

GOD'S GREAT RACE FOR ALL TIME

PART 1 RUN FREE FROM EVERY WEIGHT AND THE SIN

Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV **SLIDE**

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside** every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run** with endurance 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews is a book primarily written to new Jewish believers and those Jews who, after hearing The Gospel, are still in transition of converting from Old Testament Law to New Testament Faith.

'Hebrews' urges them ... and **US** –

To fully surrender to God's Grace ...

To act on what we have heard ...

TO EMBRACE THIS GOSPEL ...

MOVE ON FROM DEAD WORKS OF RELIGION

And **ENTER INTO The Rest of Christ's Finished Work.**

Hebrews 4:6 BSB **SLIDE**

*Since then, **it remains for some [of you] to enter His rest** and since those who formerly heard the good news **did not enter** because of their disobedience,*

N.B. WHEN THE GOOD NEWS KNOCKS ON YOUR HEART ... IT ACTUALLY TAKES AN ACT OF DISOBEDIENCE TO RESIST IT.

SLIDE HEBREW'S URGES US WITH THE 'IMPERATIVE LETTUCE'

SLIDE Hebrews 4:11 BSB

Lettuce therefore, **make every effort to enter that rest**, so that no one will fall by following the same pattern of disobedience.

*Like the seed that quickly sprang up but had no root, (Matthew 13:5-6) there are quite a few people who hear the gospel, **become enlightened**, inspired and rejoice, but never embrace it. These fall away never really getting saved.*

Hebrews 6:1 NKJV **SLIDE**

*Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, **lettuce go on** to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.*

THE WRITER IS SAYING, 'STOP JUST TALKING ABOUT IT AND GET INTO IT ... START LIVING IT ...

*The Jews love a theological debate and this went on and on and on. So here the writer says ... **Enough talk** about all these things ... IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!*

TRUE FAITH IS **LIFESTYLE CHANGING** (See Supplementary).
TRUE FAITH HAS **ACTIVE EXPRESSION** ... As James says –

James 2:17 BSB

*... Faith by itself, if it does not result in **action**, is dead [it has never sprung to life].*

James 2:18 NKJV

*... I will show you my faith by my works [**active expression**] ...*

True faith changes you and you start to do new things ... good things ... like helping others ... like giving ... like sharing the Good News ...

SO, HERE IN **HEBREWS 12** WE HAVE TWO OTHER STRONG **LETTUCE** EXHORTATIONS ...

SLIDE **Lettuce** Lay Aside Weights and The Sin and **Lettuce** Run Forward.

And here in Hebrews 12, The Writer likens our moving forward in God, to **RUNNING A RACE** ...

NB: Running is active ...

WHY A RACE & NOT A WALK AS IN EPHESIANS 4:1 (Walk worthy)

SLIDE *I like the idea of a casual stroll in the sunshine down a path that meanders through the fields of flowers ...*

I remember, many years ago as a young Christian, sitting in the sun by a quiet stream and saying, 'Lord this is where I want to stay with You.'

But immediately, He spoke to me saying, 'I did not call you into retirement ... There is a battle to fight and a race to be run! It's NOT TIME TO RETIRE ...

SLIDE 'IT'S TIME TO RUN THE RACE ... THERE IS A GLORIOUS GARDEN AWAITING YOU AT THE FINISH-LINE.'

A RACE EXPRESSES COMPETITION, BUT NOT COMPETITION WITH OTHER BELIEVERS ... IT IS A COMPETITION WITH A HOSTILE WORLD THAT WOULD SEEK TO STIFLE US & SUBDUE US.

You hear the aggressive voices of this other country of sin all around you mocking you and saying ... 'You cannot win ... you will not reach the prize.'

WHAT SORT OF RACE IS THIS RACE GOD CALLS US TO RUN?

1. IT IS A FAITH RACE **SLIDE**

Hebrews 12:1 NKJV

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ... Let us run ... The Race ...

Hebrews 12:1-2 is really the conclusion of Hebrews 11 which begins telling us what Real Faith is and continues to tell us of all the great Old Testament Heroes of Faith that Ran their Race in Faith.

SLIDE THIS RACE CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD OR RUN IN THE REALM OF FAITH

Faith is an unseen realm – 'The evidence of things not seen'.
(Hebrews 11:1)

It takes our thoughts and feelings out of the natural realm of this fallen world to see and feel and think in the eternal now!

