

Run with Endurance

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[0 : 0 0] very good let's turn now to the passage in the bible which we read the letter to the hebrew christians chapter 12 and we'll read again the first two or three verses hebrews 12 at the beginning 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 themselves lest lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls you know we christians are strange people what an awful mess sin has made of our whole psyche as well as of our lives we need to be encouraged to be encouraged isn't that amazing i mean verse five you have forgotten the exhortation the word exhortation could be translated encouragement you've forgotten the encouragement the original word is translated comfort comfort six times at least 14 times the original word is translated consolation and here's the apostle saying to these jewish christians you've forgotten the encouragement god has given christians encouragement because it is not easy to be a faithful christian so we need encouragement now when god encourages he really does encourage you know sometimes we would like to encourage our friends but we can't really because what they're going through really is discouraging and what can we do all we can do is i'll leave pat them in the back and say don't worry fred i'll be all right but i won't be all right but when god encourages us he gives first of all he gives a solid reason for being encouraged doesn't just pat me in the back don't worry he tells us why you ought to be encouraged he gives us solid basis a reliable foundation to lift us up

and secondly when god encourages he gives direction he gives us something to do so that we know what to do but of course we do have to remember that what god may tell us what to do in the christian race it may not be easy and it may not be it may not make sense to us you remember when he tried to remember josh joshua when he was needing so much encouragement and god said to him fear not be of good courage be strengthened you remember when he was asked to destroy jericho jericho with these strong walls thirty foot wide not thirty foot high thirty foot wide we're not talking about a stone dike the walls of jericho were thirty foot wide and they were at the very top of them two lots of chariots to go on he says these walls will fall down how?

oh i said surround them circle around jericho seven times well actually it's not seven times on the seventh day it was six times what's seven and six?

thirteen don't let anyone tell you thirteen is unlucky it's the thirteenth round the walls of jericho collapsed but for a commander of an army to do that didn't make much sense eh?

marching round blowing trumpets setting yourself up as a sitting duck that's what god said and god encourages he gives you a solid basis he gives you direction what to do but it may not make sense to you it may sound risky but obedience to god always gets the victory and you know a third thing you can say about the encouragement that god gives his churches people is that somehow or another the very hearing of the words of encouragement they give strength strength i don't know how it works but just listening to god speaking strength now here are the people of god the jews that came out of christened out of judaism to become christians they were getting very discouraged very disappointed with the hardness of the way things had not worked out at all the way they expected them to work out and they were very disappointed in fact as we know someone in the chapter of 10 had already returned had given up on the christian race and had gone back to judaism well i suppose we could summarize the encouragement of these first three verses in chapter uh 12 let us run with endurance the race set before us see the christian race the christian life is a race but it's a special kind of race it is as you've heard a hundred times i'm sure it's not a sprint it's a marathon but what i mean is this the object of this race is not really to be first the commonwealth games are on just now and they're talking about getting gold medals and silver medals and bronze medals the object to be first or second or third do you know the object of the christian race just finish the race and you get a crown you get a medal you'll get a crown from jesus just for finishing the race we're not saying it's easy in fact the word translated agon here is the greek word agon once we get our english word you can guess it agon it's not easy running the christian life if you're here to this morning and you're not a christian you can become a christian in one moment by repenting and believing in christ but then the race begins then the agon then the agon starts in fact the word race is translated it's translated conflict it's translated contention it's translated fight when you read elsewhere in the epistles fight the good fight oh god it's the same word

[9 : 55] exactly the same original word for fight as it is for race here jesus encourages us to follow him is well well well you can repent and believe and become a christian and a title for everlasting life in one moment by repentance and faith in christ but jesus has won in this world in this world you're a tribulation oh in the next world it will be glorious it will be glorious in the next world but in this world you're a tribulation it's a narrow road it's a hard road it's a long road it's a long road but my friend is a blessing road it's a good road it's well worth travelling the christian road well what's the advice what's the direction that is given to christians here run with endurance the race set before you the reference here is to the race track you know if you're running a race and you you go off the track you can be disqualified run on the race track the race track you are on you know there are difficulties in life as well as in the christian life there's difficulties and we get ourselves into situations and our prayer is

