

Running the Race Before Us
By Trey Sullins

Throughout the world there is an incredible amount of people who watch sports. It is one of the most popular past times which people spend their time on. For thousands of years people have dedicated their lives to training for and competing in sports. This great competitive backdrop is exactly what the Holy Spirit used in the book of Hebrews to describe the Christian walk. Hebrews 12:1 says, "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." We, as Christians, must understand the great importance of our race of life!

Our race is spectated by a great cloud of witnesses. This great cloud of witnesses is all those examples of excellent faith from chapter 11. They are not literally watching us on the earth because when people leave the earth, they have no more part on the earth. However, these great examples are witnesses who give testimony of the race which we are running. In a figurative way these witnesses are cheering us on to complete the race which they have already completed themselves.

The encouragement of our witnesses motivates us to "lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us." When athletes train, they will often use weights to help them build strength for the competition. When the time comes to compete, they will remove these weights so that all hinderances are gone and they can run as best as possible. Our Christian race should be exactly the same. We must lay aside anything and everything in this life that might distract to hold us back from running our best for God.

Surrounded by witnesses, we also look unto Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:2 says, "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." Imagine yourself in the situation that the Hebrew writer describes. You are on the racetrack with a large crowd of witnesses, and at the end of the track you see Jesus Christ standing at the finish line. As you run the track, your focus is set on the Savior who is waiting for you to finish. Jesus is also described here as the author and finisher of our faith, and that He endured the cross with joy. This explains to us that the reason we have the opportunity to run on this racetrack is Jesus died for us so that our faith can bring us to that finish line. While so many in that cloud of witnesses from chapter 11 longed for the Messiah, we have Him before us.

With all of this working in our favor our challenge is to "run with endurance the race that is set before us." In our Christian walk there comes a time when our preparations must stop, and our race must begin. The manner in which we must run is with endurance. Running with endurance means that we are steadfast, patient, and do not allow things to halt us. Paul did this by bringing his body into subjection so that he might run the best that he could (1 Corinthians 9:27). The type of race that we need to run is summarized well Ephesians 6:13: "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Notice that last part of this verse says, "having done all to stand." As we run through the Christian's race of life, we must be certain that we are doing everything possible to make our run its best!

Our race as Christians is a spiritual one and so much greater than any other race. We do not compete for a trophy, for money, or even for our own glory. We compete for eternal life in heaven with the almighty God. First Corinthians 9:25 reads, “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.” Therefore, while encouraged by our witnesses and looking unto Christ, we must run our race all the way to the finish.