TITLE: Running with Perseverance

TEXT: Hebrews 12:1-4; Phil 1:6; 2nd Tim. 1:12; Gal. 6:9

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about perseverance, particularly perseverance in living our life as a Christian.

In Scripture, God likens our living our lives in Christ, living a Christian life, as like that of a runner running a race.

Have you ever felt like being a Christian, living the Christian life is like running in a marathon race?

When we are first saved it seems we start out with tremendous energy and vitality and enthusiasm for the Lord, but as time passes, as the miles pass under our feet as a Christian, sometimes we find that we become road weary. Maybe we have had our second and third wind but then the trials of this life and running along the narrow road that we have been called to run on seems to drain us of our spiritual energy…

We become weary, somewhat less than enthusiastic for the Lord…

The Apostle Paul addresses this dilemma that we often face as a Christian…

And he calls us to perseverance.

**Hebr 12:1 (NIV) 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.**

**4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.**

Paul starts out by giving us the motivation for continuing to run the race that we entered the day that we accepted Christ…

**12:1 (NIV) 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.**

In the previous chapter, Hebrews chapter 11, Paul has talked about many of the great heroes of the faith.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses, just to name a few.

Let’s just look at a few of these men of faith…

Noah--- Do you think that Noah ever got discouraged in his relationship with God? That he ever grew weary of the road that he was called to walk?

I’M Sure he did! He was called by God to build an ark, build a boat out in the middle of the desert. His neighbors probably came by often to laugh at and ridicule him. You can imagine their puns… “ Building a boat Noah? You forget something? Where’s the water?

Noah and his neighbors where desert dwellers! The biggest body of water that they may have ever seen was a bucket that they pulled up from a hand dug well. They possibly didn’t even know what a boat was or what it was for.

Yet Noah, being blindly obedient to God, Built a boat.

Abraham---Wondered all around the desert in search for a Promised Land that he never did enter into personally.

God promised him a son but he had to wait until he was 100 years old before the promise was fulfilled. You think that it might be a little trying at times to raise a teenager when you are 113 years old?

Do you think that Abraham ever had a bad day as a man of God or maybe became wearied by the road that he was called to walk upon?

One day God tells Abraham to take this son whom he has waited for all his life for and offer his life as a sacrifice!

Abraham was blindly obedient to God and would not have even withheld his own son from Him if God would have required it of Abraham.

Jacob.. Looked forward his whole life to enter into the land flowing with milk and honey promised to his forefathers yet only his dead bones where finally taken there after the Exodus..

Joseph.. Went out to deliver some goods to his brothers in the desert.. How do they show their gratitude? They bound him and sold him to slave traders.

Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt and remained a slave to Egypt the rest of his life.

Yet he persevered in the faith and ended up saving his family and the Egyptians from famine.

Moses… God calls him into service when he is 80 years old!

I am sure Moses had a lot of days when he was weary from walking the road that God had called him to walk upon as he led approximately 1.5 million rebellious Israelites through the desert.

We see Moses frustration when he throws down the stone tablets that had the 10 commandments from God written on them breaking them to pieces as he comes down from the mountain to a rebellious camp and when he whacks a rock three times instead of the once God had commanded him to bring forth water to quench the thirst of the people..

Moses persevered in his faith and leads this people to the very edge of the Promised Land even though he, himself, is not allowed to enter into it….

There were two things that all these men of God had in common.

#1. They all had times when the road that that had been called to walk upon became weary to them. They all had days when I am sure that they questioned if it was really worth it all …

#2. They all persevered! They all became a testimony, a witness to us of the sustaining power and Grace of God.

So Paul says…

**12:1 (NIV) 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.**

We are to… **throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and run with perseverance the race that God has marked out for us.**

Does it excite you to know that God has a race already marked out for you?

All that we have to do is run with perseverance and follow the markers that God has laid out ahead of us.

We are to run **throwing off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and run with perseverance the race that God has marked out for us.**

If a runner goes to run in a race on a cold day and he wears two pair of pants, three shirts and an overcoat and tries to run the race with the intent of winning the race with all those clothes on, they will become things that hinder him, from not just winning, but from even finishing the race.

