

**Sanctification**  
**Running the Race to Win**  
**Hebrews 12:1-4**

**Introduction**

- Our text this morning is Hebrews 12:1-4
- I will be using the NIV84
- God is calling us to pursue Him and He uses the analogy of a race
- Big picture, there are two ways to run:
  - Equipped and passionate pursuing Jesus
    - Marathon not a sprint
    - A long haul
  - Unequipped and poorly loving self
    - They're running the same July marathon
- And if equipped and running well:
  - Don't expect to run any differently than Jesus did
- 3 points
  - Equipped and passionately pursuing Jesus
  - Fix our eyes Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith
  - Don't expect to run different than Jesus did

**TEXT**

**Equipped and passionately pursuing Jesus**

- First, why the analogy of a race?
  - Because God knows our nature
  - He knows we need to be exhorted to be passionate and faithful
- That's why this analogy is actually all though the NT
- Most importantly, we need to understand the prize, why do we run?
- The end and goal of the race is a person - Jesus = joy
  - We're running because joy is at stake
  - If we miss this, we'll wander off the race track into the concessions stand
  - That's where the spectators are
  - We'll likely look more like those spectators [are they ever in shape] than those participating
- We really have to ask: is my goal Jesus
  - Or doing enough for God?
  - Or, how I look to others?
  - Am I pressing forward in knowing Christ, or mastering Christianity?

- The implication of “crowd of witnesses” is that we are considered athletes in an arena
- “Therefore” = means the goal was the same for them as it is for us. It’s Jesus
- The crowd is those who have gone before, looking into the arena
- This is unique, because it is a crowd who has run the race well and finished.
- Many resisted (v:4) to the point of shedding blood
- **(Hebrews 11:13)** *“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”*
- Does that sound familiar? It ought to because...
- (1 Peter 2:9 & 11) *“...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light... <sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”*
- Exiles
- They ran looking ahead, we look behind, but we’re ALL exiles...our hope resides in another place
- That’s the key to running well
- Think about that, are you happiest when you’re serving Jesus [someone], Or, wanting something that would make you happy?
- The more we fix our eyes on Jesus the less we’ll be tempted to fixate on worldly things
- That’s what the crowd does, the crowd assures us the race can be run, and run well
- That’s why we are called to run with perseverance
- It says the way to do that is to throw off Things that hinder, and lay aside sin
  - Everything that hinders
    - Things that in and of themselves are not necessarily sinful
    - good things but not best things
    - video games, TV, Candy Crush, Facebook
    - Greek: impediment
    - Remember the runners earlier

- If you have plenty of time for these but can't find time to be in the Word, do really care?
- ◇ I find that I lie a lot to myself
- ◇ That by hearing myself say it, it's action
- We'll get to assessing these
  - And actual sin that entangles
  - Entangles
    - ensnare or obstruct
    - constricts
      - We're to lay it aside
    - Put away
    - To stow it
    - To lay it down
- (Ephesians 4:31) *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."*
- Sometimes, that looks like:
  - Cutting it off
- Jesus' words - not mine
- Matthew 5:29-30 *" 'If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.' "*
- Are we treating sin seriously, or casually?
- If your leg was full of gangrene would you put a band aid on it, or cut it off to save your life?
- Several months ago, I asked [and I quote]: *"For the glory of God, what one area of your marriage (or if you're single a relationship)...what one area will you seek to prayerfully change today? - For the glory of God"*
  - Did you do that?
  - What got in the way?
  - What was the impediment?
  - And then most importantly, Why?
- You see the WHY is so important because it gets to the real nature of the problem. The idolatry. The ugly stuff
  - I love myself much more than Jesus
  - Which means I don't really care about my marriage
  - This is what I meant when I said I'm a good liar

- How in the world will I move forward in running the race?

Fix our eyes Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith

- Jesus ran the race perfectly, and He ran for joy
- He is the goal and end of my race
- When my eyes are fixed on Jesus they're not on me
- Things do not get in the way
- Like Peter, I take my eyes off Jesus and I sink into the mire of sin and self
- That's why I want to be in the Word, I want to see Jesus
- Not master Christianity
- I want real fellowship
- Fix my eyes on **His** race
- He ran perfectly
- He weathered all the hostility
- He endured the cross
- He endured it's shame
- Then He sat down at the right hand of God completely victorious
- So there's real hope!
- My victory is rooted in His victory
- Which means **my** joy should be **His** joy
- Have you really thought about what "the joy set before Him" means?
- "for the joy set before Him" seems to point to the future. It relates to Jesus' exaltation when He was glorified after His death on the cross.
- Jesus' joy was directly linked to God's glory
- (John 15:8) ' "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.' "
- The witnesses had the same joy;
- **(Hebrews 11:26)** "He [Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward."
- Moses was fixed on Jesus
- (John 5:46) ' "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.' "
- It also means my victory is another place - exile - a person, and a distant place.
- The now and the not yet
- This worship service is a taste of the reality
- This is not my home

- Brothers and sisters, this is not your home
- That's why:

### Don't expect to run different than Jesus did

- To obtain the joy God had planned for Him, Jesus obediently suffered the agony of death.
- The hostility you endure is a perfecting of your faith
- It is a promise of Scripture - Ryan = not strange
- Consider Jesus' opposition, so that we don't grow weary
- We don't grit our teeth to get through it
- Fix your eyes on Jesus, we consider...
- Consider His response
- [slide#15] (Acts 8:32) "*Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opens not His mouth.*"
- Who suffered without malice, or slander or bitterness
- We're frail people who weary easily - Jesus gets that
- You haven't shed blood in your struggle against sin
- This again comes from the sports area
- Games like boxing, etc.] where we're bloodied
- How hard have you honestly fought against sin?
- Scripture is saying it's a real opponent
- How are you running?
- Andrew preached a while ago about 3 types of people
- #1 - Those running really well
- #2 - Those struggling= up & down
- #3 - Those who don't know there's a race

### Conclusion

- Three action points to close:
  - I'd encourage you to prayerfully ask where you are
  - Find what keeps you from pursuing Jesus
  - Laying those things aside
- Your joy's at stake
- Your Father is calling to you in this text this morning because He loves you greatly.
- Enjoy that love.

