

Run to Win

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Hebrews 12:1

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us

We are told here to lay aside every weight — throw it out of our life, let it not have any free course in us. Weights are things that hinder one's walk with God, hindering faith and godly living. These

Hebrews 12 has much to say about faith and godliness. We need to take this to heart and see if there are any weights in our life that would slow down our spiritual progress — anything that entangles or clings to us.

II Timothy 2:4

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

We shouldn't be out to please ourselves nor seek to please others, but to please God.

Entangled with Things of This Life

Entangled with the affairs of this life: These are things one gets involved in that cause them to be trapped, ensnared, and even confused.

see I Corinthians 14:33

Such things are not of God, for God is not the author of confusion.

Getting all caught up in projects and things that are not spiritual can become a real weight to someone as they run this Christian race. Rather than helping in their walk with the Lord, those things occupy their mind and time.

When you get so involved with projects and activities — even in natural, everyday things — if you allow yourself, your mind and time become all taken up with those things and away from the things of God. This is something you want to be very careful to watch out for.

You can get so taken up with something that you get up in the morning and your mind is on it, and when you go to bed at night your mind is still occupied with it. You find yourself thinking about it all night, as you keep tossing and turning, unable to sleep.

You get so involved, so tangled up and engrossed with that thing, that it keeps you out of church and from prayer and Bible study.

We need to be careful not to allow ourselves to get in that place where those things take priority in our lives above the things of God. It can become a great hindrance to our faith, a great hindrance to our testimony, and a great hindrance to our soul.

This is why we are told in Hebrews that we need to lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets us.

The thing that so easily besets is that thing that's right there surrounding you, wanting to take such control of you that it becomes your life: one project after another, one activity after another, taking you away from the things of God.

I believe that the coming of Jesus is much sooner than many think. We're living in horrible times, and it behooves us to make sure we are making good use of our time.

Ephesians 5:16

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

We should be serving the Lord with all of our soul, all of our mind, all of our strength — with our all. Yes, He should have first place in our life — *first* place.

But, to many of God's people, these other things have taken first place. These things overwhelm them, robbing them of their time. Sometimes becoming more important to them than devoting their life to serving the Lord with all their heart.

How can we really grow if we're not studying God's Word? How can we draw closer to God if we're not paying mind to spiritual things? We need to be seeking the Lord with all of our heart. We can't afford to live carelessly like nothing is ever going to happen.

We need to listen to what God is speaking to us from His Word. I believe Paul made it very clear when he wrote Timothy:

II Timothy 2:4

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

There are those who are men-pleasers: more concerned about pleasing others than they are about pleasing God.

God Has No Pets

Now, another weight people can have in their life is in their attitude toward God: "God does for others but He doesn't do for me."

Listen, God is no respecter of persons. If you're a child of God, living according to His Word, He'll do the same for you as He does for others.

As we give ourselves over to God, putting Him first place in our life, we won't be left out, for the blessings of God belong to those who really love and serve Him with their all.

God daily loads us with benefits when we give ourselves totally over to Him. But because some are so taken up with the weights that hold them down and pull them back, they find they are not receiving all the benefits He has promised them.

Remove the Weights

When runners are preparing to run a race, they have to take off all that would weigh them down. They can't run with a backpack, or with heavy boots, or anything else that would hinder.

Those weights will cause them to have a hard time in trying to run this race.

We need to remove from our life those things that weigh us down and keep us from doing what God has purposed for us to do.

When we allow ourselves to be weighed down, those weights will cause us to have problems with our faith and will hinder our walk with God.

We never want to have an attitude where we point a finger at God, blaming Him.

We should be living godly in Christ Jesus, not allowing anything to hinder us.

Titus 2:12

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

As God's people we should always have the desire in our hearts to do the right thing.

Many times people are warned but they do not want to listen. God has spoken to warn, but they don't pay any mind.

Sometimes the warning comes through God's Word; other times it's through a message that's preached, through a testimony, or through some other means.

Another attitude towards God is thinking that He is mean. Oh, no, God is not mean. He is a loving God. In fact, He *is* love.

In John 3:16 we are told how He loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. Can you imagine that? He was willing to give His Son a sacrifice for us so that we could have eternal life.

The Hindrances of Sins

Many have sin in their life that causes them to stumble and fall. Every time they try to get back on their feet, it's always there.