If a runner enters a race with the intent of winning the prize that is at the end of the race he must first remove anything that will hinder his running.

The same is true for us as Christians..

God has called us to run in a race. It is the race of our life in Christ.

We enter this race the day that we accept Jesus as the Lord and savior of our life.

At the end of this race there is a prize that awaits all who finish the race.

So God admonishes us to ….

**Throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and run with perseverance!**

We are to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us.

The second thing mentioned here is the most obvious hindrance to us as a Christian, and that is sin.

A Christian who tries to run the race that God has called us to run with known and condoned sin in their life will find that it entangles them. Known and condoned sin in our life will keep us from gaining any forward momentum, any forward ground.

Just having to run in a sinful world is bad enough.

The sins of others can be an entanglement to us, slow us down at times. But sin in our life will totally wrap us up as a Christian. We won’t be able to get anywhere in our relationship with God if we have UN-confessed, UN-repented sin in our life….

So when God reveals something in our life that shouldn’t be there we need to throw it off.

Throw it off so it won’t weight us down and slow us up or keep us from finishing the race.

And we have been called to.. **run with perseverance!**

**5281 hupomone {hoop-om-on-ay'}**

**1) steadfastness, constancy, endurance**

**1a) in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings**

How can we come to this kind of perseverance in our life?

**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.**

**4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.**

We persevere by fixing our eyes on Jesus—The author, (the originator) and the perfecter, (the one who brings to completion) our faith.

It says that we are to… **Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that we will not grow weary and lose heart.**

Consider..

**357 analogizomai {an-al-og-id'-zom-ahee}**

1. **to think over, consider, ponder**

We are to Think about, consider and to ponder Jesus!

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

We are to Consider Jesus! Think about Him! Think about how He endured such opposition from sinful men so that we will not lose heart.

What opposition did Jesus endure from sinful men?

To answer that question just look upon the cross.

Picture Jesus nailed there for no sins of His own.

Jesus wasn’t just nailed to a cross but it says He endured the cross.

He could have called down the host of Heavens angels to deliver Him from the cross but He chose to endure the cross.

Why?

Because it was the only way the price for your and my sin could be paid! It was the only way that He could restore fellowship between God and fallen man..

How can thinking about, considering, pondering Jesus trials and tribulations help us run the race that we have been called to run in this life?

**Because ….**

**4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.**

As bad as we may think that we have it, none of us have had to shed our own blood to pay sins price.

In the garden the night that Jesus was betrayed as He was praying it says that He sweat great drops of blood as the sins of the world where starting to fall upon His shoulders.

When is the last time that you literally sweat blood because of the anguish of sin not your own?

In contrast to Jesus all of our troubles are but light and momentary.

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

We can be encouraged by considering Jesus because Jesus rose victorious over sin and death and now sits at the right hand of the Father to always intercede for you and me.

We can be encouraged as we consider Jesus because when Jesus ascended to Heaven He sent back His Holy Spirit to indwell His Church. To help guide us and direct us and empower us to run the race we have been called to run..

We can be encouraged when we consider Jesus because Jesus has paid the price for our sin and we have been restored to fellowship and right relationship with God.

We can be encouraged when we consider Jesus because even though the race we run may seem all uphill at times, at the end of the race there is a prize that awaits us. A prize that makes the race worth it.

The prize of being in a place where Scripture assures us that there is no more sickness or sorrow or suffering or pain or death but only joy and happiness and health and peace in the very presence of our Lord. The prize of Heaven. The prize of an eternity with God.

In 1925 a man named Floyd Collins was exploring near Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and got stuck. He was fifty-five feet from the surface when he got wedged in a narrow shaft. Icy water was dripping in his face. The rescuers came in and diverted the water, and they talked with him, they calmed him down, but they couldn't get him out.

He began to come unglued stuck in that cave. He was able to see the light, able to see where he wanted to be, hearing voices, getting food, but he was stuck and he couldn't get out. So he slowly began to have raving lunacies about everything from chicken sandwiches to angels in white chariots.

