

J.J.

FAITH FORWARD

Hebrews 12:1-2

Hebrews 12: 1 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, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Pray

Mrs. Lopez went to her pastor to tell him, "I'm so scared! Joe, my husband says he's going to kill me if I continue to come to this church, DCF"

The pastor asked, "Why?" Mrs. Lopez replied, "It's because he noticed that my relationship with Christ goes deeper when you preach God's Word.

"Have faith Mrs. Lopez," replied the pastor, "I will pray for you, Mrs. Youngston. Have faith - the Lord will watch over you."

Next Sunday, Mrs. Lopez approached the pastor again and said the same thing and the pastor replied, "Have faith Mrs. Lopez." replied the pastor, "I will continue pray for you, Mrs. Youngston. Have faith - the Lord will watch over you."

The same thing happened the following Sunday that Mrs. Lopez approached the pastor and the pastor replied, "Have faith Mrs. Lopez" replied the pastor, "I will continue pray for you, Mrs. Youngston. Have faith - the Lord will watch over you."

But then Mrs. Lopez replied

"Oh yes, he has kept me safe thus far, only....."

"Only what, my child?"

"Well, now he says if I keep coming to your church, he's going to kill YOU!"

"Well, now," said the pastor to Mrs. Lopez, "You know what? I heard that other church across the road has a better preacher, I think you better check that church."

It's easy to say "Have faith" to others if it doesn't involve us. But will we still have faith, when it's affecting us personally?

Review from last week :

Hebrews 12: 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses

As we all know, when we see the word, "therefore", it means, "there's something before" It was talking about Hebrews chapter 11.

Paul said *since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses*

The clouds "nephos" is obviously a metaphor. It means, if you look into the heavens, there are many people who has gone before you based on Chapter 11 that has shown their faith in God.

They were looking forward to something that is much better here on earth.

Hebrews 11: 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Hebrews 11 talks about what you call the “Hall of Faith”.

QUOTE : HEBREWS CHAPTER 11 SHOWS THAT FAITH IS ALL ABOUT TRUSTING GOD IN TRIALS NO MATTER WHAT IT IS AND NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME BECAUSE THEY KNOW THE BEST IS YET TO COME.

Quote : Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means, whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love. There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace.

Oswald Chambers in Run Today's Race.

So how do we become part of God's Hall of Faith? What is the blueprint?

The writer of Hebrews was very clear and simple on this that I don't dare change the outline mentioned in the passage.

THROW. RUN.SET

I. THROW

let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

Etymology : throw “apotithemi” apo “separate” tithemi “put”... This means “throw it away”...separate from it... hiwalayan mo nay an.

In KJV: “lay aside every weight”

STORY : BAG OF GOLD I like hearing about adventure stories.. There was this one story I remember where the father and son went on an adventure in order to find hidden treasure. After a long, arduous journey, they finally found the lots of gold bars inside the cave and they put it in a big bag which the father was carrying. But while now trying to make their escape, the ground underneath them opened up and both father and son fell. The father was able to hold on to a rock with his one hand while holding the bag of treasure with his other hand. His son was holding on the father's feet with his dear life. If the father doesn't let go of the bag of gold bars, both of them would die. He had to make a decision quickly, he had to let go of the bag of gold, reached out to his son and with all his strength pulled his son to get on to stable ground and then afterwards, the son was able to pull him up and both of them were saved.

There are things we need to let go or throw away in our lives even if it feels good or looks good in order for us not to perish.

Paul also says : *and the sin that so easily entangles*

Etymology : that so easily entangles – only one word in Greek - euperistatos
It's a very interesting word “eu” good “peri” about “statos (we get the word static) from histemi” to stand

It's the only time that is used in the Bible.

It means it's something good that makes you stand still. Sin is like that. It's seemingly good but it's bad for us and for the people around us.

In my experience, if we do not let it go, God, being a good father in is going to take it away from us and that will hurt more.

Quote : Hold everything in your hands lightly, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open". - Corrie Ten Boom

II. RUN

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

Obviously, this talks about a long distance race.

Paul likes to use this metaphor in a lot of his letters to the churches. Faith is race is a race to the finish.

2 Timothy 4: 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

He knows he will be part of the Hall of Faith.

How should we run?

- Run with power.

Etymology : *run* trecho (trekrho) **it means run but it also means giving all your effort. Giving your very best to God.** Your best time, your best effort.

If we study again the people in the Hall of Faith, **they have given all their best to God, even their very life.**

Biblical Illustration : Abraham – he was from the land of Ur, a pagan, and he was asked to give that land up because God has promised him something much better and he did without any hesitation. Remember how God asked him to give up Isaac...that's giving your all. What did God say to Abraham?

*Genesis 22: Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”
“Here I am,” he replied.*

²Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

That's the meaning of faith – a willingness to give up everything if God asks us to.

