

FOCUS ON THE FINISH

Monday, October 30

Reading: Hebrews 12

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

Suppose you are lining up for a marathon. You have trained hard for months to prepare for this grueling feat. You have done everything you can to prepare yourself to win this race. However as you join the others at the starting line, you hear snickers, whispering, and finger-pointing behind you. While the others have come dressed in their regular track shoes and shorts, you have come wearing cowboy boots and a snowmobile suit!

“That’s ridiculous!” you say. And yet many Christians approach their Christian life as unprepared as you would be for that marathon. Hebrews tells us that we need to do three things in order to live a successful Christian life (here compared to a race). First, we need to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” us. We all realize that sin weighs down our walk with the Lord and takes us off the course Christ would have us run. But what is “everything that hinders?” Something doesn’t necessarily have to be bad to hinder our Christian race. It could merely be something we are holding on to that keeps us from following God to the best of our ability. We need to throw off all sins and distractions that keep us from living for Christ.

Second, we must “run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” We get our English word “agony” from the Greek word translated race in this verse. The Christian life is not an easy one. It takes endurance and sacrifice to stay on the path God has for our lives. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. We must “stay the course” and be steadfast in order to “not grow weary and lose heart.”

Finally, we must “fix our eyes on Jesus.” When runners look down at their feet, behind at the other runners, or sideways at the stands they slow down and could go off course. They must keep their eyes forward toward the goal – the finish line. Often we think the finish line of the Christian race is heaven. This is not true. Heaven is already promised to all those who believe. The prize for believers is to become like Christ. We can only do that by keeping our eyes fixed on Him and following His example – living as He lived.

What are you wearing for your Christian race? Is there something weighing you down and slowing your pace in your pursuit of Christ-likeness? It’s time we refocus our eyes on the Savior and keep going strong!