

## **Another Lap to Go**

### **Hebrews 12:1-4**

#### **Introduction**

Good morning, Lighthouse. Happy New Year! Are you ready to repeat 2020? Because this is “2022.” Not the question you were expecting to start. How about this one: Are you ready for the Word of God this morning? We are into yet another year. Some would say 2021 was a tough year with the price increases, the economic changes, and many hardships they’ve endured such as sickness and deaths from loved ones. Others could say this was the best year of their life because it is the year, they trusted Jesus to save them, got serious about the Lord or other life activities that took place. This morning I’m not going to give any predictions on this new year whether if it will be a good or bad. We’re going to talk about you with your own personal race in this life. I want to encourage with the Word of God that we have work to do until our time is up. So how many in here like sports (in general)? It seems as if the writer of Hebrews enjoys sports due to the illustrations he uses. I faintly remember the times I played sports in middle school and high school. I’ll never forget one coach I had during a basketball year: Oh man did he love to yell. He had a look that terrified teenagers if you missed an open shot or made a bogus mistake. Nicest guy ever off the court though. I remember there were three things he tried to instill in us in coaching. First, others have done it before, so you can do it too. It isn’t impossible and quit the excuses. Second, consider what it is going to do for you now and in the long run. What holds you back? Overcome it and things may seem tough, your body wants to quit, but the end results should be the focus. Third: watch and learn from those doing it now. You have examples to follow. Our text this morning is a great start to our year when we consider how we are going to enter in our new year. Hebrews chapter 12.

## **Background**

Before jumping into our text, let's go over some background to better understand the big picture.

**Author:** Is not mentioned by name, Paul is accredited most. Other men such as Luke and Apollos have been proposed. We know the ultimate author is God.

**Date:** A.D 64-68 (Sometime before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D 70) Roman Emperor Nero was infamous for persecuting Christians. Hebrews is most likely written during his reign.

**Recipients:** Primarily Jewish Christians associated with the Greek language. Three separate groups are addressed: believers in Christ, unbelievers who had knowledge and an intellectual acceptance of the facts of Christ, and unbelievers who were attracted to Christ, but who rejected Him ultimately.

**Occasion:** Many Jewish believers were facing persecution and their discouragement was leading them back into their Jewish traditions and rituals under the law.

### **Purpose/Theme:**

1. To exalt Jesus Christ and His superiority over all things. He is superior to angels (1:4-2:18). He is superior to Moses and Joshua (3:1-4:14). He is superior the Aaronic priesthood (4:14-7:28). He is superior to the Old Covenant (8:1-10:39).
2. To warn the readers the dangers of falling back into the Old Testament system (3:12-19).
3. To encourage the readers to hold fast to their faith and live righteously in light of Christ's superiority (12:1-13:20)

### **Scripture**

Hebrews 12:1-4

- (1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (2) Looking unto

Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; 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. (3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. (4) Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

## Outline

### I. We have a race to continue, v. 1.

#### A. We have a great cloud of witnesses, v. 1a.

(1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses . . .

1. This word wherefore here picks up from what we read in the previous chapter.

Hebrews 11. It has been called the Hall of Faith chapter.

2. The “cloud” here is the entire group of those who walked by faith in chapter 11.

The word cloud here was often used by Greek and Latin to represent a massive body of people. The cloud of witnesses are the heroes of the faith we find in our Old Testament.

a. They overcame obstacles by faith. By faith they persisted in the face of great challenges. We see men like Moses faced the Red Sea, Joshua and the walls of Jericho, conquered Canaan, faith from Daniel that shut the mouths of lions and many others.

b. Faith in God was the key to this, not their own strength.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

3. Now I understand there is the view due to the word witnesses here is that they are looking down from heaven and seeing our lives. However, this is inclusive to the nature of this word.