If you have a sin in your life that you keep falling victim to, get down on your face and begin to seek the Lord. Forget all those projects and activities; put your soul first. It's life or death.

Because God loves us, He will chastise His children, correcting those who err from the way, those who aren't doing right.

Hebrews 12:6

For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.

Hebrews 12:11

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

The Need for Patience

Run this race with patience: This is one thing many of God's people lack — patience.

Have you been impatient with God? Maybe you were waiting for Him to do something for you, and you didn't want to have to wait any longer.

Have you been impatient with your wife or with your husband?

What about when you waited for something to be delivered, and it didn't come on time? You were told they would bring it in the morning, and it still hadn't come after lunch! Did you get impatient?

Somebody tells you they'll meet you at a certain time, and hours later you are still waiting. You grow impatient, and anxiety sets in.

The world is filled with impatience. When you stop at a red light, as soon as it turns green, someone starts to honk their horn for you to hurry up.

Yes, we live in a world filled with people who are impatient, but God's people are supposed to be different.

We all can use more patience — even the children can use more patience. Does your child ever get impatient with you? They keep teasing and teasing for you to hurry up. They can't wait.

Now, we are to run this race with patience: steadfast in our faith, enduring whatever we find we have to endure.

We shouldn't let anything hinder us in running this race.

Luke 21:19

In your patience possess ye your souls.

In other words, with steadfastness and endurance you will possess your soul.

Hebrews 10:36

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

In order to run this race, you need to be steadfast in your walk with God, able to endure, that you might receive the promise. Then you'll be able to fully accomplish that which is the will of God. Yes, if you're steadfast and enduring, you'll be able to accomplish His will in your life.

That we might receive the promise: This is speaking of the promise of eternal life.

James 5:7

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until He receive the early and latter rain.

So you see, the Lord is being patient in waiting for the fruit, you have to admit that He's been patient and longsuffering with you. Even when you don't do right, even when you have a fit, He is still longsuffering with you.

He works with you to change you and to bring you the victory. Yes, if you have a mind for the Lord to get hold of you, He'll bring you through.

So we want to be patient in waiting for the coming of the Lord, for the Lord has been longsuffering in waiting to receive us as His precious fruit.

James 5:8

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Endure to the End

The need for being steadfast is one of the main things I want you to get out of this message, because he that endures to the end shall be saved.

You can't give up in the midst of this race. You can't afford to turn back.

Luke 9:62

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Don't waver. Stay steady and steadfast in your walk with the Lord. Run the race to the finish, and you will receive His promise of eternal life.

You need to make up your mind that you will stand true and faithful to God. Come what may, you've got to make up your mind to be steadfast in your faith.

If you don't, you will waver and fall by the wayside.

The Importance of Consistent Prayer

Jesus saw the need to step aside:

Matthew 14:22,23

And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone.

Jesus didn't let all His activity keep Him from His prayer life. He sent His disciples away, and went up into the mountain to pray and be alone with His Father.

Matthew 14:24-28

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.

Can you imagine! After the Lord had spoken to him, Peter immediately says, "Lord, *if* it be Thou."

So many just can't seem to believe when God speaks that it is really God speaking to them. "Was that really God?"

Has the Lord ever told you something, and you went your way doubting?

Mathew 14:29

And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

Peter walked on the water — until he took his eyes off of Jesus — then his faith ceased. Yes, he had faith to step out on the water, but when his eyes were taken off of Jesus, his faith ceased.

Matthew 14:30

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

This is the same thing that happens to us. When our eyes are taken off of Jesus, our faith ceases, and we'll do just what Peter did here.

It tells us that he was afraid when he saw the waves.

He opened the door of his mind to fear. He didn't see the wind, but he saw the effects of that wind.

And that's just exactly what happens to many of God's people. They begin to sink when their eyes are taken off of Jesus. They begin to look at the things around about them, at the trials of this life, and fear sets in.

Peter did step out of the boat and walk on the water, but when his eyes were off of Jesus, his faith ceased. He opened the door to his mind to let fear take over, and he began to sink.

Matthew 14:31,32

And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Peter did the right thing in calling on the Lord to save him. Jesus heard his cry and reached down to save him.

We can see something here: As long as Peter's faith was intact, keeping his eyes on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water. But as soon as he took his eyes off Jesus and began to look around at the storm, his faith ceased, and he began to sink.

Don't let this happen to you. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

II John 1:8

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.