

IT IS NEVER HOPELESS ~ Hebrews 12:1-2

➔Scripture Reading ~ Isaiah 45:5-7, Heb. 12:2

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah 45:5-7 (NIV) I AM the LORD, and there is NO OTHER; apart from ME there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged ME, [6] SO THAT from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. [7] I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

THROW OFF EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS ~ Hebrews 12:1

[1] 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.

APPLICATION

RUNNING WELL REQUIRES: Life App Bible Com

- Preparation - lay aside every WEIGHT
- Participation - must run the RACE
- Perseverance - never GIVE UP, never QUIT

1 Corinthians 6:12 (HCS) Everything is PERMISSIBLE for me, but not everything is HELPFUL. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be brought under the control of anything.

Psalms 139:23 (NLT) Search ME, O God, and know my HEART; test me and know my THOUGHTS. [24] Point out ANYTHING in me that offends YOU, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Never give in! Never give in! Never! Never! Never! Never! In anything great or small, large or petty-never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Winston Churchill

I'm a slow walker, but I never walk back. Abraham Lincoln

FOCUS ON THE FINISH LINE ~ Hebrews 12:2

[1] 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.

Philippians 1:6 (ESV) And I am sure of this, that **HE who BEGAN a good work in you will bring it to COMPLETION** at the day of Jesus Christ.

joy set before Him- Jesus had a course mapped out for Him
it included going to the cross to provide forgiveness for sins

it meant dying, being raised from the dead, ascending to heaven and sitting at God's right hand
endured the cross- perseverance in the extreme went all the way to his death
scorning its shame- He saw the shame as unimportant in view/in comparison to joy yet to come
The cross was so shameful a death it was reserved for the worst of criminals.
Roman citizens could NOT be crucified.
Others died on crosses, **BUT Christ alone died and to PAY for the sins of the world.**
While Jesus was dying He was paying for every terrible, disgusting, awful sin you can think of.
and sat down- work of atonement FINISHED (nothing more needs to be done ...PAID in FULL)
Jesus' sacrifice is over He won the victory over sin and death
right hand- the position of power, authority, and honor (God's right hand)

APPLICATION

[2] Let us **fix our eyes ON Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith

Maybe this election or the events in our nation this year have made us think it is all HOPELESS
So if we are discouraged and down - maybe we do not feel that there is ANY HOPE
That is exactly how the Hebrew Christians felt - we are being persecuted is there ANY HOPE

The Writer of Heb. gave them many, many examples of men and women who HUNG on to FAITH

[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.

What was the challenge? Focus - our focus should be on Jesus
Isaiah 45 - the reminder was **I am God there is No One Else**

Earlier Isaiah spoke about HOPE and the source of that HOPE...

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV) ...but those who HOPE in the Lord will renew their strength. They will SOAR on wings like eagles; they will RUN and not grow weary, they will WALK and not be faint.

There are times in our Christian lives when we **SOAR ON EAGLE'S WINGS**.
When there is nothing hindering our relationships with God and our relationship with people
When we find it easy and Delightful to follow Christ.

Expl. Many of the short Term Missions projects that I've been involved in or lead included serving ALL DAY - everyday - Go and go and go some more. Now we always try to make sure that the Lord Jesus is our Focus. And GOD has done some great things. We spend time in prayer and looking into God's Word in concentrated ways. **Hard things come along and WE work through the struggles and WE SOAR.** It is wonderful... SOARING in God's power and strength.

There are other times where we must simply CONTINUE to RUN

Mile after mile **REGARDLESS** of how we FEEL

We must **endure** in the mundane of the everyday we keep going being faithful.

Expl. It is the **Glory of the Grind**. Keep going...steady pace...obstacles come and you have work hard to focus on the goal but keep going. In running a marathon part of the secret is to set a pace and keep going at that steady pace. If a hill comes you face it and keep going... but if you want to finish... you run... steadily... grinding out mile after mile without quitting. **The Glory of the Grind!**

Expl. And then there are times when we have to **PRAY OURSELVES OUT OF BED-**

When we are so BROKEN that **SOARING** is inconceivable we don't even have the strength to **RUN**. Those are the hardest times, and **all we can do is put one foot in front of the other -and- WALK WITHOUT FAINTING.**

Expl. Life is hard... maybe you have had a **death** in the family... or the **loss** of a **job**... **serious illness** that just won't go away. Perhaps you are facing serious **struggles** in your **marriage**. OR maybe you look at our Nation and all that is Happening and you are tempted to DESPAIR. You feel like giving up - you feel like quitting. But you know you can't so you ask GOD for strength and you take ONE more STEP... you go five more minutes trusting God for His strength. Then Five more and then Five more.

Where-ever you are today...whether

SOARING

RUNNING

or simply slogging along putting one foot in front of the other trying desperately to keep on

WALKING

Remember that we are in a great race of faith!

It is a Marathon... it will End WHEN we arrive in the Lord's presence

And we can run this race WELL:

By getting rid of all things that hinder us (including the sin that trips us up)

By the Persevering, Enduring, Never Quitting

By fixing our eyes on Jesus, Trusting HIM to Finish that Good Word He has started

Then one day, we will hear the voice we have longed to hear our entire lives say--

"Well done my good and faithful servant."

TAKE AWAY ??

During the Civil War - Poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's wife had passed away due to serious fire. His oldest son was severely wounded and crippled fighting for the union army. Christmas day he heard the bells all over in all the churches ringing loudly and poured his heart out in this poem.

I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day

by Henry W. Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play;
In music sweet the tones repeat,
"There's peace on earth, good will to men."

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th' unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor does He sleep,

For Christ is here; His Spirit near
Brings peace on earth, good will to men.”

God Remind Longfellow of the TRUTH that He is NOT Dead... He does NOT Sleep.
I AM the LORD, and there is NO OTHER; apart from ME there is no God.

When men repent and turn from sin
The Prince of Peace then enters in,
And grace imparts within their hearts
His peace on earth, good will to men.

[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.

No matter how discouraged we may feel - Isaiah and Hebrews remind us it is all about God not us.
Remember the Lord God is God -
Focus our Hearts and Minds on Jesus the one who Completes our Faith