

Running the Christian Race

by Barrett Marshall

The Christian life is a race that requires faith, endurance, and service to God, and must be run with all one's might.

Duration: 52:20

Scripture: Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 11:7-8, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of despising the shame and disregarding the praises of men in order to run the race of faith. He encourages young people to stand for righteousness and not be affected by the mockery of others. The preacher also highlights the need to lay aside any weights or sins that hinder our progress in the race. He emphasizes the importance of fixing our eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross and sat down at the right hand of God, as our example and source of faith. The sermon concludes with the reminder that the race of faith is one of service and suffering, and encourages believers to prepare and train for this race.

Transcript

Before I start reading from Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1, this. It has been so wonderful to be here. I get the opportunity to travel to many churches.

And many churches these days are opposed to the idea of revival. They would rather have conferences, meetings that teach different truths. And I believe those are necessary in some instances.

But what those do is they only engage the mind. They only engage the mind. And so we learn truth, we gain knowledge, but the word of God says knowledge puffeth up.

Revival, true revival ministry, is centered at getting to the heart. Getting people in the place where their heart is right with God. And I am so thankful to this church.

Though the message might be dying to some, that God desires a certain heart. If we are ever going to live the Christian life. And I am so thankful that this church invited me to come in this year.

It is special to me to come here. It really is. This place has a dear place in my heart.

It was like I was coming almost back home when I came over here. You know, I go to a lot of places. I want to say this.

There is a great blessing on this church. I go all over the south. I go up north.

There is a great blessing on this church. Let me tell you why. This is the key.

Because we are all sinners. And you are quick to repent. And repentance leads to faith.

And faith is the only thing that accomplishes anything for God. And I say that before we enter in. As a blessing.

So now, when the Word is preached to us, let us enter into that. If God shows us something, let's repent. Amen.

So that God can extend the walls of this church into this community. And bring glory to Christ through His gospel. It has been good.

It has been wonderful. And I also want to say that the blessing of God is on this church also. Also, because you have that pastor.

Now, he would probably hate me even saying that. But I promise you this. I pray for him.

I know him. I talk to him throughout the year. And he has one desire.

That his church walk with God. That the people walk with God. And the blessing is on this church in some part due to your pastor.

Because I go to dead churches everywhere. Praise God this one isn't. But you must continue to seek.

Continue to repent. Continue to trust. Continue to believe God.

Thank you for allowing me to be here. I love you guys. The name of this sermon is called Running the Race.

The Christian life is said in the Word of God to be a race. It is a race that takes faith. Isn't it interesting? It came after Hebrews 11.

The great triumph of faith chapter. And he says in the first verse. In the first word of chapter 12.

Therefore. In other words. Because of this faith that is being displayed in these chapters.

Therefore. Because you've seen this faith. What? Let us run the race.

Let's look at it. Chapter 12 verse 1. Therefore. Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us.

Let us lay aside every encumbrance. And the sin which so easily entangles us. And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus. The author and perfecter of faith. Who for the joy 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 has endured such hostility by sinners against himself. So that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

You may not grow weary. Listen. I've talked much about victory.

Much about blessing. Much about the riches of Christ that we are to live out of. But I want to show you that this race has to be run with endurance.

It takes courage. It takes stamina to live the Christian life. You can't think that every day is going to be this glorious wonderful experience.

Where you walk in this aura. But there's going to be difficulty. Look at what the writer is doing.

He's painting a beautiful picture. He says since we have so great a cloud of witnesses. In other words he's saying this.

In those days they would have Olympic style events. Where they would just like in the Olympics today. They would run these long races.

And they would have these great stadiums. Colosseum in Rome we know about. Where these runners would race.

And they would train all of their lives for one moment. This race. Think about that.

They didn't get any do-overs. And I'm afraid when we enter into heaven. Some of the tears that Christ will have to wipe away.

Will be those who realized they never got running. They were complacent. They were comfortable.

And the writer is saying. When you run. With all your might.

