

The New Covenant Part 7

Run The Race

Hebrews 12

Memory Verses: Hebrews 12:2

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

The New Covenant is a transformational thing. The new promise in Christ, the new tabernacle in Christ, and the new sacrifice in Christ should change everything about our relationship with God. It changes the way we worship. It changes how we live out our faith. It makes all things new.

In chapter 12 we see how the New Covenant releases us to run our race with endurance. Running. Not my strong suit for sure. I know that we have a few runners in our church. And I have been known to attempt a run or two here and there for charity. But let's just be honest, I'm scared to death to run in a race. Its horrifying. One time I was in a 5k and a blind guy passed me. I see that blind guy in my nightmares, for real. For instance, just imagine waking up one day to find yourself in the middle of a marathon. Your bib number is pinned to your chest, people are running all around you. No warm up, no water bottle, you're in it, whether you're ready or not! Let's read **chapter 12:1-29**.

That's the Christian life. You didn't sign up for comfort, you signed up for a no holds bar marathon. Hebrews 12 is God's rallying cry to every weary runner under the New Covenant. It says, you can keep going! You don't need to quit. You can finish this! But here's the catch, you won't finish by your own strength or will power. No, you will only finish by the grace and power of the One who ran before you and runs with you still; Jesus Christ. The New Covenant doesn't promise an easy race, but it gives us everything we need to endure it. **The New Covenant gives us the power to run with endurance, not by striving harder, but by fixing our eyes on Jesus.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

So the first thing we need to see about running the race is this... **Run With Eyes Fixed On Jesus**. Look again at **Hebrews 12:1-3**. Going back to last week in chapter 11 we see that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Those who have ran the race before us. Those who have endured and finished the course. The picture is powerful. You are not alone. All around you, the stands are full of faithful heroes of the faith who now cheer you on. Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and David. And though they were not perfect people, they stand by, encouraging you to run an imperfect race for a perfect reward. How

encouraging to be in a race that our Biblical heroes have also run?

But the focus isn't on them. **Vs.2** points us to look to Jesus. We aren't to focus on the others while casually glancing at Jesus, like he's just another Biblical hero. No we are to look to him alone. We are to fix our gaze on him as though he's the only thing we can see. The Greek word here for look means to turn your gaze away from all else and have a laser focus on just one point. That point is Jesus. Why? Because he is the one who began this good work in you and he will see it to completion.

And get this; he isn't just a good example. "Man, Jesus ran a good race didn't he. I'll try to be like him." No, its much more than that. We must not make the mistake of merely seeing Jesus as an example to follow. He is a God to rely on. Jesus is our strength. Yes, he endured the cross. Yes, he endured the shame and rejection. And that is worth immolating. But he is also seated at the right hand of God with all power and majesty and glory! **We don't just consider his earthly race, we must consider his eternal reign as well!** He is God and he has all the power to help us finish our race.

When sprinters run a race, they are trained to never look around. Not at the crowd. Not at their competition. One glance sideways and you lose speed, lose direction, maybe even stumble. The moment your focus drifts, your race suffers. The same is true for your faith. If your eyes are on your pain, your past, or other people — you will stumble. But if your eyes are on Jesus — you will endure. So what are your eyes on today? **The New Covenant gives us the power to run with endurance, not by striving harder, but by fixing our eyes on Jesus.**

The second thing we need to see today about how to run this race is this... **Endure The Discipline Of The Father**. Look again at **Hebrews 12:5-11**. Unfortunately, the Christian life has been sold to so many as something that its not. Many claim, come to Jesus and all your problems go away. Thats a lie. Here is where things get honest. The Christian race is not just long, but it is painful at times. The author reminds us that endurance comes through discipline. If the Christian life were not long or painful then there would be no need for endurance. But part of being a Christian is learning to endure. It grows us and makes us stronger. It builds our faith muscles. And so God is determined to make you an endurance runner.

And in order to do that... he must discipline you! Not because he is cruel, but because he is a loving father. Let that sink in; **God is not punishing you, he is preparing you!** The Old Covenant system punished sin immediately. The New Covenant disciplines us through love. It forms us. Shapes us. Matures us gently and with patience. And though there is still pain, that pain is not meaningless, it is producing something.

