

RUN WITH ENDURANCE

Joe Slater

Why participate in a race at all, if not to complete the course and win? A quick start out of the blocks might impress spectators, but the judges award medals only to those crossing the finish line. Even so, the Hebrews writer exhorts us to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:1b, 2).

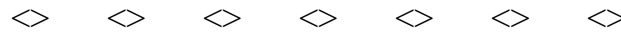
Living for Christ usually resembles running a marathon. Not many people obey the gospel only to pass into eternity a few days later (which would make their race more like a 50-yard dash). A lifetime of faithfulness requires endurance. Distractions tempt us to take our eyes off the goal, thus veering off course. Trials dishearten us, inducing us to drop out of the race. By God’s grace, however, we not only can endure, we can win!

Jesus has not asked us to do anything He Himself was unwilling to do. If you think your trials and distractions are difficult, consider what Jesus endured, especially the cross. Words utterly fail to describe the horror and agony He suffered there. How could He hold out in the face of such an appalling experience? Wouldn’t it have been easier just to call down the angelic legions to rescue Him?

Fortunately for us, Jesus rejected the easy path. He stayed focused on His goal: “for the joy that was set before Him.” Can you fathom the love that kept Him on the cross as the prospect of saving His tormentors filled His heart with joy? He looked beyond the excruciating physical pain, the shameful humiliation, and the spiritual

anguish of bearing the world’s sins, to the salvation of multitudes of lost sinners. Nothing about the cross itself was pleasant; but there was no other way to save them – or me – or you.

Now He calls upon us to run our race with endurance. “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). God has not called us to live as we please, but to deny (say “no” to) ourselves. Need I remind you that the cross was an instrument of certain death? I know not whether any of us will be called upon to be martyrs for Jesus. Regardless, becoming a Christian means crucifying the old person of sin, that a new person may arise, living a new life surrendered to God’s will (see Romans 6:1-6; Galatians 2:20). Such surrender makes endurance a foregone conclusion.



Fussy Little Christians

Dr. Vance Havner has aptly described the present generation of Christians thus: “We are a generation of proud, fussy little Christians – experts, but not examples. We know too much (or we think we do)

“We have heard all the preachers and read all the books. It is hard these days to be converted and become like little children. We want to be thought of as philosophers and scholars, brilliant but not childlike. So we miss the secrets God has hidden from the “wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.

“How often, even among the saints, does some simple soul learn the deeper things of God and press through to Heaven’s best, while “the wise and prudent” utterly miss them?”

Via bulletindigest.

The Time of My Departure is at Hand

Read carefully what the apostle Paul wrote when he realized the time of his departure from this life was at hand. He said, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing*” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

That’s what Paul said when he realized the time of his departure was at hand. Now, what might we say if we learned the time of our departure is at hand? Would we say things like...

- The time of my departure is at hand...I had better get my house in order.
- The time of my departure is at hand...I had better go mend some relationships.
- The time of my departure is at hand...I had better repent of some sin I’ve been committing.
- The time of my departure is at hand... I had better start going to church again.

You get the idea. When Paul realized his time of departure was at hand, he confidently affirmed that he had fought a good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, therefore he had a reward awaiting him. May we so live our lives that when our time of departure comes, we’re not found scrambling, trying to receive the reward for a race we were unwilling to run.... Give it some thought.

--Steve Higginbotham (via Bulletin Gold)