You get one chance. One chance. To live the Christian life for the glory of God.

Do it with all your might. All your strength. And he's saying that these so great a cloud of witnesses.

Are the witnesses of chapter 11. In other words he's saying this. He's saying look.

You're about to run this race. You only get one shot at it. And run it like these men ran it.

Moses ran it. Abraham ran it. Noah ran it.

Run it with all your might. It takes endurance. Because the race I want you to see.

Is a race of service. To Jesus Christ. Look back in Hebrews chapter 11.

Verse 8. The Christian life dear believers is one of service. To Jesus Christ. By faith Abraham when he was called.

Obedied. By going out to a place. Which he was to see for an inheritance.

And when he went out. Not knowing where he was going. Verse 7. Speaking of Noah.

By faith Noah being warned by God about things not yet seen. In reverence prepared an ark. For the salvation of his household.

My friends. The race. This Christian life.

Is lived to serve God. So the picture is this. We have this greater cloud of witnesses surrounding us.

Not that Moses is literally looking down on us. Or Abraham is looking down on us. What he is saying is let those people motivate you.

Let that energize you. The life they lived. To live that one chance.

That one race you have. With all your might. For the glory of God.

It's a race of service. Listen to Joshua 24.15. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord. Choose for yourself today whom you will serve.

Whether the gods which your father served. Which were beyond the river. Or the gods of the Amorites.

In whose land you are living. But as for me. And my house.

We will serve the Lord. You have heard that verse of scripture many times. But this is the thing.

He was one of the greatest leaders. Who understood. I am a servant.

You know what the greatest attribute of a leader. Is that he is a servant. He lays down his life for his Lord.

And God is saying. Through the Holy Spirit in these scriptures. You have to run the race.

You only get one chance. And if you are going to run it. It is going to be one of service.

Now listen. If it is not one of service. You are not even running.

If you are not serving the Lord. If you are not serving the brethren. You are not running.

And my friend. If you are not doing that. You may not even be in the race.

It is a race of service. Number two. It is a race of suffering.

We don't like to hear that. I don't. The last thing we like to do in the western world is suffer.

It is the hardest thing. For the western world. Why? Because we have so many comforts.

So many. And the slightest little aggravation. Will irritate us.

Because we are always so comfortable. Listen to Hebrews chapter 11. Right there.

Verse 24. It is a race of suffering. By faith Moses when he had grown up.

Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Choosing rather to endure ill treatment. With the people of God.

Than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Young people you have two roads. You either endure ill treatment with the people of God.

Or you enjoy passing pleasures of sin. Two roads. It is the same today as it was for Moses.

And I want to say as a side track. I want to mention this. It grieves my heart.

When I hear parents. Tell me Barrett. I think my child knows the Lord.

And they are enjoying the passing pleasures of sin. It says by faith Moses. In other words if you are enjoying the passing pleasures of sin.

You have never entered into faith. If you can do it with a free conscience. If there is no guilt upon what you are doing.

And it grieves my heart. I will hear someone say. Yeah my child they have walked away from the Lord for five years.

What? The Holy Spirit of God lives in that individual. I am sorry you can't walk away from Jesus Christ for five years. I am not saying you can't backslide.

But it grieves my heart. Because you know what it does? It hinders the parents from ever praying for their salvation. And there goes the child on their way to hell.

Because they rather think rightly. If they are enjoying the passing pleasures of sin. They haven't expressed faith.

And young people. If you are enjoying your sin. And you are okay in it.

You don't know God. That is a serious thing. And maybe tonight you need to get right with God.

Because you realize you never entered into faith. It is a road of suffering. And if your life is just comfortable.

If your life is just well and good. And nothing ever comes in your aura. You are just.

Life is wonderful. Then you are not probably running the race. Romans 8, 17.

Listen to this. And if children heirs also. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

If indeed we suffer with Him. If indeed we suffer with Him. In order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Listen to this. For it has been granted to you. That for the sake of Christ.

You should not only believe in Him. But also suffer for His sake. Not only believe.

