

Devotional for Hebrews 12: 1-17

I am not a runner. I really don't understand what it is about running that folks like. Whether it be sprints or marathons, I am not in. Are you? My real life experience with running comes from my junior high days. I wanted to be a part of a team and signed up to play field hockey not having a clue as to what would lie ahead---like a bit of running, not just during the game, but all the practice sessions before the games.

Each practice began with a run around the hockey field two times. We were required to do that in 2 minutes, or we had to run it again. Coach stood at the center line with her stopwatch making sure we did not cut the corners which would have helped improve our personal time. I hated to run. I am not a runner. Not now, not then. Or am I? Are you?

Hebrews 12 begins with the word "therefore" which reminds us to look back to the "wherefore"

So wherefore Hebrews 11.....

* as Andree stated it so well last week in her devotional for us:

... is God's tribute to men and women who though their lives weren't perfect, fought the good fight of the faith, and held onto their confidence in God to the end---holding on till the end being the qualification for belonging to the house of Christ, according to Hebrews 3:6. These are people who when they died heard God say, "well done, good and faithful servant."

They died in faith, trusting God would bring all of His promises to final fulfillment. (vv 39-40)

Therefore, chapter 12 exhorts us to look to the example of Christ and those who

have gone on before, the great cloud of witnesses who are there as encouragers bearing witness to the faithfulness of God sustaining them through their many trials and tribulations of their lives. They are there with their record to encourage us in our turn to cultivate endurance like theirs as we run the race. The chapter leads us to a discussion on discipline as well. We are exhorted to draw ever closer to Jesus so we can finish the race he has set before us.

What does it take to run a race? Do we throw on a pair of our favorite sneakers and set out from there? We need more than a comfortable pair of running shoes as so much more is involved. There are warmups, stretching, wearing the right equipment and having a goal to employ the muscle of faith that will get us to the finish line. We need focus.

We are to fix our attention solely on Jesus. We need to forget the chaos of life and simply look to him. We are to have no divided attention and are to rid ourselves of all that hinders us. We are to run with perseverance, keeping on no matter what happens. Aiya! These are not easy things.

The life of a disciple of Jesus can be hard. This is a difficult race to run. However, we're not running a hopeless, joyless drudgery-laden race! We are looking forward to everlasting joy in the very presence of God! Joy unending. Eternal peace. And an end to sorrow, suffering, and death itself.

Our prize for running the race is attainable only because He endured the cross for the joy set before him. The joy David wrote about in Psalm 16:11

"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

He went to the cross taking our sin, our debt so that we could be with him when our race is finished. He has provided the path we are to take. Keep your eyes focused on him so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

All of us have things in our lives that hinder our run and distract us or pull us under as did those before us. We struggle with sin. We resist that which is right. We are snared in things that are satisfying in the moment. We fixate on temporary

thrills. And we forget who we are in Christ and who we are to him. We are his children and He our loving father. As such we are subject to his discipline which comes out of his abundance of love for us.

God allows us to taste the fruit of our sin. He allows us to get caught in our sin. He can get our attention whenever He wants. God is busy working in us. He straightens our path teaching us all along the way. He works in our disobedience and in our unbelief. He reminds us to put off the old self and come back to him. In our hardships he speaks into our lives. His discipline is for our good in order that we may share in his holiness. (v 10)

vs 12 "Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 Make level paths for your feet, so the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed."

Recognize God's grace to you and extend it to others. Make every effort to live in peace rid of bitterness. Don't grow weary or lose heart. Persevere for the maturity and completeness of your faith.

.....Back in Jr. high when we ran those 2 minute laps before field practice, I always came in after the 2 minutes. I and a handful of others had to run again. Somewhere in there I had a deep desire to make coach proud. Day after day, I strove to reach the mark. One particular day, I pushed through and as I did, I heard cheers from the sidelines and the voice of one who I wanted to please with my determination, "1:58, 1:59 ...Duffy, is that you?" Yep! I crossed the finish line in under 2 minutes. I learned to run back then. And I am running now with you all. It's not a sprint but a marathon, a race to be run with endurance. We have a cloud of witnesses of those who have gone on before, cheering us on as we look to their lives as an example of faith. We too are and will be part of that cloud of witnesses to others as we live our lives in and through faith.

Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me

CityAlight

.....vs 4

With every breath, I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat:
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!

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Susan Fogg
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Mosaic of my thoughts and many commentators