The newspapers got in on it, and ten thousand people came to see this man stuck in a shaft. They sold hot dogs and sandwiches. It was a side show. Seventeen days later Floyd Collins died in that hole, able to see where he wanted to be yet not able to get there.

That is kind of what happens to us as Christians when we allow ourselves to remain entangled in sin and the cares of this world while trying to run the race that God has marked out for us.

We can see the light at the end of the tunnel but we become stuck in our mediocrity! We become entangled in UN-repented sin and it keeps us from reaching our goal.

Folks, even though there may be times when we may feel like we are stuck in a hole --there is light at the end of the tunnel and we can get there but only as we keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus, who is not just the author but is also the finisher of our faith.

Phil 1:6 (NIV) being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

God started a good work with us, the good work of salvation the day that we accepted Christ, and He will bring that work on to completion as we allow Him to do that.

We allow God to do His work within us by simply considering Jesus.

Keeping our eyes upon Him and allowing Him to guide our life along the path that God has already laid out for us.

Paul often found himself in tight places in his walk with the Lord. What got Paul through those tight places in life was his keeping his eyes fixed upon Jesus at all times.

After his conversion Paul lived his life “considering Jesus”.

That lifestyle of considering Jesus allowed him to boldly proclaim….

2Tim 1:12 … I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Because of this fact Paul writes in Galatians….

**Gala 6:9 (NIV) Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**

Sometimes, as a Christian, just doing good can make us weary. Doing what is right in a world filled with wrong can at times bring us down.

Doing good and not being appreciated for the good that we do can wear us down and make us weary.

Reaching out to others until it hurts and no one seems to notice the wounds that we may pick up alone the way can be exhausting to a Christian….

So we find that our very acts of doing good can weary us and bring us down.

A man once said…

*It may not be your fault for being down, but it's got to be your fault for not getting up.*

You see all that we have to do to get back up as a Christian is to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus. All that we have to do push ahead in this race that we have been called to run is to consider Jesus!

If we really consider Jesus, consider all that He did for us, consider the price that our sin cost Him, and consider what He endured for us-

Anything that we may have to go through in this life is insignificant in comparison.

**In our struggle against sin,** (whether our own sin or just living in a sinful, fallen world) **we have not yet struggled to the point of shedding our blood.**

Jesus did! Yet He persevered and finished the race and won the prize that awaited Him at the end of the race, and then He gave us the promise that because He did, all who keep their eyes fixed firmly on Him, will also!

You see, Jesus ran the race we have been called to run ahead of us and has marked the way….

We just need to follow the path that Jesus has laid out for us, keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Him and firmly fixed on the prize that awaits us at the end of the race.

The prize is heaven! The Prize is an eternity with Him.

It all comes down to a matter of perseverance!

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I would like to close with this story that a fellow Pastor shares…

This pastor shares that several years ago, he heard David Ring speak.

David had cerebral palsy and a speech impediment so bad that you can barely understand him. But he held 11,000 people in the arena where he spoke spellbound for twenty minutes. He told of how as a little boy he was close to his mother, and when she died, he had nowhere to turn but to the Lord.

He said, "They said I would never ride a bike, but I did. They said I would never get married, but I did; I have five kids to prove it. They said I would never preach, but last year I preached 265 times. I have cerebral palsy, but I preach. What's your problem?"

This Pastor said for two days he heard some of the greatest speakers in the world and he never shed a tear. But When David Ring spoke that morning, tears flooded from his eyes. What God didn't do for him through some of the best known authors in the land, he did through a young man with cerebral palsy.

He said to himself, If that young man with his trial can still preach, I can't wait to preach again.

David Ring knew the importance of keeping one’s eyes fixed upon Jesus.

He understood the importance of finishing the race and winning the prize that awaited him at the races end.

He knew the importance of throwing off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and running with perseverance the race marked out for us.

He was a man who persevered..

This morning, are you running the race God has called you to run?

Are you keeping your eyes fixed upon Jesus and the prize that awaits you at the end of the race?

And are you running with perseverance?

Running with a steadfast determination to finish the race and claim the prize that God has for you at the races end?