4. The word here for witnesses is μάρτυς (Martooos). It is the same word we get our English word Martyr. It has multiple usages. It can mean a witness as in a legal sense or a spectator or witness for something left behind as example or record. We understand our English word Martyr as someone who has died for their faith. Stephen was our first Martyr for preaching Jesus.
5. I am not saying the view others are looking down on us is impossible, but here in this passage the usage of μάρτυς is indicating the testimony and example left by the Old Testament saints. They are not witnesses what we are doing, but they are bearing witness to us that God can see us through. We witness their lives as expounded in chapter 11. They testify to the power of faith in God's promises.
6. This is like how much coach tried to instill in me. Others have done it, you can do it too. Quit the excuses of how hard it is. You may never part seas, or defeat a giant in combat, but you can walk by faith in God as they did.
7. A few years ago, a popular preacher taught we ought to unhinge ourselves from the Old Testament and focus on the New Testament. How absurd though. Our Old Testament was written for examples to follow. If you feel your job is too hard, study Moses. If you struggle with lust and temptation, study Joseph. These heroes of the faith are never to be disregarded; we can learn from their lives to benefit our walk.

B. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that easily besets us, v. 1b.

. . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

1. Let us lay aside every weight. He continues using illustrations that would fit an athlete.

- a. How effective is an athlete in a competition that is weighted down?
- b. See while an athlete might train with weights they are removed and cast off before the competition. They would be a hindrance so the one especially running a race. It is a handicap that keeps us from reaching our goal.
- c. Weights here aren't necessarily sinful in itself. Many of the weights that would hold us back aren't sinful at all. It's anything taking place where God should be.
- d. What's keeping you from being all in for God's work? It could be that job that has you working every Sunday. It could be that sport that has games and practice Sunday morning. Family gatherings, friends.
- e. Not just keeping you out of church, but the daily things too. Reading and studying God's Word, prayer, serving your brother and sister. Maybe it's time to turn off the TVs and commit time with your family after work. Shut-off the phones, the computers, and social media. If these things or controlling you and not them, they must be laid aside – casted off.

2. And lay aside the sin which doth easily beset us.

- a. This phrase “which doth easily beset us” is one word in the original. It’s a word that’s used to mean to thwart an athlete competition. Something that it gives them trouble persistently. Hence where we read the word

beset to capture the meaning

- b. Notice there is also an article that precedes the word “sin” and “sin” in its singular form. This means it is very particular to the individual.

Whether we want to admit to it or not, each one of us has a besetting sin.

That one that you seem to be asking forgiveness to God over and over about. Every believer is subject to certain temptations. We are especially to be on guard against these particular sins. It would be wise to memorize Scripture that pertains to these sins and how to resist them.

- c. As my coach would tell team, consider what it is going to do for you now and in the long run. As we lay aside these weights and besetting sins, what is going to do in our race? What will it do for our every day lives?

- d. I’m no feel-good prosperity preacher if you haven’t noticed already, but I do confidently believe that Lord loves blessings His children. He is much more interested in blessing your future than punishing your past. Think of all the blessings you are missing out on because you’ve allowed these weights and sins drive you.

- e. I want to challenge everyone here and I included if you aren’t doing this already. Set your alarm clock just 5-10 minutes back than your usual wake up time and devote yourself to prayer. Pray for your spouse, family, your church, your Pastor, co-workers, and new people you will come across and yourself for strength. Watch your days and attitude get so much better. If you get up already with the mindset how terrible

your day will be, then it just might be. Instead, get up in the morning with gratitude that God has given you another day. We lay aside these weights and the sin which easily besets us.

C. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, v. 1c.

. . .and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

1. Running with patience. This word patience is meaning endurance. Running implies a determination. Cast off the hindrances and run. No athlete can win without determination.
2. And not just running but running with patience. Most people would not need much endurance if it was just a 100-yard run, but if you're going to do a 5k or something bigger, you're going to need some endurance. The Christian life is more like a marathon and keep going after you cross the 26-mile mark.
3. Run the race that is set before us. This is something that you don't plan out or set up. God is the one who is set up the race. And trust me, there are plenty of obstacles. If you're a child of God, your race already began, it is a matter of moving off the start line and progressing.
4. I want us to look at this word for race. It comes from the word ἀγών (Ag-one). The same word where we derive our English word "agony." Strong's defines it "Properly a place of assembly (as if led), that is, (byimplication) a contest (held there); figuratively an effort or anxiety: - conflict, contention, fight, race."
5. It is used 6 times in the New Testament. Paul loved using the word. A similar word used in Acts describes this of Paul: He often compared his own life with as a race. He said this to the Ephesian elders before going into dangerous territory for him, back to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Here this word for course is “dromos” Paul usually uses “Ag-one” to describe a race, but it is usually not rendered as race. Here’s a few passages with the same word.

