

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“The Race Set Before Us”

By Brian Meade

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of 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. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;” (Hebrews 12:1-4)

The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews draws upon the great heroes of faith’s examples of chapter eleven, and then makes some very needed applications for those who follow Jesus in the New Testament age today. He gives us the imagery of a “race that is set before us.”



There are some very definitive comparisons and differences to be made from the physical races of then and now. We can learn some valuable lessons that will help us to better run the spiritual race and better serve Jesus now.

1. Running The Race Requires Us To Qualify For It.

Most races of today require, those who are to participate, to qualify the runners for the race. Not everyone would be given the opportunity to run in just any race they desire to run; they may have to have a certain level of ability to even be considered for the race. That’s what is so different about the race God calls us to.

It’s not about how good a condition our body is to run the race or how fast we can run. It is not based on a certain exclusive age bracket, that the aged need not apply. It doesn’t matter whether one is male or female, bond or free, Jew or Gentile; there are no racial or social barriers— you just have to choose to want to run to have the opportunity to begin the race (Galatians 3:26-28).

As long as one can believe in God and has come to realize the guilt of their sin and are in need of a Savior, they are ready to begin the race by obedience to the gospel (Acts 2:37-38; 8:36-39; Romans 6:17-18). And when we have obeyed the gospel, by belief, repentance, confession of faith and baptism into Christ— we should note this as the beginning of the race for us, not the end.

2. Running The Race Requires Us To Lay Aside All Hindrances.

“let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us,” (Hebrews 12:1) What is the writer saying to us about the race itself? Is he saying it will be easy? Is he saying it will be too difficult? We can rightly come to the conclusion of “no” to both of those statements about the race. As we know, Satan does not make the race of faith easy for us at all. He will put temptations and occasions of snares in our way that will make it a challenge to reach the finish line. God tells us to “lay aside” sin, because it is a weight that only weighs us down. Just like a runner in a race cannot carry heavy objects and realistically expect to do well in the race, we must discard (as best we possibly can) the sin that we don’t need!

We must constantly look at sin in just this way, with the mental picture of it as a snare to our progress in the race. And that is the point of temptations to sin—to get us to be hindered and stop running the race. Sin has the power to entangle our feet as we are running the Christian race. The obvious problem of an entanglement is that it trips us up and becomes a stumbling point of distraction. So it is for good reason we are told to “lay it aside.”

3. Running The Race Requires Endurance To Complete.

If you have ever ran in a short distance race or took part in a marathon run, you understand very well the intense and challenging nature of such an event as a race to the finish line. In the short distance style of racing, one gives everything they have got for the whole length of the race.

And in the marathon style of running, one must focus on keeping a pace that is sustainable for the overall long distance of the race. For both of these kinds of races, one key ingredient is needed: endurance. It will take a persevering endurance to withstand all obstacles and distractions that come our way.

When runners are so far into the race, at a certain point, they may start to become weary of running— that is when endurance becomes a key factor in determining who will make it to the finish line, and who will not. Therefore, it is not an “imaginary problem” that those who teach the *once in grace always in grace* doctrine say doesn’t exist. In their minds, the salvation is already a done deal and one cannot lose their faith. But the sad reality remains, that some will lack endurance and fall by the wayside. Jesus speaks about some of this kind in Luke 8:13, *“Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.”* It is extremely important for us not to *“grow weary in doing good.”* (2 Thessalonians 3:13— see also Hebrews 12:3; Revelation 2:3).

We can get weary of fighting the same battles over and over again to the point of weariness and exhaustion. I have heard even Christians say things like, “I just got tired of doing good, all the time.” Jesus said, *“But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.”* (Matthew 24:13)

One thing runners must do to have the endurance to finish a marathon: is to keep a positive mental attitude that says, “I CAN DO THIS!” The word “Can’t” cannot be in our vocabulary, if we want to see it through to the end. What Paul says in Philippians 4:13— *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*— means so much to us when we are in the difficult parts of “the race that is set before us.”

4. Running The Race Requires Keeping Our Focus On The Prize.

Notice again what the Hebrew writer says about the focus we must have in the race, *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of 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.”* (Hebrews 12:2)

We must follow the example of Jesus, as He was here on the earth and had a mission, a race to complete, if you will. Jesus had to focus on “the joy set before Him.”

What does that mean? It means Jesus had to keep His eye on the purpose that the cross and the shame led to— the joy of fulfilling the purposes of His Father in securing our salvation. We too have to look past the sufferings, the temptations, the difficulties, and the struggles of the race and focus on the prize awaiting us!

Notice Paul’s focus in Philippians 3:13-14, *“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*



That is why Paul could say at the end of his life, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* (2 Timothy 4:7-8 NKJB)

May we keep the attitude and zeal of Paul to finish the race!

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby’s Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry’s niece), Betty Hurst, Pam Zeanah,, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris— Ruthie Robertson’s sister, is out of the hospital but still needs our prayers.

Katie Ward Coburn may come home from Memphis this coming Monday.

Remember Tim Harris Jr’s surgery April 2nd in Memphis.

NorthEast Church of Christ in Tupelo is having a **Gospel Meeting** beginning April 7th-12th.

Also, Red Bay Church of Christ is having a **Gospel Meeting** beginning April 7th-12th.

(Details for both meetings in the foyer)

Our Gospel meeting will begin April 21st—26th with Allen Shepherd. (flyers available)

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #1: *“Passing the Test”*

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Fred Johnson
The Book of Acts (Jason Longstreth)
Page 24, Question #1

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Paul Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Fred Johnson
Acts 8:18-22
Song Leader: Jerry Kennemur
Lord’s Supper: Jerry Kennemur
Assisting: Adam Harris & Nathan Meade
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #2: *“What Money Can & Cannot Buy”*
Closing Prayer: Russell Briggs

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

April 3rd:

Auditorium Bible Class:

Paul Johnson
Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther (Mike Willis)
Page 15, Question #1

Invitation: Chris Callahan
Song Leader: Brian Meade
Closing Prayer: Russell Briggs