

Guidelines for Racing

Text: Hebrews 12:1-3

Introduction:

- How should we run this Race of Life to Win?
- In every type of racing in life (cars, track, time events, etc.), there are “guidelines.”
- Today, I want to preach to you about some of those “guidelines” we must go by to have a successful “race.”

I. BE FAMILIAR – Vs. 1a

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses...”

[Questions]:

- Who has encouraged you by facing a test or trial that you ultimately faced?
- Who are the witnesses here and how are they an encouragement?
- Can you name one specific witness in **chapter 11** that encourages you and why?

[Application]:

- These witnesses form an overwhelming testimony.
- The more we become *familiar* with their stories and the stories of others in the Bible who demonstrated faith, the more equipped we will be to handle life’s challenges.

II. BE FAITHFUL – Vs. 1b,c

A. **This Requires Preparation** – ...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...

- No one wakes up one morning and decides to run a marathon.
- That kind of race requires much preparation.
- So does the spiritual race. If we are to run well, then we must prepare properly.

B. **This Requires Patience** – ...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

- We are said to be in "*a race*". This word means "*a struggle or a contest*."
- Our English word "*agony*" comes from this Greek word.

[Illus] That sure does describe the road of life doesn't it? Sometimes life is good. The road is smooth and the way is easy, but there are other times when it feels like you are running blindfolded, uphill through a minefield! It seems there are times when life is a struggle! It is an agony! It is living misery!

- Now, the word "*patience*" means "*endurance*". It means settling in for the long haul.
- It carries the idea of commitment to the race in spite of the obstacles or the difficulties.

[Illus] Christian friends, we are not running a short dash, we are running a marathon! We must pace ourselves and run with preparation and endurance!

III. BE FOCUSED – Vs. 2 - “...Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...;”

[illus] As we run this race, we are to keep ourselves **focused**. We are to concentrate on things that will prevent us from becoming discouraged as we run the race. The writer tells us what those things are.

- A. **We Must Be Focused On The Person Of Jesus** - "*Looking unto Jesus.*" That is how the Christian life began! It all began with a look, **Isa. 45:22**. **Looking** got us into this race and keeping our eyes on Him helps us to do well as we run this race!
- Notice the phrase in **verse 1**, "*the race that is set before us.*" This seems to me to indicate that we each run our own race.

[illus] I must run in my "**lane!**" (e.g. this illustrates the permissive will and perfect will of God—**track** = permissive / **lane** = perfect will). I cannot run your race and you cannot run my race. Now, if I spend my time looking at you and how well you are doing, I am liable to become discouraged in my own race.

- I might become defeated because I am not doing as well as you are. Then, I might try to run in your lane!
- Or, I might stumble over pride if I begin to think that I am doing better than you.
- Or, I might even get discouraged if I think that the way you are running has an effect on my own race.
- I must not allow your failures and **stumbles** to hinder me. In other words, if I keep my eyes on you and how you are running I am in trouble!
- The only way that any of us can run well is for us to keep our eyes **focused** on Jesus. He is the only One we have to run for.

- B. **We Must Be Focused On The Performance Of Jesus** - Not only should we keep our eyes on the Lord's Person as we run, but also on His Performance.

1. **He Finished Our Race For Us** - As we run the race of life, let us take courage in the fact that Jesus Christ has already passed this way.
 - He ran the race ahead of us and He has completed His race. In doing so, He completed our as well! That means that as we run and face the pressures of life, we have Him to help us along the way, **Heb. 4:15-16**.
 - He knew His share of trials in the race of life, but He successfully navigated His course.

Look at everything He endured: (Just mention – no need for posting)

- He was born to an unwed mother - Mt. 1:18-19
- He was born in a stable - Lk. 2:7
- Born to poor parents - Luke 2:24
- His life was threatened as a baby - Matt. 2:13ff
- His birth was the cause of terrible suffering - Mt. 2:16ff
- He was moved as a baby - Matt. 2:13ff
- He was raised in a despicable town - Nazareth - Luke 2:39
- His father died when He was young - Mt. 13:53-58
- He had to support His family - Mt. 13:55-58
- He had no home and no place to lay His head - Mt. 8:20; Luke 9:58

- He was hated and opposed by others - Mark 14:1-2
- He was charged with insanity - Mark 3:21
- He was charged with demon possession - Mark 3:22
- He opposed by His family - Mark 3:21-22
- He was rejected, hated and opposed by the audiences who came to hear Him speak - Matt. 13:53-58; Luke 4:28-29.
- He was betrayed by a close friend - Mark 14:10-11; 18
- He was left alone, rejected and forsaken by all of His friends - Mark 14:50.
- He was tried before the high court of the land and tried with treason - John 18:33.
- He was executed as a common criminal by means of crucifixion - John 19:16ff.

Conclusion:

- Yes, friends, He has been through it all and He is the perfect Coach for those running the race today.
- So, instead of looking everywhere else for the help you need, find your help in Jesus and in Him alone!
- Don't let discouragement get you down! If you are battling it tonight come to Jesus.
- Let Him refocus your priorities, lighten your load and equip you to patiently run your race for His glory.
- There is help in Him, don't leave His House without it!

Invitation Hymn: # 376 (**Big**) “*I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.*” (At least 3 verses-4 if needed).

*Sermon prepared by Bruce Beach, Th.B June 2007 – Preached again at OBC A.M. 6/1/08

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