



12/4/25

*Today's passage is especially meaningful to me because I love to run. Yes, I'm one of those weirdos who actually enjoy it. For a while there, I thought I had to give up running. I would say, "The next time I run, I'll be running into the arms of Jesus." But thankfully, the Lord has been so gracious to me that He's allowing me to get some practice in before that day comes. I love to run. But I pray that the endurance and strength I gain from running will massively pale in comparison to the endurance and strength I gain in the spiritual race to the finish line. I look forward to running into the arms of Jesus where He will welcome me home into heaven. Whether you love to run or not, I am so thankful we can run this spiritual race to Jesus together.*

*Merry Blessings,  
Jonna*

*Hebrews 12:1-13 ~*

*Hebrews 11:7 spoke of Noah's faith because of His reverence for the Lord. The whole chapter is filled with stories of faith in the Lord. Now I come to Hebrews 12, and I see that it starts with the word, "Therefore." So I have to ask, "What's the therefore there for?" It's there because the author is asking me to see chapter 12 through the lens of chapter 11, the call to faith. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).*

*Hebrews 12 is going to give me the perspective of running a race... a very long race. I have run several marathons, and I know that there's a point in the marathon when the mental training is more necessary than the physical training. The ability to speak to my heart, mind, and body is more important than the physical stamina to run. So what is this race I'm called to run?*

*Vs. 1-2 ~ "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, 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, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*

*The author says, like the witnesses of faith that went before us, "let us ALSO lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely." So they struggled, too. It wasn't that they had extra powers within themselves, like they were supernatural mighty men and women. They had the same weakness I have. But I actually something they didn't have dwelling in them... Because of Jesus, I have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside me to help me run the race. He is my coach, my strength, my fuel, my constant helper and comforter.*

*I know from my racing days that wearing heavy clothes or extra weights would have made the race that much harder to run. Eating pizza right before the run would have made me sick and unable to keep going. I had to think about clothing, nutrition, and sleep beforehand. In the same way, if I'm going to view this life on earth as a race to the finish line, I need to be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. I need to be nourished by His word. I need to rest in Him.*

*Running this race takes endurance. It is not easy. It's not a sprint. It's an ultra-marathon. It takes training and resolve to keep going. How do I do that? I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus... on the gospel. I remember that, like those witnesses who went before me, Jesus does not focus on my failures but my faith. He is the founder... the leader... the pioneer of my faith. He is the one who matures my faith so that I can run and not give up.*

*Jesus ran with endurance straight to the cross. Why? For joy. It was His joy to run His race because He knew the prize waiting for Him at the finish line... the cross was not the finish line. It was the race. The finish line was the empty tomb and the ascension to the Father where He is seated on His throne with Him forever. The prize is the salvation He won for all who would believe in Him and endure the race with Him.*

*He could have said, "No, I won't do this thing. The shame is too much. I am completely without sin. How can I stoop so low as to be treated as the lowest and most guilty of all?" But He "despised the shame." He disregarded it. He looked down on the shame and said, "I'm not afraid of you. My people are worth the cost." Jesus is the reason I run. Jesus is the reason I endure. Jesus is the face I'm looking for as I run toward the finish line.*

*Vs. 3-4 ~ "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."*

*The race is hard and long and sometimes seems impossible. Thoughts of abandonment and failure mess with my mind. That's why I have to keep my eyes and my mind set on Jesus. Consider fully what He went through for me. Remember the gospel. He was treated with such great hostility, not just on the day of His crucifixion, but throughout His whole life on earth even from His birth. And truly, before His birth His word was ignored and mocked by mankind. He had endured the evil rebellion of man since the Garden of Eden. He has never grown weary or fainthearted in His plan to redeem my soul and the souls of all who believe. And He endured exponentially more than I will ever have to. That's why I have to keep my eyes on Him and walk*

*in His steps... so that I won't grow weary or fainthearted. I need to stop trying to define Jesus according to the circumstances of the race I run, but see Him according to race HE ran... for me.*

*In my struggle to be done with the sin that entangles me... like the sin of doubt, the sin of selfishness, the sin of seeking glory for myself rather than seeking to glorify Jesus... I have not yet resisted to the point of shedding my blood... like He did. Jesus is the motivation for not giving up on the race.*

*Vs. 5-7a ~ "And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves and chastises every son whom He receives.' It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons."*

*God is my trainer. Races are hard. I hear a lot of women say they go to the gym and take classes because they know they won't stick with it if they have to do it on their own. God makes sure that I never have to do it on my own. He puts me through rigorous training. The discipline I endure in order to run the race with Him is not punishment. It's training. Punishment would kick me out of the race. Training helps me run the race better.*

