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Sermon Notes

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Running with Endurance the Race... and the Race is Christ

Hebrews 12:1-3

At the 1968 Summer Games in Mexico City, the marathon was won by an Ethiopian, Mamo Wolde. But the most heroic story was John Stephen Akhwari of Tanzania, who arrived at the stadium long after the early finishers. He had taken a nasty fall that bloodied his right leg. After getting it bandaged, Akhwari continued with the race, obviously in great pain and limping. Afterward Akhwari was asked why he didn't drop out. He replied, "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

So also God ordained that you run the Christian race in front of you and run it to the end. He did not merely ordain that you START this race, but also that you FINISH it!!

Matthew 10:22 he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

I. The Context: "Therefore..."

A. Linking verse: Hebrews 10: 36 and Hebrews 10:

Hebrews 10:36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

Persevere in WHAT? In the life of faith:

Hebrews 10:38 my righteous one will live by faith.

B. Hebrews 11: the "Hall of Faith"... (more in a moment on the "cloud of witnesses)

Pink: "Hebrews 11 is a lengthy proof of the efficacy of persevering faith to enable its possessors to do whatever God commands, however difficult; to endure whatever God appoints, however severe; to obtain what He has promised, however seemingly unattainable."

C. This is the SETTING of the majestic summary command that follows:

II. The Command: “Let us run with endurance...”

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.

A. The Whole Purpose of Hebrews

1. The Christian life is a journey... a race to be run...
2. It is not a momentary thing, something that happens in an instant
3. The Hebrew Christians were under extreme pressure to renounce their faith in Christ and go back to Old Covenant Judaism
4. The whole press of the Epistle has been to strengthen their faith and enable them to finish their lives as healthy believers in Christ
5. So the “Away” verses we looked at earlier in the Epistle
 - a. Don’t “Drift Away” (Hebrews 2:1)

Hebrews 2:1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

- b. Don’t “Turn Away” (Hebrews 3:12)

Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

- c. Don’t “Fall Away” (Hebrews 6:6)

Hebrews 6:4-6 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, ⁶ if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance

B. There is a “Race set before us...”

1. The Greek word “race” is “agon” from which we get “agony”... it implies a great contest, a struggle, something requiring immense effort
2. The first century world would have understood this analogy of a RACE to run... an endurance race, in which great courage and stamina would be required
3. The concept here: there is a race set before us, and we must run it to obtain heaven

4. NIV: race “marked out” before us
- a. Perhaps a little strong; Greek word is a race “laid down” or “set” before us
 - b. Idea of a specific race course, marked by the will and purpose of God
 - c. Anarchy unacceptable... we don’t make our own race course according to the dictates of our personal tastes or consciences
 - d. There are the “rules of the game”... and if we are to win, we must follow them

2 Timothy 2:5 if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

Illustration: High school cross-country... Tony Baugh... excellent runner... turned the wrong way at the conference meet... the “race set out before us” is clearly marked in God’s Word

We can’t make up the route we want to run

Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

- e. The Christian life is a race course marked out by the word of God, by the Law of the Lord

Psalm 119:32 I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

Psalm 23:3 He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Isaiah 35:8-9 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. ⁹ No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there

5. Christ spoke of the road to heaven and the road to hell:

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

6. Especially we know that Christ Himself is the WAY:

John 14:4-6 You know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The “race laid before us” is the clearly marked path of Christianity

It is Christ Himself... constant faith in Him, constant focus on Him... it is the Law of God, written on our hearts, enlivened by the indwelling Holy Spirit; it is the

C. The Command: LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE

1. To run = FULL EXERTION... the life of faith is a RACE to be RUN, and it is a life of full exertion and energy
2. Running is RELENTLESS... a sport in which there can be NO REST until the end of the race
 - a. Other sports allow rest periods... there are timeouts in basketball and football; there are quarters and halftime; there are many breaks in the action in hockey and even more in baseball; tennis allows rest periods every other game and at the end of sets
 - b. BUT in a race, when the starter’s gun sounds, you must run the allotted distance and KEEP RUNNING until the race is done... even if you have a big lead in the race, you are not exempted from running... you have to get your body across the finish line
 - c. In the Christian life, you are either RUNNING or you are SINNING... every decision is a step toward heaven or toward hell... there can be no rest periods
 - d. This doesn’t mean that God doesn’t restore our souls, or allow us to sleep at night; but it means that while we are alive, we must be making constant progress to the goal
3. Here also we RUN not walk...
 - a. Many verses speak of the Christian walk
 - b. But here the image is of the Christian run
 - c. When we RUN we are putting forth MAXIMUM effort to achieve the goal, the finish line

