

RUN DON'T WALK! - Hebrews 12:1, 2

(Read Text) – In the last couple of weeks you've heard *two* great messages from pastor Nathan and pastor Mark. One addressed the internal *spiritual* disposition of the believer, hope, while the other addressed the outward manifestation of that disposition, servanthood. These two messages provide a great perspective for the rest of the year. Armed with this mentality, I want to encourage you today to “**run and not walk,**” in regard to the *course* God has ordained for you this year!

As believers, we often wrestle with *doubts* and *fears*, which threaten to shorten our *spiritual stride* (gate) in the Lord, due to past negative experiences. Thus, we began to walk, rather than run, the “**race set before us!**” The writer of Hebrews, *however*, challenges us to not allow the *past* to dictate our future. The reason, *I believe*, many of us find it *difficult* to run is our sights are set too low! **(Colossians 3:1-2) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

As we examine the great faith chapter, **Hebrews 11**, we find those great, *and yet flawed*, *Patriarchs of the faith* possessed a faith perspective which seems foreign to the perspective of many believers today. There is one verse in **Hebrews 11** that serves as the antithesis (opposite) of the faith many possess today! **(Hebrews 11:39) And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise.**

The promise, *of course*, is the *promise of Messiah*. Jesus did not come in their day, yet they ran on, believing God, evidenced by the fact that they

“...obtained a good testimony through faith...” This ***“great cloud of witnesses”*** (Patriarchs) serve as an example of how we should live out our faith this year!

There may have been promises, dreams, and goals that did not come to fruition *last year*. However, *as with the Patriarchs*, our desire to **run on** comes **not** from our present circumstances, but from the belief in a certain, future glory! ***This is the means by which we can confidently run by faith and “obtain a good testimony,” witness for Christ!***

The great hymns and “Negro Spirituals” of the past motivated believers to “run on” in Christ! They focused not upon earthly gain, but future glory. These songs still inspire us today. Songs such as ***“It Is Well With My Soul”*** (Horatio Spafford – lawyer, facing financial ruin after the Great Chicago fire, 1871, lost four daughters at sea in 1873); also songs like ***“Swing Low Sweet Chariot”*** (written by Wallace Willis a slave in 1840) – a song written by people who seem to have no hope, yet they possessed a hope of glory no slave master could beat out of them!

If we will ***“run and not walk,” in this New Year***, it must be according to the glory set before us, rather than the negative experiences behind us! (ttt) **1 Peter 1:6-9**. What lies ahead in this year no one knows. But this we do know, there is an immutable (unchanging) goal of *glory* before us, in Christ! Thus, the writer of Hebrews exhorts you ***to “run and not walk,” in the course ordained for you! How? Three ways:***

First – **Preparation** – (v.1a) - get rid every (not just some) weight and the sins. We need to become *spiritual* ***“weight watchers!”*** Spiritually, we have to watch our weight; failure to do so means added unwanted pounds! The

Greek word for “weight” – ogkos: as bending or bulging by its load – burden, hinderance. **We know we are overweight when our load is exposed!** (*Bicycle shorts 1970’s*) As believers, in order to run, we must be willing to fight the “battle of the bulge!”

“Weights” here represent that which may be acceptable, but not profitable. **(1 Corinthians 10:23) All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.** A box of donuts from Hurt’s Bakery (located at Barnes Rd./Tutt Blvd) maybe acceptable, but not edifying (beneficial) if we’re trying to lose weight! ☺ Preparation involves discipline in order to fight the “battle of the bulge.”

Pastor Craig Groeschel, of Life Church, once said: ***“Discipline is the bridge between who you are and where you want to be...small disciplines lead to big results over time.”*** ***Pastor Craig Groeschel*** To “lay aside” every weight can be a process of committing oneself to small disciplines – **example:** troubled marriage? *Strengthen marriage; praying over your wife/husband. To run, there must be a willingness to lose self, that we might gain the Savior!* ***“I must decrease, He must increase!”***

Secondly, we must lay aside the sins. **HOW?** **1 John 1:9.** Confessing must be followed by **forsaking**, lest our confession proves to be fruitless. **(Proverbs 28:13) He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.** Forsaking the *sins*, which “easily” ensnare us; **easily – skillfully surrounding, a competitor.** The sins which easily compete against our allegiance (loyalty) to Christ. **(Romans 8:12-13)** **Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to**

the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

In Christ we *owe no allegiance* to the flesh (sin). Yet, we owe everything to Christ! **(1 Corinthians 6:20) For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.** To “lay aside” – to “put away” from you! *Because it (whatever sin it is) knows you are easy!* **But what if I should stumble?** David declared: **(Psalm 37:23-24) The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.** The order is in, *Christ has prepared the way*, get up and **run on!**

Secondly, to run requires, **Endurance** - **(v.1b) Many believers lack endurance because endurance is not pretty.** It doesn't feel good! There will be times you'll want to quit! **But run we must!** Paul exhorts us: **(1 Corinthians 9:24) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.** Endurance means to run like you mean it! Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, once said, **(Ecclesiastes 9:11a) “The race is not to the swift...”**

Christ calls us to run a marathon, not a 40-yard dash! It's not how we start, but how we finish, that matters. Therefore, keep running despite the *past*, knowing God is sovereign over every *trial, temptation, affliction, and disappointment*. **(Romans 5:3-5) And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Notice: our endurance is not based on**

self-determination, but the determination of God to love us to the end, *by His willingness to pour into our hearts His love on a daily basis!*

Lastly, we can ***run and not walk*** by staying **Focused** upon Christ - **(v.2)**. **We live in a world full of distractions.** **How can we stay focused on Christ?**

Practically, we can pray, stay in the word and in fellowship. But **“Directionally”** we can keep our eyes on the **author** and the **finisher** of our faith! **Christ *does not* want a rear-view mirror relationship; He desires to be set before us! Before all else! (Luke 14:26-27) "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."**

We can remain focused knowing that God **never** starts anything He *cannot finish!* **(Philippians 1:6) "...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."**

The government may be shut down, but Jesus **isn't!** His faithfulness abounds throughout the year! **(Psalm 37:3) Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.** The Hebrew word for "feed" implies **tending a flock; to graze.** If we "graze" upon His faithfulness for our *spiritual nourishment*, rather than the faithfulness of ourselves or mankind, only then can we run with **divine confidence!**

Difficulties, and obstacles face us in every year. **Therefore, in order to stay focused, we must follow His example: (v.2b) "...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross..."** **What was that joy? YOU! – our salvation, and the glory set before Him! (v.2b).** ***This joy overshadowed the temporary shame of the cross!***

Lesson: Keep the joy before you! **Jesus is the source of our joy!** Focus is essential to running the race. To focus on Christ is to abound in Christ! **(ttt) 2 Peter 1:5-9.** When we stop abounding, we stop running and start walking, in *doubt* and *unbelief!* **(Acts 20:24) But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.**

CONCLUSION: We should “run and not walk” for three reasons: **1) We have a real adversary.** Satan seeks to kill, steal, and destroy your dreams, your witness! To run is to resist the devil, *that he might run (flee) from us!* **(James 4:7).**

2) To stay spiritually fit. (1 Timothy 4:8) For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. 3) Our course is predestined for glory. (Romans 8:30) Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. This year “run don’t walk,” according to godly preparation, endurance, and focus. **(Psalm 65:11) You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance. So run on!**