

July 21, 2019 - - "How to Stay the Course"

Introduction:

We all can get very disillusioned as we run this race called life. No one is exempt. The world is not always a friendly place and there are many concerns today that have people anxious. Our personal problems are by far the major cause of discouragement among the saints. We live in a society where we have become accustomed to quick personal gratification. Success may not come at the first or even after several attempts. However, God's desire for His children is to stay the course, don't give up don't give in. Keep the faith and trust God as your father. It has been said, "You do not determine a person's greatness by his talent, wealth or popularity, as the world does, but rather by one character." We live in a world that is increasingly hostile to the Christian faith. Trying to remain faithful in this environment can cause any believer's faith to falter and when that happens we can become disillusioned. Those that persevere often eventually have success. There are some secular examples of this truth.

In 1854 a young boy was sent home from school with a note pinned to his back that read, "keep this child at home he is too dumb to learn. That child was Thomas Edison. Stay the course!

In 1894, the rhetoric teacher at Harrow in England wrote on a sixteen-year-old's report card, "a conspicuous lack of success." That sixteen-year-old was Winston Churchill. Stay the course!

In 1902, the poetry editor of "The Atlantic Monthly" returned a booklet of poems to a twenty-eight-year-old poet with this rude note: "Our magazine has no room for your vigorous verse." That poet was Robert Lee Frost! Stay the course!

In 1905, the University of Bern turned down a Ph.D. dissertation as being irrelevant and fanciful. That young physics student who wrote that dissertation was Albert Einstein.

In 1992 the NY Yankees started a player at their minor league Class A ball club but he did poorly, with 21 errors in 58 games batting just over 200. There was talk of releasing him. That player was Derrick Jeter. He stayed the course and so can you; you have the Holy Spirit.

Life can bring problems, sickness; like Joni Tada and what of Michelle Moore?

John 16:33 "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

In this passage, the writer of Hebrews reveals two actions that prevent a faltering faith.

I. Remember; run the race patiently (12:1).

1. This chapter begins with the word 'wherefore'. This means that it is based on the giants of faith listed in Hebrews eleven this is how we should respond. To complete the race, remember the cloud of witnesses that fills the stadium (12:1 a). You may be facing family opposition like Abel, or you may be separated from your friends and family like Abraham. You may have been hurt or rejected like Joseph. When the race gets tough and you feel like quitting, remember the cloud of witnesses cheering for you.

They are cheering us on and encouraging us to heed the exhortation in Galatians 6:9.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

2. The symbolic scene is a huge coliseum. The contestants are the writer and us. The event is a distance footrace. It must be run with patience because the Christian life is not a hundred-yard dash; it is a relay in which each person's leg of the race lasts a lifetime. Saints who ran before us (many of whom are listed in chapter eleven) have passed the baton of faith to us and are now cheering for us as we carry it on to the next generation. As we run the race of faith, we must remember this important fact; look with me in **Psalm 33:13-18**.

3. Running a race is so much easier if you shed as much needless weight as possible. Sin can hold us back. Sin can hinder us to run an effective life ran. There are things that may not be sinful but are just hindrances "every weight" that can keep us from running effectually the race God has for us. Our choices are not always between what is right and wrong, but between something that may hinder us and another choice that may not. If you are too busy for Bible study and corporate worship, you don't love God as much as you love whatever is keeping you away. To run the race patiently, remove the sin that holds you back just like you would remove any weight before a race.

Is there a weight in your life you know that you must lay aside?

II. Refocus on Jesus (12:2)

1. In a race, as in most sports, where you look is very important. Looking down at your feet or at the runners behind you will throw you off stride and slow you down. That's why it is critically important to look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (12:2a-b). The Greek word for 'looking' is a much fuller word than we can find in the English language. It has a preposition in it which turns the look away from everything else. You are to look to Jesus so as we refocus on Him, what three truths about Him should we consider? The rest of this verse conveys these wonderful truths. He did this for us *and who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

2. Refocusing on these three things will produce a supernatural burst of encouragement. At your job you may be discouraged and not fit in because you don't laugh at the dirty jokes or join in the wild-party talk about the weekend. Students may say, "It's discouraging at school. Because of my Christian values, I don't fit in. I don't drink or do drugs, and I am not sexually active." Jesus is our Advocate in heaven. Therefore, when you start to falter in your faith, refocus on all He endured for you to be saved.

3. God knows it's tough to live the Christian life. That's why He gave us the Bible to teach us, Jesus as our example to follow, and His Holy Spirit to indwell us. When you start thinking about how hard it is to live the Christian life, refocus on Jesus who endured the cross and the contradiction of sinful people (12:2c & 3a). That same Jesus is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God and is making intercession for us.

4. If you spend yourself out physically, you become exhausted; but spend yourself out spiritually, and you get more strength. God never gives strength for tomorrow, or even for the next hour, but only for the moment. God has not promise you tomorrow, too many Christians set their selves up for discouragement because we are looking to solve tomorrow problems on today's grace! Stay the course these truth will help you to do just that.

We go from one tragedy to another. Life is not fair, but God is. Winston Churchill said "Success in life is often nothing more than going from one failure to the next with undiminished enthusiasm." Stay the course!

III. Respond to Christ's Example. 12:3-4

1. Even in their difficulty if they could consider Jesus they can be strengthen knowing that they are following in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus doesn't ask more of us than what He has Himself experienced, and that He knows exactly what we are going through should keep us from leaving the course and giving up.

2. Take personal Responsibility. No one can solve your problems for you. Ultimately, you must deal with them yourself. Be willing to take responsible steps of action to change what you can, and to accept what you cannot change. You know that serenity prayer. It begin as such, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Too many like the New Senility prayer: "God grant me the Senility to forget the people I never liked, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference. When you need help and encouragement, God may send someone to be supportive, but ultimately you need to learn to bear your own burdens with His help alone.

Conclusion:

Steve Brown related the story of a British soldier in the First World War who lost heart for the battle and deserted. Trying to reach the coast for a boat to England that night, he ended up wandering in the pitch black night, hopelessly lost. In the darkness he came across what he thought was a signpost. It was so dark that he began to climb the post so that he could read it.

As he reached the top of the pole, he struck a match to see and found himself looking squarely into the face of Jesus Christ. He realized that, rather than running into a signpost, he had climbed a roadside crucifix. Brown explained, "Then he remembered the One who had died for him -- who had endured -- who had never turned back. The next morning the soldier was back in the trenches. "