

January 31, 2021

Reviving our Faith

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."

Hebrews 12:1-2



Faith is a choice to believe that absolutely changes our lives in very measurable ways. The author of this letter reminds these first century believers that their lives of faith are very much like a race. Using that imagery drawn from their own experiences the author first tells them to *"...throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles..."*

If you've ever participated in or watched track and field you know that runners, in particular, wear the lightest weight and least restrictive clothing they can. I doubt if any of us has ever seen a serious athlete preparing to run a race wearing a snowmobile suit and heavy boots.

The Hebrew author uses race imagery to command those of us who believe to get rid of anything that makes running our faith-race harder than it already is. He commands us to *"...throw off..."* anything that might hinder our faith. What might hinder our faith? Maybe we are carrying things from our past and its time for those to go. Or, maybe we are fighting battles that don't really belong to us and those need to go. Or, maybe we are trying to carry too many of the things of this world and those need to go. Or, maybe we are...

The point is we need to consider what might be weighing our own faith down and get rid of it. We also need to unload the sin that is tripping us up. What sins are you struggling with? What sins do I struggle with? It is time for those to go. We must *"...throw off..."* anything that is hindering our faith; anything that is causing us to stumble.

Next the author tells us to *"...run with perseverance the race marked out for us..."* A life of faith is not a sprint. Sometimes I wish it were. A life of faith is a marathon. Every day, day in and day out, we must choose faith over and over again. It is not nor will it ever be a 'one time for all time' choice. Sometimes it is easy to choose to be faithful, but other times it is very, very difficult.

And, just as perseverance is important so too is staying on course. Those who finish the Boston Marathon have to run the prescribed course from start to finish to get credit for their accomplishment. There is no cheating, no cutting corners, no short cuts. Like any marathon our faith-race must be run from start to finish and it must be run on the prescribed course.

Finally, the author calls us to, *"...fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..."* If you signed up to run the Boston Marathon this year it would be helpful to know, I think, that others had done it before. In fact, I suspect that a lot of runners who sign up for a marathon talk to those who have done the race before to learn how to do it well.

All of us have a perfect example of how to run this race of faith. Jesus has lived the race, done the race, endured the race, and he has completed the race. So, if we keep our eyes on him, if we run in his footsteps, and if we do it the same way he did it we will, Like the Apostle Paul, be able to boldly claim, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day..."* (II Timothy 4:7-8)

This letter to the first believers whose faith was being tested and whose will to persevere was being challenged, really has only a single lesson. Fight the good fight. Finish the race. Keep the faith. That was their single task all those years ago and that is still our single task today.

Fight the good fight. Finish the race. Keep the faith.

