

# 29

## THE GREAT RACE

*Hebrews 12:1-2*

### Intro: Chariots of Fire

#### I. Fans Cheering for You: “A Great Cloud of Witnesses” (v.1a)

- A. Physical runners run best with a crowd
  - o “surrounded by” reflects coliseum imagery from Greco-Roman athletic competitions
  - o Cheering crowds motivate, inspire, encourage you as a runner
- B. Spiritual runners also have a crowd
  - o “great cloud of witnesses” refers back to all the saints in chapter 11
    - Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Samson, David are all cheering you on!
    - It can also refer to any saints around you today: parents, friends, siblings
  - o Why do we need this crowd? How do they help us?
    - Unlike normal athletic competitions, these fans are not there so much to see the runner, but so the runner sees them!
    - They remind you the race is not impossible; it can be finished; you are not alone
- C. Key Point: Don’t run alone! You were meant to run with God’s people

#### II. Freedom from Entanglements: “Lay aside every weight” (v.1b)

- A. Physical runners need to avoid hindrances
  - o In the Greco-Roman world, the common dress was a robe which one had to “lay aside” before they ran
  - o Runners would strip down to the bare essentials in order to run faster
- B. Spiritual runners need to avoid hindrances
  - o Lay aside “sin which clings closely”
    - Disobedience to God will ruin your running—you will trip, stumble, fall



- Persistent disobedience may even keep a person from finishing (apostasy)
  - NIV: "the sin that so easily entangles"
  - The point: you don't have to put sin on—it's already there. You have to take it off so you can run!
  - o Lay aside "every weight" (even if it's not sin!)
    - It doesn't have to be sinful to slow you down
    - Don't ask only whether something is wrong, ask whether it helps you run!
    - What are some things that can slow us down even if they are not sinful?
- \*\* Key Point: You are running for your life! So be ruthless with what you lay aside

### III. Finish Line: "Looking to Jesus" (v.2-3)

- A. Physical runners need a finish line to look at
  - o Without a finish line, a runner can lose focus, get distracted, give up
  - o A sure way not to finish a race is to not have a finish line!
- B. Spiritual runners also need a finish line
  - o We have the greatest finish line imaginable: Jesus waits for us there!
    - Jesus is not just a spectator like the other saints, he's the finish line
    - Jesus is not just one who has faith, but is the "founder and perfecter of our faith"
    - Don't look around you while you run, look to Jesus! "so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted" (v.3)
  - o What can we learn from the way Christ ran the race?
    - #1: He ran with great endurance: "endured the cross"
  - o "endured from sinners such hostility" (v.3)
  - o Cross was not just about physical pain, but about shame
    - #2: He ran with a goal: "the joy set before him"
  - o Joy helps you run better than duty
  - o Eric Liddle: "God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure"
    - #3: He received the reward: "seated at the right hand of the throne of God"

\*\*Key point: Jesus is the goal and motivation for the Christian life. Don't take your eyes off him!



## Discussion Groups

1. How's the Christian race going for you today? Are you tired or weary? Share honestly with the group.

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2. What are some things that hinder your running today that you need to put aside, even if they are not sinful?

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3. How are you encouraged today by Jesus' running? How does his example help you run the race better?

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