

FAITH IS LIKE RUNNING A RACE

Hebrews 12:1-2

Introduction: The Old Testament saints exhibited faith, the New Testament saints showed their faith. We have friends and relatives that all have shown faith. What do these people have to cause them to be so determined? What makes them keep on "keeping on?" What in the world can cause a person give up his/her life for something that he/she doesn't really have to? Just what is faith anyhow? "Faith is a trust or persuasion about something or in something or someone" resulting in a loyalty, a continuous following, never backing down or off of whoever or whatever one's faith has been placed. Faith has an object, a goal.

Paul describes the Christian's life as a race, a contest where there are obstacles, opposition. What kind of race are you running with your faith?

I. GOD GIVES EACH BELIEVER A RACE TO RUN

1. It is common sense for a runner in a race to get rid of all that is not necessary to run the race. All garments are removed that might hinder in any way.
2. The Christian has "weights," and those would be anything that might take away one's awareness of God.
 - Anything that might cut away one's hunger to know God better.
 - Anything that might take away one's desire to be obedient.
 - Anything that might hold one back and rob him/her of being spiritually hungry.
3. Think about your own life. Are there things, is there something that is causing you to not be as close to the Lord as you could and should be? Those things are called "weights."
4. We keep those things that slow down our spiritual life because we think we will be unhappy if we lay them down, even to be closer to God.
 - We forget or don't know that God will always replace the weights with something better.
 - God knows what will make us happy.
5. How true is the passage that says that "*...sin so easily besets us...*" for we never think for a moment that we can get into a position in which sin would be normal, natural.
 - However, sin is as natural as breathing.
6. For the Christian to run his/her race of faith he/she must lay aside every sin, which will be hard to for some of our sins are very enjoyable, but every sin, every habit must be laid aside, confessed and turned over to the Lord Jesus Christ for Him to handle.
7. A race involves movement, running, not standing, not sitting, not walking, but running. Many Christians are "passed" by other Christians as is normal in a race and those who are passed are called "babes" instead of maturing Christians who should be "teachers" by then.
 - It takes energy, effort, enthusiasm, dedication to be involved in running a race.

8. One might retire from his/her professional life at some point but Christians NEVER can retire from being in the race of faith.
9. *Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:7* speak of patience and persistence.

II. THE FINISH LINE IS AT THE FEET OF JESUS WHEN ONE'S EARTHLY LIFE IS ENDED

1. The Old Testament and New Testament saints had faith, but it wasn't a perfect faith, they made mistakes, they slowed down, they even stopped at times, but they kept trying.
 - Jesus is the Christian's example for He had perfect, total faith at all times.
2. The goal, the reasons for Jesus' "race" of faith was JOY:
 - Delighting the Father in His complete obedience.
 - Finishing His task.
 - Rescuing Humanity.
 - Pouring out His love on undeserving mankind.
 - Receiving love from those who believed in Him.
 - Preparing for the New Time that is to come.
 - Bringing God and man together.
3. Jesus kept His eyes on God's will and was obedient all the way to the finish line and from the cross Jesus said, "*...It is finished!...*" His race was over and He had been faithful to the end.
4. We as believers in Jesus Christ are to keep our eyes on HIM, His will, His love, His promises. As Jesus kept His eyes on God, the Father, we are to keep our eyes on Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

1. We must deliberately put aside all the things that take us away from God and rob us of running our race as best as we can.
2. We must focus our eyes upon the ONE who saved us, who keeps us, and who is our example in running the race of faith.