

EXCESS BAGGAGE

Lighten Your Load! Hebrews 12:1-4

The Christian Race

Hebrews 12:1 “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,...”

- The writer of Hebrews pictures the Christian life as a race
- The word *race* comes from the Greek word *agona*, where we get the English word “agony”
- It’s not just any race, it’s a *faith* race
- How do we enter this race?
- What enters us into this race is our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord
- When we said yes to Jesus, we started running this Christian race
- If there is anyone that’s been running physically, you’ll agree running is hard work, it uses every muscle in your body
- Running can be a struggle
- The Christian race can be a struggle, too
- But you don’t have to struggle alone
- The text says there we are *surrounded* by a great cloud, or crowd of witnesses
- They were not only *participants*, but they are *witnesses* to us of what faith and endurance can do
- The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 are part of that cloud of witnesses
- They stood strong against all kinds of trials, temptations, and oppositions
- But all of them finished the race of faith
- They are witnesses to us that God can change anybody and use anybody

Lighten Your Load

Vs. 1 “....let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,...”

- The Christian life involves hard work
- The Summer Olympics just ended and especially in track and field, you saw the sprinters do whatever was necessary to be at their best for the race
- They don’t want anything on them that could slow them down and keep them from running at full speed
- In this Christian race, we are to *lay aside* every weight *and* sin that could so easily beset us
- God is saying to us *lighten* your load
- To run the Christian race effectively, we must *intentionally and deliberately* lay aside every weight *and* sin

Lay aside every weight...

- A weight is *not* a sin, but it is *something* in your life that’s weighing you down and slowing you down spiritually
- These weights may be “legitimate and innocent” in and of themselves, but they can hinder our progress in God, they sap our strength, dampen our enthusiasm toward the things of God

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- They have the potential to consume our time and energy keep us from running this race with all we have
- It takes discipline *and* courage to lay it aside some things
- The bottom line is: **Anything that is not building you and making you stronger is “excess weight” that’s slowing you down**
 - What are the weights in *your* life?

And the sin

“...and the sin which doth so easily beset us, ...”

- Weights *slow* us down spiritually, but sin can *ensnare* us, *entangle* us, and *trip* us up spiritually
- Sin in our lives can *easily* cling, distract, entangle, or trip us up and keep us from finishing the race
- If we try to run our race with sin in our lives, sin will eventually trip us up
- What sin? The sin that *affects* you
 - There are sins that are common to *all* believers, but are some sins that affect us *personally*
- This text is saying very strongly to every one of us to lay aside the **particular sin** that distracts, entangles, or trips you up
- Each of us must ask ourselves what is the sin that easily ensnares me or trips me up?
- You must throw away, strip off, and repent of every sin that keeps you from fully following God

Run Your Race with Patient Endurance

Vs. 1 “...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,...”

- The Christian life is not a 100-meter dash that’s complete in under 10 seconds, it’s a marathon; a long-distance race
- It is an *endurance* race, it is a race of *patience*
- Endurance is developed when we *patiently and faithfully* withstand trials, temptations, and opposition
- Spiritual strength is developed as we resist the trials, temptations, and opposition
- If you are being opposed for your stand for God, be glad because that means you are running the *right race* **James 1:2-3 (KJV) 2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.**
- There are mountainous portions of this Christian race, but if you are prepared and determined you can conquer them

Focus on Jesus; Our Example

[2] 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. [3] For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. [4] Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

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- We are thankful for the lives of the heroes of faith in the Bible and the lives fellow believers who have impacted our lives
- But the *supreme example* of discipline, training, faith and endurance is Jesus Christ
- If we are going to successfully run this Christian race, we must stay *focused* on Jesus
- Pattern your life after Jesus' because:
 1. He is the **author** or creator and the **finisher** of the Christian race
 2. Jesus had a great inspiration: the *joy* that was set before Him; the joy of joining other believers throughout the ages
 - We have the joy of living for God despite opposition
 3. Jesus is our supreme example of discipline; He did whatever was necessary to *start and finish* the race.
 - We must be willing obey and follow God regardless of the personal cost
 4. Jesus' faith was rewarded because right now He is exalted and seated at the right hand of the throne of God
 - Our faith in God will be rewarded when we finish our race **2 Timothy 4:7-8 (KJV) 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**
- Jesus possessed the endurance to start *and* finish the race
- Many you are saying in your minds, that was Jesus, the Son of God, He could do it, but no one else can
- The text says compare Jesus' life to your own and you will find that He endured *much more* than we will ever have to endure
- It keeps us from ***fainting in our minds***; that is losing heart, becoming discouraged and despondent; drawing back and giving up
- Jesus isn't just a model or pattern to follow, Jesus is our *enabler* through the power of His Holy Spirit, Jesus increases our faith enable us to *run, finish and win* this Christian race

How to Lose the Weights and Sins in Our Lives

Vs. 1 "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,..."

- How do we *lay aside* our weights and sins?
 1. Identify them all (every weight and sin) and call them what they truly are, weights and sins
 - Don't make any more excuses for the things that are spiritually weighing you down and holding you back from successfully running your race
 2. Confess and repent of your sins
 - To confess means to agree with or speak the same thing
 - Then repent of those sins means to *turn away* from them
 3. Be filled with the Holy Spirit
 - The Holy Spirit gives believers the power to live free from the weights and sins of life