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/0p3ISHPcdZU.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/anthony-mathenia/consider-him-hebrews-12-3-17/>

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