

RUNNING THE RACE, REACHING THE GOAL

SUNDAY MESSAGE NOTES

06.05.2022

*"Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let's rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the 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. **3** For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:1-3)*

Christianity is a lifelong journey, and like all journeys, it has a destination or a final goal. What is your goal in this? Wealth? Health? The saving of souls for the Lord? Whatever it may be, remember that God is more concerned with our spiritual and character development than what we can do for Him. For that reason, the ultimate goal of Christianity is Christlikeness. When we become more like Christ, our intimacy with God grows—we will want to read the Bible, pray more, practice humility, and have better relationships with the people around us.

How to run the race and reach the goal:

1. Let us run the race together.

The church is a community. Not only is there power in togetherness and strength in unity, but Hebrews 10:24 says, "Let us consider how we may spur one another toward love and good deeds." The Bible calls for us to encourage each other to pray, care and share. We may all have

different backgrounds, but in our diversity, we should be united and not divided. We should also use our spiritual gifts to build up God's church. Running the race together means holding each other accountable in our journey of being more Christlike. Remember that as contagious as Christlikeness is, un-Christlikeness is just as—if not more—contagious.

2. Let us learn from the forerunners.

Romans 15:4 says, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." As we go through Christian life, let us not forget our heroes of faith who were witnesses—not mere spectators—in running the race (Hebrews 11). These martyrs have gone before us and have overcome, and so we must learn from them in our studying of the Word of God. This extends beyond the people of the Bible our fellow believers through their testimonies, or through church history and faith-centric literature. These learnings will give us hope, and will encourage us to not give up when things get difficult.

3. Let us throw off everything that hinders and entangles us.

Hebrews 12:1 says, "...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles..." When you participate in a race, you don't bring with you anything that would cause discomfort or weigh you down; in terms of clothing, you want to be as light as possible. This is also true for our race of the Christian life. In order to get to the goal, we must remove anything that could hinder us from running as fast as we can. Some of these hindrances are: gold, girls/guys (relationships), glory, gadgets, gaming, and gambling. Remember that not all of these hindrances are sins; they could also be harmless in the eyes of the world—good, even—but good is often the enemy of "the best." Don't settle for what is good when you could have the best.

4. Let us run with perseverance.

Hebrews 12:3 says, “Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” When running a marathon and you get to the point where you feel as though you cannot go any farther, the only thing you should do is to keep going. Once you stop and rest, you won’t have the strength to go on, but if you continue, adrenaline will eventually kick in and give you renewed strength. Do not give up just because you are tired; instead, persevere.

5. Let us focus on Jesus, our ultimate model.

Hebrews 12:2 says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The greatest example of a successful finish to the race is Jesus, who, because of the foreseen joy of glorifying the Father through obedience, being exalted by His Father and seeing souls being saved because of his finished work, was able to see his race through.

Jesus has done everything for our salvation, so much so that all what we need to do is receive Christ and believe His finished work; and He will save us. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” While religion is man’s endeavor to reach God, Christianity is grace-oriented and centered on the idea that this is the work of Christ, and we merely are recipients of His grace. The more we focus on Christ, the more people will see Christ in us.