1 Thessalonians 2:2 (2) But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

1 Timothy 6:12 (12) Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (6) For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

6. This last verse shows that end goal. The finish line is not heaven, it is reward.

The believer’s inheritance will heaven. The point is that the race is one of conflict, contentions, and difficulties. Our text is not a call for a sprint but for a distance run. Every believer must face difficulty, but he must press on regardless of the challenges.

II. We must keep our eyes on Jesus as we run, vv. 2-4.

A. Looking unto Jesus, v. 1

(2) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;

1. This word “looking” is much deeper than what we see initially. It comes from a strong Greek word used only once in the New Testament. ἀφοράω (Aphor-ah-o). It means to consider attentively. This implies to have our eyes taken off everything else and putting them on Jesus.



2. An athlete who takes their eye off the goal will not gain victory. The point is that when a believer takes their eyes off the target, he goes off course. This slows their walk with the Lord.
3. We do indeed have our cloud of witnesses, but they aren't the ones we are to be looking unto. Jesus is our perfect example.
  - a. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith.
  - b. This word Author is the same word when Jesus is called The Prince of Life in Acts 3:15. He is the leader; He is in charge.
  - c. One may say that Jesus is with us at the starting line and the finish line and all along the way of the race that He sets before us. He gives us both the capacity to live by faith and completes it.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

**B. Jesus: the one who endured the cross with joy.**

who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame. . .

1. It can be difficult to associate the cross and joy together. The most shameful thing humanity has ever done, and we bear the responsibility of Him crucified because of our sin.
2. No way was the cross itself joyful or Jesus was feeling happy while He endured gruesome torture and the nailed to a Roman cross, but He could look past the horror of the cross to the joy beyond it. The same mentality would enable these Jewish Christians (and we ourselves) to endure.

a. Jesus' focus was in submission to His Father's Will and it was a joy of knowing what His death would accomplish.

b. Because Jesus put the value of redeeming men above the horror, He endured the cross.

3. We also read Jesus despised the shame. Jesus not only endured physical pain and torture but the disgrace of dying a criminal's death. We also bear this shame. We were why He endured it.

C. Jesus, the one highly exalted and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

...and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

1. He didn't stay dead, He rose again 3 days later and set in the highest authority.

2. He is alive and will always remain our perfect example and one we depend on.

3. Just as my coach taught to look at those getting done as examples to follow. We have such a high standard. But He was one understands everything we go through. The difficulties, the trials, and He even endured temptation, but did all without sin. This brings us to our last verses this morning.

D. Keeping our attention Jesus is our remedy for discouragement and weariness, vv. 3-4.

(3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. (4) Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

1. He is not asking us to go through anything more difficult than He did.

2. We can look back at the cross and with full assurance that He does indeed care for us and He understands the pain we endure in life.

3. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood” The Hebrew Christians were facing intense persecution, but not their lives over it. It says the word yet. Are you willing to submit yourselves to losing your life because of your faith in Jesus if that time comes?

### **Conclusion**

I don't know what this year holds. Things could get worse; it could get better. I know the world changes a lot, but I know who never changes: That's Jesus. The unchangeable one. No matter the cultural changes, economic changes, world leadership changes, we serve a God that'll never change. Children of God, it's time to get back on course and keep on course. The race isn't over or just beginning, it is another lap to run. Maybe you haven't been running the race because there isn't one set before you yet. Maybe this is the time you finally get on the starting line. This is a serious decision and will be the start of the rest of your life. It starts by putting your trust in Jesus to save you from your sin. You can't lay aside that besetting sin if there's no Savior in your life. We read in our text He endured the cross. He died in your place so that you could be saved from the penalty of your sin: eternal hell separated from God. My prayer this year is as His church we would be more passionate than ever about doing God's work and making the Gospel clear. We would run our race with joy and endurance and keep your eyes on Jesus. Lighthouse, we are now in a new year, we have another lap to go.

### **Prayer**