

Run the Race

A Bible Study on Hebrews 12:1

By David Brandt Berg

From "Greater Victories"

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which [does] so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."¹

The original text of this epistle was not divided into chapters. The translators did that. So you've got to keep in mind the preceding chapter in order to understand what "great cloud of witnesses" Paul is talking about. It is Hebrews chapter 11, of course, which some people refer to as the "Faith Hall of Fame." Paul is referring to all the saints who have already gone on to be with the Lord. And they're not only watching us, they're praying for us. They are like our cheering section in the heavenly stadium, cheering for their team-you and me and everyone else who is serving the Lord. Whenever one of us scores a goal, they really cheer! Whenever one of us wins a soul, all the angels in Heaven rejoice.¹

Think how wonderful it is that there are millions of witnesses up there in Heaven, all watching and praying for us. Sometimes the Lord even has them come down here to help us. *This* life is where the real action is, where the big tests and battles are taking place. Once you leave this life there are other things in store for you, but this life provides the primary tests. This is what the whole universe is watching, the big game, the World Cup! So since they are all watching us, what should we do? Paul explains:

"Let us lay aside every weight." What are the weights?-The things that slow us down, that hinder us from getting the job done. The Lord allows us to wear those weights for a while, to strengthen us. Sometimes runners wear weights while training, in order to build up their muscles. Then, when they take the weights off, they feel like they can almost fly! So sometimes the Lord allows us to wear a few weights to test us and strengthen our spiritual muscles. But when they have served their purpose, then it's time to lay them aside and run the race.

"And the sin which does so easily beset us." What is sin?-Not doing the *most* important thing God wants us to do, the way He wants us to do it-not hitting the bull's eye, the center of His will. So, "let us lay aside the weights and the sins"-anything that holds us back from doing our best to be what God wants us to be.

Then, after laying aside all these weights and distractions and sins, what are we supposed to do? "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." You have to *do* God's will; you have to *do* God's work! As long as you are doing the job He has for you, as long as you're doing His will, you're running the race.

You can only "run with patience" if you have faith and are trusting the Lord. If you didn't have patience, you would lose heart and quit, wouldn't you? You'd say, "I'm tired of doing all this hard work, especially when people never thank me and don't appreciate me and don't realize what a hard job this is!" If you didn't have patience, you couldn't do it. In another epistle Paul encourages us: "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."¹

It's a race in which some are going to win more than others. Some are going to receive greater rewards than others do. It may be because they performed their duties faithfully and well, even if they weren't able to do a lot of public outreach and witnessing. I think that some of the little people who do the most unseen jobs in the Lord's service are perhaps going to get rewarded the most one of these days. They are the ones who will step forward to receive their medals, rewards, and crowns from Jesus. For the first time, they will get everything that they deserve, and the whole universe is going to hear about their faithfulness to Jesus!

Picture this: At the sound of a drum roll, a woman steps forward to receive her reward. "Who is that? I never heard of her!"

"Don't you know? That is one of the volunteer office workers who helped make a wonderful outreach ministry possible!"

Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! Out step some others. "Who are they?"

"Those are some print shop workers. If they hadn't been diligent in their work, a lot of Gospel literature would never have been printed."

Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! "And who are all those people?"

"They operated and maintained the computer systems that furthered the Gospel, repaired the Christian

volunteers' cars, organized relief work, taught children about Jesus, sponsored missionaries, and did countless other jobs."

So we're to "run with patience the race that is set before us," which is serving the Lord however and wherever He has called us. And the only way we can have the patience we need to run and win this race is by doing what? "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."¹ So keep your eyes on Jesus!