

## *Running Well* *Hebrews 12:1-3*

*“In the ancient Isthmian games of Greece, a pedestal stood at the finish line, and on it hung a wreath—the winner’s prize. No one runs a race without some expectation of reward. The reward may be nothing more than a ribbon or a trophy or wreath of leaves. It may be a prize worth a large amount of money, Sometimes the reward is fame and recognition. Sometimes it is a healthy body. Occasionally the race is run for the sheer exhilaration.*

*The Isthmian races and the race spoken of in Hebrews 12, however, were not run for exhilaration. This type of race is the **agon**, the agony race, the marathon, the race that seems never to end. It is not a race you run simply for the pleasure of running. If you do not have something important to look forward to at the end of this race, you will likely not start it and will certainly not finish it.*

*Only what was at the end of the race could have motivated Jesus to leave what He did. Jesus ran for two things, the joy set before Him and sitting down at the right of the throne of God... The prize Christians run for is not heaven. We run for the same prize that Jesus ran for, and we achieve it in the same way He did. We run for the joy of exaltation God promises will be ours if we glorify Him on earth as His Son did. We glorify God by allowing His attributes to shine through us and by obeying His will in everything we do.” MacArthur*

- I. The second we came to know Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, we entered a race, a marathon marked out by Him to teach us how to live our faith with **steadfast endurance**. The goal is our glorification. How well we run depends on how well we keep ourselves in **training** by obedience to the instructions he gives through His Word. Otherwise, the race we are in will be a disaster of one disappointment after another because of our inability to distinguish between right and wrong.

Heb. 12:1

2 Tim. 4:7

Heb. 4:13-14

Eph. 5:31-32

Prov. 28:13

Col. 3:9-10

Eph. 2:22-24

Gal. 5:7

John 16:13

Gal. 5:1

**agōn** – figuratively, an effort or anxiety:—conflict, contention, fight, race. Strong’s

- II. The Holy Spirit's power gives us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pe. 1:3). We cannot run the race well without Him. His indwelling enables us to keep the eyes of our hearts transfixed on the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ. Jesus pioneered / captained / authored our faith, i.e., he enabled our dead hearts to come alive to Him. The race we are in is meant to perfect the good work of righteousness he started in us. Our responsibility is to let him perfect our faith. We do that by submitting to whatever he wants for our lives, be it a throwing off of something or someone or a sin that keeps tripping us up. Our faith must deepen and become stronger, it was never meant to stay dormant and unproductive.

Heb. 12:2

Heb. 2:10

Rom. 3:10-11

***aphoraō*** - to consider attentively:—look.

***hypomenō*** - to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee, to endure, bear bravely and calmly

*“In the Christian life we have a goal: The Christian is not an unconcerned stroller along the byways of life; he is a wayfarer on the high road. He is not a tourist, who returns each night to the place from which he starts; He is a pilgrim who is forever on the way. The goal is nothing less than the likeness of Christ. The Christian life is going somewhere, and it would be well if, at each day's ending, we were to ask ourselves: 'Am I any farther on.'”* Barclay

- III. There will always be opposition, strife, and hostility toward those who live by the truth of the gospel. The darkness hates the light and living as children of light means that we will be hated in overt and subtle ways (Jn. 3:20; Eph. 5:8). In fact, the race to the finish line of our salvation has many obstacles, sin being one of them. Satan also loves to put obstacles in our way to try to get us to lose heart through the weariness that comes from dealing with them. Yet, the price we pay for being true to Him is hardly worth pining over when we consider the price Jesus paid for our souls. We are told to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power (Eph. 6:10). That is what we must be if we expect to run the race he marked out for us with perseverance. Otherwise, we'll just continue to limp along doing nothing of much value for the Kingdom.

Heb. 12:3

*“It is God's will that every Christian should finish well. It is quite obvious that all believers do not finish well. It may be that the majority of Christians do not finish well.”* Newton Conant