- **Run with perseverance**
with perseverance the race

Etymology: perseverance (patience in KJV); hupomone ; - to endure is the root word but the actual meaning is to be steadfast.

Illustration : My wife always have a favorite term when she's encouraging me, when I'm getting discouraged. She says to me, “Sige lang ng sige.”

Vicky always writes to the church, “Go Go Go for God's Glory!”

God did not promise us that living the Christian life is going to be easy.

I heard a preacher says that there are no struggles in your Christian life, **it's because the devil is ignoring you because you're not being used anyway in the kingdom of God.**

Etymology : race “agon” where we get the word “agony” “agonizing” ...there will be struggles in the Christian life.

Quote : “The devil wouldn't be attacking you so hard if there wasn't something valuable in you. Thieves don't break into empty houses” - (author unknown)

Encouragement : Yes, sometimes, it can be hard, you need to rest. You need to take a break but never give up on the race. Never give up on trusting God! Sometimes we might fall, but stand up again and start running again with all power.

- **Run with purpose**
the race marked out for us,

Etymology : marked out (set before) “prokeimai” pro “before” keimai “ something that is laid down”

So this is something that is appointed to you.

Story : Ptr. Junn had his funeral last weekend. He was one of the main reasons I attend the Ontario Filipino Ministerial Fellowship. When he messages me, that's the time I attend. He's also one of the reasons why I became close to the members of Hallelujah Baptist Fellowship. When I visited Ptr. Junn Lagud's funeral last Friday night, I was talking with one of their church members. I asked them how was the church? He told me that Ptr. Jun told them that a few years ago that he is already getting old. So the church looked for an associate pastor. It was last year that they were able to find another pastor. That's why even if Ptr Junn wasn't there, there's already another pastor who took over and then the church member said to me, “Maybe that's the reason why Ptr. Junn went home to the Lord, tapos na yung purpose ni Lord sa buhay niya.”

When you live your Christian life, make sure you are running according to the race God has set for you to run. **Not everyone can be pastors, elders...but what is your purpose in God's kingdom? It doesn't have to be in the frontline. It doesn't have to be grandiose.**

Biblical Illustration: Amalekites defeated. So the Amalekites attacked the Israelites while in the desert. Moses commanded Joshua to get men and attack the Amalekites the following day. He said,

Exodus 17: 9 Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”

So the following day, Joshua attacked the Amalekites and Moses went to the hill with Aaron and Hur. The battle wasn't easy but the Israelites were winning when his hands are lifted up with the staff. But the battle was long and hard and Moses was getting tired. So when he lowered his hands, the Amalekites began winning. So what happened?

11 As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. 12 When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. 13 So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

This victory was so important, that's how we got the name of God : Jehovah Nissi “The Lord Is my Banner”

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.”

15 Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner.

The reason why I used this story is because

First, whenever we are trusting God, praising God, having faith in Him, we will always be on the winning side, no matter what is happening.

Second, look at the role of Aaron and Hur, it was so important in order for the Israelites to win. They placed a stone under Moses so he can sit down and then they were supporting Moses' hand. Remember, that's not easy to because the battle was until sunset.

Our Christian race or purpose might not be in the frontline like Joshua doing the battle with soldiers or like Moses who is on the hill whose hands are lifted to the Lord but our purpose can that be of Aaron and Hur which was crucial to the victory.

Application : That might be your purpose, it might be in the frontline or it might be to serve in the background and encourage others, the one who places a stone for other in order for him to sit and rest and to help others when they are getting tired but its crucial to encourage them. That might be our race.

We need to Run with power, perseverance and with purpose.

**1 Corinthians 9: 24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?
Run in such a way as to get the prize.... 26 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly;**

Next week, by God's grace, we'll talk about fixing our eyes on Jesus.

CONCLUDING STORY :

John Stephen Akhwari was never likely to win the men's marathon, but his chances were wrecked when, perhaps because of the effects of the high altitude, he succumbed to cramps that slowed his progress. If that was painful, then worse was to come after he was involved in a melee of athletes jockeying for position.

Akhwari fell to the ground, gashing his knee and also causing a dislocation. He also smashed his shoulder against the pavement. Most observers, seeing his injuries, assumed he would pull out and go to hospital. Instead, he received medical attention and returned to the track to continue his race.

His pace, of course, was now much lower, but his resolve to complete the event remained intact. Eighteen of the 75 starters had pulled out; he did now wish to add to that number.

(Show Video)

And so, more than an hour after the winner, Tanzania's Akhwari crossed the line in last place, cheered home by a few thousand spectators who had remained in the stadium after the sun went down. The medals had already been awarded. By the time he reached the stadium, he was limping and the bandage around his leg was flapping in the breeze.

He was asked why he'd carried on, and his response has gone down in sporting history. "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race," he said. "They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

QUOTE : God did not save you to start the race. He saved you to follow Him, run the race and finish the race.

How?

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

We'll discuss this next week by God's grace.

S.G.D.