4. Elements of the RUN

Self-denial... discipline... vigorous exertion... and especially
ENDURANCE

D. Run with ENDURANCE

1. This is NO SPRINT... it is a marathon race

2. From my early involvement in competitive running, I have been interested in the marathon
 - a. The Boston Marathon went right through my hometown of Framingham
 - b. I several years I rode my bike downtown to watch the best marathon runners in the world run right by me... it was about the six mile mark, and they had a long way to go
 - c. I began studying the history of the race
 - d. I learned about the heroic run of Abebe Bikila

1960: Olympic marathon champion Ethiopian Abebe Bikila; ran 26.2 miles on the hot, rugged, unyielding cobblestone streets of Rome totally barefoot!!!

3. Endurance means a steadfast determination to keep on following Christ despite the obstacles and the pain... opposition, suffering, the struggle with sin, the weariness that comes from constantly trying to defeat the world, the flesh, the devil
4. Sometimes, every fiber of your body—weighed down by the flesh—cries out to stop following the narrow way that seems so strict, so challenging... we endure... we keep on
5. The alternative is devastating... to be a “stony ground” hearer of the word who falls away from Christ:

Matthew 13:20-21 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

6. Only by persevering can we bring forth a harvest

Luke 8:15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

7. Therefore, endurance is THE ISSUE of this Christian race

Luke 21:19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Romans 2:7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

James 1:4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

8. The trials God brings into the lives of His genuine believers He does to build this one attribute: PERSEVERENCE

Romans 5:3-4 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Illus. Heartbreak Hill... at the 20 mile mark of the Boston Marathon... people drop out by the dozens

III. The Obstacles: “the weights” and “the sins that easily entangle” us

Vs. 1 ... let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

A. Every Runner Does this

1. Running equipment has gotten lighter and lighter
2. Nike unveiled a marathon shoe that is the lightest in history... reduced by 20 % to a mere 160 grams... the change over the 40000 steps a marathoner will take = weight of a car, about a ton
3. So also other sports... the swimmers in Beijing used sleek swimsuits specially designed to move through the water with the least possible resistance; cyclists in the Tour de France use bicycles made of carbon fiber designed to give maximum strength with minimum weight
4. So the Author to the Hebrews commands us to LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, and the sin that “clings so closely” or “easily entangles” us

B. Two Steps of Sanctification: Negative and Positive

1. Negatively: we MORTIFY sin
2. Positively: we PURSUE LIFE in Christ

Ephesians 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

3. We are commanded the same here

- a. Negatively: lay aside weight and sin
- b. Positively: run the race of life in Christ

C. What are the Weights we must lay aside?

1. Clearly, they are sins that hinder us from running the race with endurance
2. They are ANYTHING that impedes your progress as a Christian
 - a. The WEIGHTS that hinder us are NOT lawful Christian duties... like prayer and church attendance and witnessing and financial giving and service... these ARE the Christian race!! They are not BURDENS to be laid aside
 - b. The weights are NOT trials... such as sickness, or financial difficulties, or the hostility of unsaved relatives or coworkers or neighbors... those are TRIALS God uses to BUILD your endurance... they are not the weights
 - c. Neither are they lawful pleasures per se... the Scriptures do not call us to a life of extreme asceticism in which you deny yourself food, comfortable clothing and live in the desert on top of a pillar away from all the temptations of this world... though ASCETICISM is not a major temptation for this generation of Christians, I need to be clear that this is not the weight we must lay aside: all pleasures of this life
3. BUT the text calls for us to analyze what is HINDERING our spiritual progress
 - a. Study yourself... study your heart... ask if this or that LAWFUL PLEASURE (like eating or sleeping or entertainment or sports or any other such thing) has become an IDOL in your life and is actually hindering you as you run the Christian race
 - b. Jonathan Edwards studied his eating and sleeping patterns so that he could know what effects they had on his SPIRITUAL HEALTH
 - c. We could be adding on ourselves burdens the Lord is NOT calling us to carry... the frantic BUSYNESS of the typical American family... the sports leagues and music lessons and hobbies and trips and shopping and social occasions and vacations and and and... all of these can be UNWISE BURDENS making it very difficult for you to run the Christian life

Illus. Pit stop teams at Indy 500... study how to keep the race car on the track with what it needs to cross the finish line first... it needs tire changes, oil changes, gas... and all must be done in SECONDS... there is no need to study the quickest way to repaint the car, for that is not ESSENTIAL to the race...