But to suffer. That is Philippians 1.29. 1 Peter 4.19. Listen to this. Therefore let those who suffer.

According to God's will. Wow. That is the will of God.

For His people to suffer. Entrust their souls to a faithful creator. While doing good.

It is a race of service. It is a race of suffering. And you are going to have to run it only once.

Isn't that wonderful? You are only going to have to suffer once. And then it is bliss forever. So why not in that one race you have.

Run it with all your might. That is God's word to you tonight. Start running.

Serve the Lord. Be willing to suffer for God. It is a race.

But I want you to see you must prepare for the race. Verse 1. You must prepare for the race. Chapter 12.

Verse 1 of Hebrews. You got to make preparation for a race. So you can never run.

Right? You got to train. Therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us.

You must make preparation for the run. Many of us, I want us to see tonight, is that we are not making any preparation. And if you are not making the right preparation, you are not running.

What is the first preparation? Look what it says. Let us lay aside every encumbrance. Now listen what this means.

To lay aside the encumbrance is to simply this. Any weight that is upon you. You take the weight off of you and you put it down on the side of you so you can run.

Now what an encumbrance is, is this. It is something that hinders your running in the Christian life. You know I was in the army.

And in the army we had these huge rucksacks. They would weigh a hundred pounds. And one of the last days in the army they take you on a ten mile hike.

About as fast as you can possibly walk with a hundred pounds on your back. Now listen. The slightest crack in the road can make you fall.

And what we have are so many Christians falling in little tiny cracks. Because they got so much weight on their back. So what is the encumbrance? What is keeping you from running tonight? I'll tell you one.

I want you to realize encumbrances aren't necessarily sin. But they lead to you becoming entangled in sin. Cracks become holes.

Encumbrances. The television. Nothing wrong in itself.

But many of us will spend two, three hours. An hour a night in front of something that gives no life. And the Word of God sits on the side of the table.

We'd rather enjoy that encumbrance. Which is not necessarily sin. But my friend it's keeping you from running in the race.

Some of you young people are in relationships that are not godly. And you're a Christian. And the Lord is saying take that weight off.

Set it to the side. So you can start running the race. Some of us are bogged down with worries and fears.

Some of us are so concerned about our children. That we never, ever, ever spend any time with the Lord. Our children aren't sin.

But very quickly they can become encumbrances to running the race. Unless they have the proper place in our hearts. The Lord is supreme.

What weight in your life is keeping you from running tonight? Some of you are so bogged down in work. You've got too many things on your plate. And the Lord is saying I want you to lay it aside.

You're not even running because you have that weight. Some of you can't and I understand that. But don't let that be an excuse to running the race.

You only get one shot at it. Remove weights or hindrances. It could be something as simple as sports.

Taking up all our minds. Our sport teams, our hobbies. Nothing wrong with them.

But they're becoming weights. Number two. Preparation for the race removes the weights.

Preparation for the race removal of besetting sins. Look what it says. Let us also lay aside every encumbrance.

Verse one. And the sin which so easily entangles us. The King James says the sin which so easily besets us.

Now listen. If you will not lay aside encumbrances. If you will not lay aside weights.

Then those sins that are prone to come out of your heart. And you know which ones they are. We all have besetting sins.

It's called the sins of constitution. Things that you your whole life have had such a hard time to get over. And you can't ever beat them.

I'll tell you why you can't ever beat them. Because you got encumbrances that you won't lay aside. They're just simple weights that lead to that sin.

Some of you deal with lust. I'll tell you how to. You lay aside the television.

You lay aside the internet. That's a weight that leads to that specific sin. And it keeps entangling you.

And you're not running. What is it in your life? Why are you always getting angry? Bitter? There's some weight God's saying, get it off. Now, we've made preparation.

It's time to start performing. Verse 2. Fixing our eyes on Jesus. It might be my favorite phrase in all the Word of God.

It has to have Jesus in it. Fixing our eyes on Jesus. Hallelujah.