*God disciplines me, not because He's disappointed in me or mad at me, but because He loves me. Love wants the best for someone. He knows what I need in order to experience the best. So... He has me train hard and long, and sometimes it seems like I'll never get there. But He won't ever give up on me.*

*When I'm going through days of more difficult training, where I'm "feeling" hostility from without and doubt from within, I need to pay attention to what I'm letting my mind dwell on. If I'm repeating over and over, "This race is so hard. I'll never make it. Why is God punishing me? Doesn't He care? It's probably because I'm such a bad runner", I have to ask... "Are these thoughts from the Lord?" All I have to do is look at His word and I know that those thoughts are lies. They add weight. They hinder the run. I need to throw those heavy lying thoughts away and run with His light, peaceful truth. "His yoke is easy and His burden is light." I am not running alone. He is not abandoning me. He is not kicking me out of the race. And being out of the race would not be better in any way.*

*The hardship I face is not punishment but training. The motive is everything. God is treating me as His child, not an outsider that He casts away... but His child who He loves and will never give up on.*

*Vs. 7b-9 ~ "For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?"*

*What happens if I'm at a store and I see someone else's child misbehaving, throwing a temper tantrum. Do I walk up and take that child away from his mom and start disciplining him? No! She'd call the police! It's not my child. I do nothing.*

*But I am not someone else's child. I'm God's child. And just like the parent in that store WOULD do something with her rebellious child (hopefully), God will absolutely do something to help me stop rebelling... because He loves me and I'm His.*

*I didn't grow up with my dad, but when I visited him, I deeply respected the way he disciplined me, the way he corrected my wrong behavior so that I could learn. Even when a child experiences discipline or correction from an earthly parent who handles it all wrong, that child still shows respect to the parent's authority, either out of fear or love or both.*

*God is my spiritual Father. He knows everything. Shouldn't I have more respect for His correction than I would for a parent who doesn't always get it right? It's so easy to view God through the lens of earthly parents who failed to discipline in love. But God is not defined by the choices and motives of earthly parents. He sets the standard of what perfect parenting is.*

*Vs. 10 ~ "For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness."*

*Even with the best motives, our parents didn't always discipline us for our good. Even as a parent, I didn't always discipline my children for their good. Sometimes my discipline was selfish... done in anger or frustration... or sometimes I didn't discipline when I knew should have. BUT God ALWAYS disciplines me for my good. What is the good He is cultivating in me? He's training me so that I can share in His holiness... His purity. All that is good comes from His holiness. Holy love is untainted. Holy joy is full. Holy peace is unending. Holy righteousness is pure. God disciplines me for my good. This race is for my good... even on the days when my toes get blisters, my arms get tired, my legs feel like tree trunks. God is the God of endurance and encouragement, and He won't give up on me. He will help me run.*

*Vs. 11 ~ "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*

*At the moment of salvation, God declares over me what He spends the rest of my time on earth accomplishing in me. "He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). The sanctification process is HARD. It can be painful because transformation comes through suffering... just like training for and running a race is painful. It is not punishment. It is training. And it has a beautiful ending... the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

*Righteousness is peaceful. The world would tell me that righteousness is boring or arrogant or "triggering." That's a lie. Righteousness before God is peace. The more I share in His holiness, the more peace He grows in me. If I don't have peace, my eyes are probably not fixed on Him*

*and I am trying to run wearing extra weight and rationalizing entangling sin. "That's just my personality." No. God never gives sin as a personality.*

*Let me not miss the hope. I don't run in vain. I have the absolute promise of sharing in God's holiness, enjoying the peaceful fruit of righteousness, experiencing the up close and personal comfort of His love as His child... all because of the gospel... the good news of Jesus.*

*Vs. 12-13 ~ "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."*

*Therefore, because I am running a race that I know I will win... lift my drooping hands. The race will be hard. The miles will be long. My hands may feel weighted down. But when I remember the hope and the finish line, I will be able to press on... to pick up my hands and pump my arms. When I think of where I'm running and why I'm running, and when I fix my eyes on Jesus and see the love on His face and His nail scarred hands reaching out to me to welcome me across the finish line, I will forget my aching knees and run harder because I see how this race is so worth it. I will see the straight path, the path of steadfast love and faithfulness, set before me, and what feels lame in me as I am so tired at times will not fall apart and be broken... but rather be healed... restored... wholly holy, running into His arms.*

*This race is worth it. This race is founded on Jesus and lived out in faith... confidence, conviction, and commitment. Don't give up. Remember the gospel. Remember the joy. Remember Jesus.*