D. Especially: the WEIGHTS are SINS that are killing your spiritual life

1. Imagine a marathon runner strapping a scuba diver's lead weight belt around his waist before lining up to run 26.2 miles! HOW CRAZY would that be?? But that's what WE DO BY SINNING... we are making it that much harder to run our Christian race
2. 1 Peter especially speaks of LUSTS which WAGE WAR against our soul

1 Peter 2:11 ¶ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

3. Every sin we commit WEIGHS US DOWN because it establishes a NEW HABIT that gets harder and harder to break
4. The Author speaks of SINS that so easily entangle... the image is of us spreading out a net for our own feet... we entangle ourselves in our sins... they are around us all the time... they trip us up
 - a. Our pride makes it hard to receive godly correction or to change our lives when things are going astray
 - b. Our anger and irritability make relationships more difficult
 - c. Our greed makes it easy to overeat and to be selfish and start living for our earthly appetites
 - d. All of these easily entangling sins make running the race with endurance harder

E. How Do You "Lay Aside" Those Sins?

1. The author uses simple "lay aside" language here
2. Paul in Ephesians 4:22 says we are to PUT OFF the old man
3. Romans 8:13-14 speak of MORTIFICATION of these sins

Romans 8:13-14 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

4. Various other passages speak of the same idea:

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

2 Corinthians 7:1 let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

IV. The Encouragement and Direction: “the great cloud of witnesses”

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

A. Hebrews 11: The Heroes of the Faith Described

1. The author’s incredible description of the heroes of the faith has created a “cloud” around us as we have read
2. They are “witnesses” of the power and effectiveness of the life of faith
3. A powerfully active life... by which Noah builds an ark, Abraham leaves his pagan lifestyle and pagan homeland
4. A courageous life by which Abraham offers his only son as an offering, by which Moses leads his people through the Red Sea
5. They are WITNESSES to us... calling to us to trust in the promises of God and live for the glorious city that is to come

B. They Are Called a “Cloud” Reminding Us of the Pillar of Cloud by Which God Led Israel to the Promises Land

Exodus 13:21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way

1 Corinthians 11:1 ¶ Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

C. Do the Dead Saints Observe Us? Do They Look Down from Heaven on Earth and See Us? Yes!!!

D. “How Much More”

1. If the Old Testament saints were so faithful with lesser promises, how much MORE faithful should we be who have the fulfillment of the ages and the BETTER PROMISES of the New Covenant??!!

E. However... these witnesses cannot give us power... only EXAMPLE... the power for the race comes from JESUS

V. The Power: “Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Faith”

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

A. “Looking” by Faith

1. Greek word = look AWAY so you can LOOK TO
2. It’s a matter of turning away from every other thing to focus completely on one thing
3. The idea is of a TOTAL FOCUS on Jesus... tunnel vision on Jesus
4. And it must be BY FAITH... for we cannot see Jesus physically

Peter 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him

5. The focus comes by the preaching of the cross

Galatians 3:1 ¶ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

6. The focus comes also by the ministry of the word of God

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

7. We “fix our eyes” on Jesus by saturating our minds with His words, His life, His miracles, His teachings, His death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, His promises
8. Especially what we have learned in Hebrews
 - a. His deity
 - b. His superiority to angels, the prophets, Moses, Joshua, etc.
 - c. His perfect ministry as our Great High Priest
 - d. His session at the right hand of God
 - e. His opening for us into the throne room of grace