Lord change our circumstances get rid of this problem get rid of that problem what God wants is to change us is to change us our prayer is Lord change the situation I'm in change the circumstances I'm in and God says I want to change you so that you accept the circumstances you are in stay on the race track I've laid out for you bloom bloom where the Lord has placed you as though maxim we would use today run with endurance now this word endurance it's run with patience in some verses but you know the original word patience here is never used of God it's only used of humans patience except of course in the sense that

God gives the grace of endurance or patience you see the word implies difficulty but there's no difficulties with God nothing's difficult for God difficult for you difficult for me but not for God the word implies frustration the word in fact implies something's gone wrong but listen nothing has gone wrong with God there's never a panic in heaven there's never an emergency or a crisis in heaven everything's bang on shape everything's gone according to the plan that God has set for the universe but for us things seem to have gone wrong we come across situations we never intended to get into so he says keep on that track and run with endurance on that track and run with endurance we need this resolve we need to be determined to carry on all we need to do is to finish the race

Satan has only one objective to get you to throw in the towel to get you to stop running the race to give up but run with this endurance that you'll continue things will go wrong things are unexpected things will happen but carry on running the Christian race let us lay aside every weight what is meant by a weight here well anything that hinders efficiency in itself it's not wrong it's not a sin the question is is it helpful or is it not some athletes they like to run with socks some like to run without socks some athletes even like to run barefoot it's not wrong to wear socks it's not wrong to wear running shoes the question is does it help or does it hinder and we come across things in the Christian life where we have to ask the question now this is not sinful in itself the Bible tells us elsewhere all things are lawful it's not helpful but not all things are expedient not helpful for you to do this not helpful for that person to do this might help others it's perfectly lawful to do but in every situation every circumstance is not the same certain company might be bad certain jobs might be bad for certain people certain TV programs not wrong in themselves but for you with this weakness with that problem it's not advisable to watch it's not advisable to watch some scripts as they say some programs some company the sport itself obviously isn't wrong we're given here that demonstration to study the sport can become a God it can be more important than the Christian life so lay aside everything whether it's lawful or not that hinders you around the Christian life lay aside every weight and the sin which easily ensmeared you with regard to the Jews who this is addressed the Christian Jews the Christians at one time were Jews they would know that their besetting sin as it's sometimes called their besetting sin was unbelief and idolatry they were forever beginning to worship idols you and I may not understand that but that was their besetting sin that's what ensnared them so very easily and naturally for them ferment and sin of unbelief in God and by idolatry now you'll notice he says lay aside that sin you don't have when it comes to sin you don't ask does this help or does this hinder?

it's a sin you lay it aside no debate non-negotiable and notice it's said as if it's something quite easy to do you see sin can so often be simply a decision for example we are told to forgive one another and some people say oh well it'll take me a long time to forgive them it'll take me a long time to forgive them why?

[18 : 43] why in earth would that be the case? you decide oh by the grace of God definitely by the grace of God certainly but it's a decision you decide I'm going to forgive that person that Bible instructs me to forgive them the longer you put it off the more difficult it will become that it's something that's to be done without debate without controversy lay aside everything that's wrong if it's a command if it's a duty then there's no question about it it must be done us are grace to design to do it now look at the encouragement these verses are giving us to you first of all in verse 1 the encouragement is surrounded by a great crowd of witnesses and that of course is referring to the martyrs in the previous chapter

Hebrews chapter 11 these were the witnesses and the picture is imagine them you're running this race and the grandstand is full of these witnesses cheering you on carry on you've only 10 metres to go come on carry on that's what it's saying here and who's in the stands?

who have they been speaking about? Abraham Abraham's watching Noah is watching Job is watching Moses Moses is sitting in the stand cheating you carry on carry on encouragement from them and you see is our race track narrower than Abraham's narrower than Job's you think of Job and one day in one day he lost seven sons two daughters and three daughters and three daughters in one day now I'd be rather inclined to say hey Job you've done something wrong come on that's not normal you've done something wrong well that's exactly the mistake is Job's comfort what you mean assuming you did something wrong no no no no it's just the