The author and perfecter of faith. Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. Despising the shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Now we're ready to start performing in the race. We've made preparation. We've taken those weights.

We've laid them aside. And now those tiny cracks, we can step right over. And now we can start running.

And the way you have to run is you've got to look at Jesus Christ the whole time. You've got to get your eyes off yourself, people. So many of you beat yourselves to death.

You laid the weights down. You laid the sin down. And now you've just got to look at Him.

That's why worship is so important. Because worship is a looking at Jesus in my personal worship time. It's a viewing of Him.

It's a looking unto Him. But what I want you to see, there are two ways we look unto Jesus. By example, number one.

By example. There's no greater example of our Lord than simply what? The Word of God. The Word of God.

In Revelation it says, On Him is written the name, the Word of God. In other words, the Word of God must become your portion daily. You must not read it to know it.

This is the key. But you must study it to obey it. Nowhere in the Word of God do I find Bible reading.

It says study to show thyself approved unto God. It says meditate on the law day and night. Nowhere, even in Joshua, in Psalm 1, in Timothy, everywhere I find this.

It is allowing the Word of God to consume your mind. In such a way that you're seeking to obey it. So by example we're looking unto Jesus.

Through the Word of God. Number two. We have to have something to carry out what we're looking at.

We're seeing the Word of God. We desire to obey it. But there's something called grace you need to do it.

And so we're looking unto Jesus by an example. And we're looking unto Jesus for grace. Now how do we receive grace from God? Through faith, of course.

And the most practical application to faith in the Word of God is prayer. Prayer, because prayer's emphasis is I need you. I can't do it.

And so when we're looking unto Jesus, we're looking in the Word of God by example. And we're seeking to obey it. But we say, Lord, I need a means, something within me that will enable me to obey it.

So Lord, I'm asking you for humility in this situation. And I thank you for it. And I walk, I run, looking at Jesus.

That's what it means. It's looking to Him for every provision in your life. It starts in the morning and it continues throughout the day.

That's why it says to pray without ceasing. Because it's the means of grace. And brother, sister, we need grace, don't we? So, looking unto Jesus.

How do we perform in the race? We're looking at a person. We're not looking at ourselves, our deficiencies, our weaknesses. Paul said, I boast about my weaknesses.

I tell everybody about my weaknesses in order that the power of Christ might dwell on me. So, looking unto Him for grace. Now listen to the second thing.

How are you going to perform in the race? That's in the measure, I believe, of service. Now we get to the road, the race of suffering. Look at it.

Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. That sounds like He was suffering. That's the type of race we're talking about tonight.

How did He do it? For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross. He looked past His circumstances. Think about that.

We're so caught up in our circumstances. Oh no, look what just happened. Oh no, look what just happened.

Jesus had something set before Him in His heart and mind. And it wasn't His circumstances. It was His love for the Father.

And He was able to endure the suffering because His one desire was to please the Father. The joy set before Him. You see, there's coming a day when we're going to see Him face to face.

And you think you've experienced joy? Just wait. It's going to be so overwhelming, so powerful, so wonderful. And that is what we set before us.

It's not today. It's that day. The world lives for today.

What can I get today? The Christian is to live for that day. When we can hear that wonderful word from the Lord, Well done, my good and faithful servant. We're servants.

And so the joy set before Him is, He says it in verse 2, And has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. He was looking to that day when He was going to be with His Father again. Sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

And that joy was so set before Him that it didn't matter what He had to endure right then. That's looking unto Jesus. Looking past your circumstances.

You have to look to the person. You have to look past your circumstances. Now listen.

You're going to have to disregard men and their attacks. Look at what it says in verse 2. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, He looked past the circumstances, despising the shame. That word, despising, means simply this.

He disregarded what men ever thought about Him. The shame that would come with having to endure the cross. The mockery.

All those who would make fun, who would spit at Him. All of those He despised. In other words, He ignored it.

Now no one can do this if they live for the praise of men. And that's the great trouble of the believer in every single one of us. We do it in different ways.