B. Jesus the Author and Perfecter of The Faith

Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith

1. In Greek, the word “our” isn’t there...
2. He invented the “way of faith”
3. He lived the “way of faith” perfectly... right to the end
4. Underdeveloped theme in theology: Jesus as a perfect example of the life of faith
 - a. The “Heroes of the Faith” were flawed examples and witnesses of the life of faith
 - b. Jesus is the perfect example of the life of faith
5. By faith, Jesus looked constantly to the Father for everything
6. By faith, Jesus resisted all temptation
7. By faith, Jesus overcame all feelings of discouragement about His mission
8. By faith, Jesus lived in total dependence upon God for everything
9. By faith, Jesus lived in constant communion with God
10. By faith, Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father’s commands
11. By faith, Jesus was totally assured of a good outcome for His death on the cross

C. Jesus the Author and Perfecter of OUR Faith

1. We need more than a MODEL and an EXAMPLE... our faith is under constant assault by the world, the flesh and the devil
2. Jesus gave us our faith to begin with: He “authored” it in our souls
3. Jesus will give us the POWER and ENDURANCE we need to finish this race of faith right to the end
4. Jesus SUSTAINS EVERYTHING by His powerful word
5. He ESPECIALLY sustains the faith of His people... and PERFECTS it... bringing it to full maturity

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.

6. Jesus uses these various trials to shape and mold and perfect our faith

D. Four Aspects of Christ's Life We Should Ponder Carefully

1. The **MOTIVE** that prompted Jesus to suffer

who for the joy set before him endured the cross

a. Christ did it ALL for joy

b. He looked BEYOND the immediate suffering and embraced the JOYFUL OUTCOME of the salvation He was working for His people

Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

2. The **EXAMPLE** of Christ's astonishing courage at the cross

Endured the cross...

a. He didn't ENJOY the cross... there was no joy whatsoever in the actual crucifixion itself

b. It was a horrendous way to die; barbaric and repulsive

c. The victim's hands and feet are nailed to the wood and he is hanging down

d. In order to breath he must push up with his nailed feet and gulp for air... the agony of this effort makes for a grotesque "dance of death"

e. Seeking to avoid the pain of pushing up on the nailed feet, the victim will go as long as he can between breaths... but eventually, he must breathe and so he pushes up again

f. There is NO JOY in this... but it was FOR JOY... the joy set before Him... that Christ did it

g. The verb used here is that he ENDURED the cross

3. The **CONTEMPT** Christ Had for the World's "Shame"

Despising its shame

- a. Mocked and flogged by Roman soldiers
- b. Humiliated by Pilate: **Behold the man...**
- c. Publicly condemned
- d. Death on a cross is not only excruciating but humiliating
- e. People walking by mocked Him and scorned Him

Psalm 22:6-8 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. ⁷ All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

- f. The verse says he DESPISED THE SHAME... “despise” = thought little of it, looked down upon it... in effect, He mocked the mocking, He shamed the shaming... it was a LIGHT THING to him
- g. Christ looked at this price tag for our salvation and thought it a SMALL PRICE TO PAY to rescue us from eternal torment in hell... let them mock, let them wag their tongues and scorn me... it is as nothing to me if only I can save my sheep from the wrath of God

4. The Final **TRIUMPH** of Christ in Sitting at God’s Right Hand

and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- a. Bottom line: the world scorned and rejected Jesus and poured disapproval on him; he was brought before the tribunal of the world and condemned
- b. BUT GOD esteemed Him highly and raised Him up and exalted Him to the HIGHEST PLACE and gave Him the name that is above every name!!
- c. The world scorned Christ... God exalted Him!!

E. The Power for Our Own Endurance Comes from Christ

- 1. As we look to Him and feed on Him by the Spirit, we are made strong for our own race of faith

VI. The Goal: “the Joy Set Before Him” (and us)

- A. Christ Did It All for Joy
- B. The Definition of Love: Cheerful Sacrifice for the Benefit of Another
- C. “Desiring God”: Christian Hedonism... Living for Pleasure

1. Simple lesson: God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him
2. We were made for HAPPINESS, for DELIGHT
3. Everything we do we should do for the pleasure of it... but the key is that we should find our joy, happiness, pleasure in HIS GLORY