It is a realm where we move to the sound of a different drum ... amongst the people of this world who should notice we are different.

We run in peace ... not in strife ...

WHAT SORT OF RACE IS THIS?

2. IT IS GOD'S RACE **SLIDE**

I used to talk about this race being our individual race as many still do – that God has called you and me to run different races ...
But that is NOT what is meant here.

Hebrews 12:1 NKJV

... *Let us run with endurance **the race** that is set before **us** [all].*

THIS IS CALLED, '**THE RACE**' IT IS **ONE RACE** THAT EVERYONE IS ASSIGNED TO RUN ...

IT IS 'SET BEFORE **US**' (**PLURAL**)

THIS RACE IS **A METAPHOR FOR THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD & WAS CONCEIVED IN ETERNITY FROM GOD HIMSELF ...**
(Ephesians 1:9-10)

WHAT SORT OF RACE IS THIS?

3. IT IS A MULTI-GENERATIONAL RACE **SLIDE**

THIS RACE SPANS ALL GENERATIONS FROM ABEL TO THE END OF CIVILISATION.

The first runner listed is ABEL the son of Adam ... He began God's eternal purpose ... picking up the baton of faith and beginning to run ...

Hebrews 11:4 CLV

He [Abel] obtained a testimony that he was righteous and even though he is dead ... his testimony continues on ...

SLIDE *Abel, then Enoch ... Then Noah ... Abraham ... Sarah ... all now dead ... with living testimonies AS THE RACE CONTINUES ON*

Hebrews 11:13 NKJV

***These all died in faith**, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

Then there was Isaac ... Jacob ... Joseph ... Moses ... Joshua ...
Rahab ...

The writer goes on to say ...

Hebrews 11:32 ESV **SLIDE**

... What more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets.

Hebrews 11:39-40 NKJV **SLIDE**

... All these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰ God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

IT IS GOD'S GREAT MULTI-GENERATIONAL RACE IN WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO RUN – A RACE FOR ALL TIME ... A RACE THAT BEGAN BEFORE YOU WERE BORN ... & WILL GO BEYOND YOUR LIFETIME ... AND EVEN THOUGH IT IS BIGGER THAN YOU & YOUR LIFE, YOU MUST FINISH YOUR COURSE.

Paul running in chains said '*... I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*' (2 Timothy 4:7)

THE MEN & WOMEN OF FAITH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SAW IT BUT NEVER ARRIVED THERE BECAUSE IT WAS GREATER THAN THEIR LIFETIME ...

IT'S FOR US ALL ... WE ARE ALL CALLED TO IT.

THESE ARE GIANTS OF THE FAITH...

THEY HAVE PROVED IT ...

THEY ARE OUR FOREFATHERS ...

These I used to think were there judging us ... But they are not ...

THESE ARE OUR COUNTRYMEN ...

THEY ARE OF THE SAME SPIRIT ...

WE ARE OPERATING THE SAME WAY AS THEM ... IN FAITH.

WE ARE RUNNING FOR OUR KING & COUNTRY ...

THESE ARE OUR GREAT SUPPORTERS ... THE GREATEST & MOST HONOURABLE MEN & WOMEN WHICH OUR HEARTS IN CHRIST HOLD TO THE HIGHEST ESTEEM AS DOES OUR GOD – 'Of whom the world is not worthy' (Hebrews 11:)

THESE ONES ARE THERE IN THE STANDS WATCHING ... CHEERING ... THEIR HEARTS ARE WITH US

WE CAN FEEL THEIR STRENGTH ... THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT ...

SAYING, '*Yes, that's what we lived for ... that's what we bled for ... that's what we died for ... We are proud of you.*'

WHAT SORT OF RACE IS THIS?

4. IT IS A RACE SET BEFORE US **SLIDE**

Hebrews 11:1-2 **SLIDE**

*... Let us run with endurance the race that is **set before us**, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who [ran] for **the joy that was set before Him** ...*

WHAT IS SET BEFORE YOU?

IT IS THE GLORY OF GOD

Other races are run for a person's personal glory ...

This race is run that we might share in God's glory

Psalm 73:24 NIV **SLIDE**

*You guide me with your counsel and afterward **you will take me into glory**.*

God has created a glorious horizon looming before us ... a glorious future for us all ...