Some of us, we never show anybody anything about us. And so it keeps our status in check. And some of us, we tell everybody how wonderful we are.

But the problem with despising the shame is tonight you're going to have to be free from the praises of men. They'll destroy your life. And they'll become such a bondage that you can never run the race.

Do you disregard the shame? Young people, do you not care that people make fun of you? I wonder, dear adults, will you stand for righteousness at your workplace? You're going to have to despise the shame. Disregard it. And then lastly, how do you run the race? How do we perform? We look unto Jesus.

We look past our circumstance. Number three, we reflect on his path. We reflect on his path.

Verse three, For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. Things are going to get bad when you're running in the race. Now, they may not get bad if you're not running at all.

But if you're going to run in the race, I guarantee you're going to face opposition. And all you have to do when you face opposition, you're going to keep looking at Jesus. You're going to look past all that.

You're going to look past people, disregard all that. But you're going to reflect on how much he endured. Consider him who endured such hostility.

And if you'll remember the cross, if you'll reflect on the cross in his life, my friend, you'll see your little problems start shrinking, I promise. Because he endured such hostility against wicked. And if you'll reflect on that, then you will not lose heart, the Word of God says.

It'll give you courage in the midst of the storm. What encumbrances do you have? Tonight you have to lay them aside. You only get one race, one chance.

Some of you are older folks in here. Why not live the last five years with such zeal and passion and run with all your might the Christian life? Looking at Jesus, not worrying about what others think, looking past your situations. That is faith.

What I have just shared with you is the life of faith. It's looking at Jesus Christ. It's laying aside all that garbage so that you can actually run.

And I'm afraid most of us in here, we're so comfortable we don't want to run. I feel okay. It's my retirement years.

I hope he doesn't have to wipe away that tear. That you didn't run with everything. Some of you need to lay aside things in your life.

And you haven't done them. And some of you are in such bondage to your sin because of it. If you'll do it, you'll feel a release and a freedom in your life that you've never felt.

Run the race. That's God's word to you. Run it for the glory of God.

Father, we know that there is a race for each of us. It's set before us. And it is one of service and suffering.

But I pray today, O God, for each of these in this room, that the Lord has put a specific point on something in your life that needs to go. Lord, I'm asking you to allow that individual to lay it down. We're so

comfortable, Lord.

And you called those great men of God, who you said in that chapter the world was not even worthy of. Lord, I pray you would put such a desire in these people to run it with all their heart. Why not right there in your seat? No prayer room.

Tell the Lord. Tell the Lord you haven't been running, but you want to start tonight. Tell Him those sins, those ones that keep entangling you.

Tell Him you don't want them anymore. Tell Him you're willing to lay down all those weights, Lord, whatever they are that are of the world. Just do it right now in your church.

Some of us have been looking at ourselves. We've been so introspective and so critical of our own selves. And Christ says, look to Me.

Come to My Word. For I have life, He would say to you. Trust Me for grace.

Why don't you just tell the Lord and ask forgiveness for your trusting in yourself and living for self? Some of you are suffering greatly. And Jesus has these words for you. Consider Him who endured such hostility.

Look past your circumstance and look to that day when we shall see face to face. Oh, that God would do that in your life today, that you'd never be the same. Father, we thank Thee for forgiveness.

We thank Thee that there's life in Christ. We thank You, Lord, that even though we might go through these sufferings and this service, that it's an abundant life that we can live in the midst of it. And so, Lord, we entrust ourselves to You tonight to lay aside those things, to look to You, to believe You, to love You, to trust You, and to make You our prize.

Lord, we run the race for a prize. And I pray in everyone's heart tonight they'd run for the prize of the Lord Himself. We thank You.

We praise You for how You're going to do it. In Jesus' name, Amen. I think it would be a shame for us to just get up and walk out Why don't we sing something, Jeff? Why don't we just end this time the way we began it, worshiping, so that we might be walking out of here looking unto Jesus, Amen?

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