Christian race it's not easy Abraham went out not knowing where he was going not knowing how long he was going to be a college he went out not knowing how long he was to travel he didn't know where he was going how's that close for you he just went out not knowing where he went not knowing where he was going not knowing where he was going not knowing for how long but God made all these martyrs all these witnesses he made them endure and he can make us endure he made them zealous and he can make us zealous and he can make us zealous and eventually to triumph and to conquer but primarily he said looking unto Jesus continue to triumph and to conquer looking unto Jesus continually looking to Jesus that one supreme human example that perfect that perfect human example we have the only one that's perfect

Abraham well there were flaws there were flaws Job Satan's objective to get him to curse God he failed Job didn't curse God but he did curse the day he was born but he didn't curse God and you see we just think carry on believing trusting in God looking unto Jesus the author the author the source the giver of our faith spiritual graces and energy I don't know how it works I don't know how it works but it seems there's power there's strength just by looking at Jesus just by reading about Jesus just about thinking about Jesus strength power is transmitted from Christ by meditating by thinking about him power comes out looking unto

[23 : 52] Jesus the author the source get to the source what's the source of your strength what's the source of your grace what's the source of your faith Christ Jesus the author the giver and the finisher in the sense of completing of maturing and how encouraging it was to have in your intimation sheets the verse I was meaning to quote he who has began the good work will continue he finishes what he's began he finishes what he's began he finishes for the who for the joy that was set before him sat down at the right hand on the throne of God imagine imagine Christ having joy when he was faced with the most awful trauma that a human being has ever faced he had joy and what was the joy the inexpressible joy thinking of you and we and every believer that's to be presented faultless before the throne think of that throne a glimpse of the throne he said throne just a glimpse just see it he said throne it's amazing it is wonderful but do you know what he says about that throne?

that throne that then captured its all who's had a glimpse of it it's all you know what it's like you go abroad somewhere and you say oh no idea it was so wonderful and you see the throne here's what the bible tells us in Revelation chapter 3 verse 21 every person who finishes the race Revelation 3 Revelation 3 verse 21 says I will grant to sit with me on my throne now you're a believer in Jesus finish the race and you'll sit on that throne with him Revelation 3 verse 21 Revelation 3 verse 21 and you'll sit on that throne with him Revelation 3 verse 21 well lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls look unto Jesus consider him consider him what's the apostle do here?

what's the Holy Spirit? you see the real writer is the Holy Spirit what's the Holy Spirit? moving the writer to pin these words he's trying to lift up a downcast and the Holy Spirit and he's trying to lift up a downcast and all all The congregation.

He's trying to, he's writing these words to consolidate a disintegrating assembly. As we said earlier, someone already stopped worshipping and then going back to Judaism.

And he's writing all this to encourage and strengthen, to lift up, to consolidate and to stimulate a tired, fatigued people.

[27 : 52] He's writing all this to encourage and revive a disheartened church. Satan and his demons work 24-7 to find out things that will dishearten you.

And so the Spirit has moved the apostle to write this, lest these believers in the 21st century become weary and discouraged.

How does he do it? By pointing them to the author. By pointing them to the finisher of our faith. The author of Jesus Christ.

Because you see, it's his church. It's not our church. It's not your church. It's not my church. It's not the elders' church. It's his church.

It's not your church. It's his idea. The church was God's idea. The Christian life was his plan.

[29 : 00] Christ's plan. His purpose. His will that has been foreordained. It's his love. And it's his power.

It's his power. You know, sometimes if you look at the church, you get discouraged. If you look at believers, you get worried.

If you look at Christianity, you wonder where it will all end. But if you look at Jesus, if you look at Jesus, you can be so inspired.

You can be so revitalized. You can be so encouraged. You can be so strengthened. You can be so excited.

If you keep looking at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He who has begun.

[30 : 08] He who has begun. A good one will continue it until that day of Jesus Christ for you'll see the throne and you'll be granted to sit on Christ's throne.

Lord, may God, the Holy Spirit, may his word, his truth, affect you all to everyone. Now let's pray.