It is an eternal sunrise that shines with the brilliance of 10,000 times 10,000 suns in brightness and glory ...

When you see it, it captures your life ...

You become ruined to this world ...

CAN YOU SEE IT?

WHAT SORT OF RACE IS THIS?

5. IT IS AN UNENCUMBERED RACE **SLIDE**

Hebrews 12:1 NKJV

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside **every weight and the sin** which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

WHAT IS 'THE SIN'?

Some people have called this a 'besetting sin', a personal sin that is unique to you. A sin with which you constantly struggle ...

However, even though that may be an issue with many Christians ... I don't believe it refers to that.

THIS IS 'THE SIN' AND THE SAME SIN FOR US ALL –

The Sin that does so easily ensnare all New Testament Believers.

THIS IS THE SIN OF UNBELIEF ... HARDENING OUR HEART.

Hebrews 3:12 NIV

*See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a **sinful, unbelieving heart** that turns away from the living God.*

WHAT ARE 'THE WEIGHTS'?

SLIDE WE CANNOT RUN WITH WEIGHTS

In The Body of Christ, there seems to be more reason to backslide than to run the race before us ...

THERE ARE The 3 'Ds' **SLIDE**

DISSENTION ... DISAPPOINTMENT ... DISCOURAGEMENT

THESE THINGS HOLD US BACK

THESE THINGS WE CAN CAST OFF

- **DISSENTION**

People criticizing one another ... factions start ... and we become resentful ... angry ...

We often want to share our grievance with someone else but in so doing we indulge the flesh ...

Ephesians 4:31 NLT

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behaviour.

Get rid = (arthētō) Aorist Imperative

DON'T INDULGE IT ... IT IS A WEIGHT THAT WILL PREVENT YOU FROM RUNNING HIS RACE

WE CLING TO OUR HURTS ...

WE HARBOR RESENTMENT

WE NURSE OUR WOUNDS ...

WE CAN BECOME SELF INDULGENT ...

LET IT GO!

- **DISCOURAGEMENT**

THERE'S A TIME FOR WEEPING (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

BUT THERE'S A TIME TO STOP, RISE UP AGAIN, WASH YOUR FACE & LET IT GO!

I once wept to God because of a broken relationship, but felt no relief. Then the Lord spoke to me saying, 'Stop weeping! Stand up like a man!'

1 Corinthians 16:13 Berean Literal Bible

Watch you; stand firm in the faith; act like men; be strong.

- **DISSAPPOINTMENT**

MANY LEADERS HAVE LET US DOWN

Many years ago, I was going through a very sad time. I was hurting badly. I just needed help! Then one day the pastor of the church I was attending phoned and said he wanted to see me. I immediately felt some hope that someone cared.

Well he came that evening, but to my dismay he didn't want to talk about my struggles ... He came to try and sell me a set of Bible-Encyclopedias. I was so disappointed and even more dismayed. But here's the point: I could have let that disappointment prevent me from going to church – from going on in The Christian race... But by God's grace I was able to lay it aside and continue on to where I am today.

Cast aside every weight!

Let's NOT glorify these emotional weights ...

These are sickly ... sticky ... horrible things. Yet, in our self-pity, we embrace them ...

BUT HOW CAN I LET IT GO?

CONSIDER JESUS

Hebrews 12:3 NKJV **SLIDE**

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

When I was in Bible-College, an old Welsh teacher called Doctor Alfred Greenway, once told us a story.

He said he had been stood down by the eldership of a church organisation in which he had served for years. He said he was so hurt by it that he went into his study, threw his Bible down and said, 'That's it Lord, I quit. I've had enough!'

*Then he said, Jesus spoke to him in an audible voice.
Jesus said to him, 'Did they spit in your face yet?'
He answered, 'No Lord they haven't'
Jesus replied, '**Well they spat in mine!**'
He picked up the Bible and continued on in the race.
He laid aside that hurt and became a great teacher in the Body of Christ!*

SUPPLEMENTARY

*The New Testament uses **indicative statements** when discussing what God has done, is doing or will do.*

***Imperative statements** are used when saying what we should do.*

What God instructs us to do (the imperative) is based upon what He has done, is doing or will do (the indicatives).