D. The “Pleasures of God”: God Does Everything for His Own Pleasure

E. God Loves a Cheerful Giver... so God IS a Cheerful Giver

1. All Christian giving should be cheerful
2. Does God also give cheerfully??? YES!!!

^{KJV} Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

3. It was also God's PLEASURE to crush His Son

^{NAU} Isaiah 53:10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

F. Christ Also is a Cheerful Giver

1. This verse teaches us that Christ went to the cross for JOY
2. It was His pleasure ultimately to die for you and for me
3. He was looking beyond the pain and torment and shame and wretchedness to the incredible joy of heaven
4. He was delighted to do this for us

G. Even the Cross was Done for Joy

H. How the Joy Works: Endure Now for Future Joy; Enjoy Now by Faith What You Will Enjoy in the Future by Experience

I. What is the Joy Set Before Christ? His Glory in Our Salvation

J. The Same Joy is Set Before Us As Well

VII. Consider Him, Lest You Become Discouraged (vs. 4)

Hebrews 12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

A. Earlier Command Repeated: (vs. 2)

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...

Hebrews 12:3 Consider him...

1. THINK about Jesus... meditate on His example... think about His suffering and His patience and His joy and His obedience
2. This is done by faith based on the word of God
3. A steadfast gazing at Christ will enable us to persevere in the trials we face
4. First century Hebrews were being persecuted... opposed by wicked people

B. The Opposition Jesus Endured

1. Greek word: hostility, hatred, persecution... verbal abuse, physical abuse
2. The ones who did it: SINFUL MEN... this world is filled with children of the devil who hate the children of God... Christ was the pure Son of God, and they opposed him and hated him

C. Goal: Protection from Discouragement

“so that you do not grow weary and lose heart”

1. Satan’s top priority in the Christian life: to get us so discouraged that we stop running the race set before us
2. Two infinite journeys: internal journey, we think we can never defeat the sins that entangle us and we give up fighting altogether; external journey, we think we can never really lead anyone to Christ, or the unreached people group is too hostile to even try doing missions... so we GIVE UP!!!
3. The remedy to growing weary and giving up is Jesus... focusing our minds and hearts on Christ’s example, for His power is at work in us
4. We are also to focus our minds and hearts on the same joy that was in Christ... the JOY OF ETERNITY IN HEAVEN free from all this abuse

VIII. Applications

A. Consider Christ for the Salvation of your Souls

1. Look to Christ crucified for the salvation of your soul
2. Consider him... picture him there in your hearts

B. Fix Your Minds on a Race of Endurance

1. Allow this passage to search you and probe your hearts
2. You are in a marathon race, and you're not finished yet... the prospect ahead looks very tough... you are running up Heartbreak Hill at the 20 mile mark of the marathon, with, it seems, no energy left
3. Is it not true that you have grown weary in the Christian race? Is it not true that your weariness has resulted in you slackening your pace? Your love for Scripture is less than it was... your delight in prayer is somewhat lessened of late... your delight in Christian fellowship is reduced. And why? Is it not because you have become discouraged and beaten down with the seemingly endless warfare of the Christian life? Day after day, you have had to wage war against the world the flesh and the devil. Day after day, you have had to stand your ground against temptations. Sometimes you have stood, and sometimes you have fallen. Each fall has increased your discouragement a little more. So, as a result, you are weary of the race. You wonder if you will really make it, if you are able to stand up against all the attacks of the Evil One for the rest of this marathon race
4. FOLLOW THE STEPS prescribed in this passage!!
 - a. FIRST: understand that you MUST persevere in the Christian life... you are in a marathon race for heaven
 - b. SECOND: understand that the strength for this perseverance comes from Christ, but it is still your responsibility
 - c. THIRD: throw off everything that hinders your Christian walk... every sin that is entangling your legs as you run
 - i) If this is some lawful pleasure that has become an idol, throw it off... stop indulging it and instead feed your heart on Christ and His word
 - ii) If it is some sinful pattern, understand the damage you're doing to your soul and untangle your legs from the net
 - d. FOURTH: run the race with endurance... make progress day by day in the health of your soul... grow in knowledge, get stronger in faith, built your character up in love, habitually obey the commands of God... RUN this race
 - e. FIFTH: fix your mind on Jesus... practically set aside time every day for meditation on Christ... picture Him in your mind as crucified for you... picture Him also as resurrected and at the right hand of God; tell yourself that the race you are now running you are running by faith in the Son of God... do not allow yourself to be discouraged and give up