Often as a father I've also had to be a coach. A good coach doesn't let his athletes coast. A good father doesn't let his children grow up soft and immature. He corrects them. He calls out their laziness. He demands

more. Because he sees their potential and he has to prepare them for the road ahead. I've recently had to coach my children at driving. And they hate it. Anytime we tell them they are over the line or they are turning too quickly or they are braking too soon or too late they hate it. They get mad at us for being so critical. But we must be critical because when they start driving on their own its life or death. In the same way, when God disciplines you, when he allows hardships, when he cuts away idols, when he calls you into uncomfortable obedience, it's because he loves you too much too let you stay weak. So instead of resisting discipline, receive it. Embrace it. Let it do what God designed it to do, grow in you the peaceful fruit of righteousness. **The New Covenant gives us the power to run with endurance, not by striving harder, but by fixing our eyes on Jesus.**

The next thing we need to see is that we must... **Remove All Hindrances Through The Spirit.** Look again at **Hebrews 12:2,12-17.** We cannot run if we are holding onto baggage. We cannot be fit for running if we are consumed with an unhealthy lifestyle. Like runners trying to remove the toxins from their body, we must do a full body cleanse. This is an urgent call for personal and communal holiness. And you know what's cool. The New Covenant gives you your very own personal spiritual health coach; the Holy Spirit. The New Covenant gives you more than commands, it gives you the Holy Spirit to help you obey!

So what sins are weighing you down. What unhealthy spiritual things are you allowing into your body and mind? It's time to deal with those things. Not in the flesh, not by willpower, but by the Spirit living in you, convicting you, helping you. **You cannot run free until you let the Spirit cut loose the sin that's weighing you down.**

The illustration is already built into the passage. Imagine trying to run a race with a 50 pound back pack. You will not only be at a disadvantage but you would be hard pressed to even finish. Stop putting your self out of the race before it even starts. Let go of everything that weighs you down. **The New Covenant gives us the power to run with endurance, not by striving harder, but by fixing our eyes on Jesus.**

And lastly, if we are to run this race we must... **Receive The Reward With Awe And Gratitude.** Look again at **Hebrews 12:18-29.** The writer draws a contrast here between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. Mount Sinai representing the old prize... perfection in the law. Mount Zion representing the new prize... salvation through faith in Christ. Sinai was unapproachable; fire, darkness, fear. But Zion is open; joyful, holy, filled with angels, saints, and Jesus. The Old Kingdom we ran for was the law of Mount Sinai but the new prize is salvation in the king of Mount Zion; heaven! The Old Covenant said, "stay back." The New Covenant

says, "come near."

But don't miss this; God's holiness has not and will never change. He is still a consuming fire. He is still to be feared. He is still awe inspiring and jaw dropping. The difference is that now we can worship him with confidence and boldness. We are running for a kingdom we cannot see and a king we cannot touch. But when we receive that prize, it will be unmistakable. And we will be in awe.

When I was a kid I went to visit my father in Denver. One day we drove up the mountains to Rocky Mountain National Park. It was July but there was still snow all over the ground. We stood on a peak and looked out over the world. It felt like we were almost in the clouds and the view was unlike anything I'd ever seen. For our 10th wedding anniversary Me and Lisa went to Niagra Falls. Again, when you stand at the top of the falls or on a boat at the bottom, you can't describe it. Its power, its beauty. Its otherworldly. The point is this.. you don't stare over the edge of the Rockies or Niagra Falls or The Grand Canyon or the Pacific Ocean and speak casually about it. Instead you might not be able to speak at all. Why? Because you are overwhelmed. You're humbled. You feel small and that's a good thing. And that's what worship should feel like. That's what the New Covenant invites us into. Not shallow church going, but soul shaking wonder. Gratitude. Reverence. Fire in your bones appreciation. You don't approach a holy God with arrogance. You come with joy, but you also come trembling. Because you've been invited into a kingdom that cannot be shaken. **The New Covenant gives us the power to run with endurance, not by striving harder, but by fixing our eyes on Jesus**

Application

The bottom line is this; we are called to run and we must keep running. Not simply to inherit the reward at the end, but because its worth it right now! Hebrews 12 was written to people who were tired. Persecuted. Pressured. People who were ready to quit. But the writer says; Keep going. Don't give up. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Remove sin from your life. Trust the father. Worship with reverence and awe. The race is hard but it ends with glory.

Conclusion

In the 1992 Olympics, British runner Derek Redmond was favored to medal in the 400-meter sprint. Halfway through the race, he tore his hamstring and collapsed on the track. Everyone thought he was finished. But he got up. Limping. In agony. Then, through the crowd, a man pushed past security — it was Derek's father. He ran to his son, put his arm around him, and said, "You don't have to do this." And Derek said, "Yes I do." His father replied, "Then we're finishing this together." And with the whole stadium on its feet, they crossed the finish line — not first, but together.

That's what Hebrews 12 is saying to you. You may be limping. You may feel like you're not strong enough. You're right. But your Father has run onto the track. And He is saying, "I've got you. You're not alone. You're going to finish. And I'm going to carry you if I have to." **The New Covenant gives us the power to run with endurance, not by striving harder, but by fixing our eyes on Jesus**