

“RUN THE RACE”

“ON THE MARK” — “GET SET” — “GO”



Hebrews 12:1-2:

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience 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 is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God.

Introduction:

In running a race, there are three familiar signals given:

- 1. On the mark!**
- 2. Get set, or ready!**
- 3. GO!**

ON THE MARK:

I. This letter to the Hebrews is for Christians who need special help.

- A.** They are not backsliders or hypocrites, nor are they ignorant of the Scriptures.
- B.** They are just not running the race!
 - 1.** They have made no progress in the Christian life since their conversion.



- (a)** Jacob grew in spiritual maturity when he had a personal encounter with God at Bethel. He named the place Peniel.

Genesis 32:30: And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

(b) When children don't grow, we get concerned and check the diet and examine them for physical deficiencies.

(c) Christians need to grow in grace, and the gifts of the Spirit need to abound.

2. Their faith is not growing.

(a) They feed their fears instead of their faith.

(b) A fretful, anxious Christian is a contradiction of terms!

(c) Their love is not growing or going anywhere.

(d) Good works are not being done. Martin Luther, the great theologian, said you cannot separate faith from good works any more than you can separate fire from burning. Faith comes first. Once you have faith, you cannot help but demonstrate that faith by serving others in Jesus' precious Name.



II. This letter to the Hebrews is also for present day Christians who have difficulty growing toward spiritual maturity.

A. Is the Spirit growing within you?

B. Are you a stronger Christian now than you were five years ago?

1. In order to grow, you need to feed on the Word, exercise your faith, and rest in Him.

C. Are you growing in your dependable discipleship?

III. The text for this sermon mentions a race to be run.

Illustration: Anyone who has — as a boy or girl — run a race, has probably used this old fashioned “count down”:

Get on your mark. Get set. GO!

A. GET READY – GET ON YOUR MARK

1. Here is a checklist. Be sure all necessary preparations are taken care of.

(a) Know the rules of the race.



Bible study – Study the Word, individually and in groups.

Prayer – Pray for guidance and direction. Pray without ceasing.

(b) Train for the race.

Obey health rules. Your body is the Temple of God.

We don't like don'ts — but there are rules against drinking, smoking, and using mind-blowing drugs.

(c) Practice

Live up to the best you already know. Theologians call this “practicing your doctrine”. Youth for Christ folks say. “*Walk your talk.*”

SUMMARY OF GETTING READY:

- 1. Study the rules (Read the Bible and pray for direction)**
- 2. Obey training regulations (Clean living – moderation in diet and exercise)**
- 3. Practice what you believe (Walk your talk)**



Preparations are important in this vital race toward the “Prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:14: And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

“RUN THE RACE” — “GET SET”

Preparation Strengthens us. We are not ready to become more involved in the race. We must prepare.

- A.** “Get Set!” carries with it more urgency than the preliminary words of “Get Ready – On Your Mark”.

We know we are to continue to honor all the preparatory rules; but now there is an added sense of urgency.

Right here is where you are — where you live — where you work.

Right now — not tomorrow, or at the time of New Year’s Resolutions, or “sometime”, but now!

Right here — right now!!!

II. GET SET

A. The race is about to start. The crowd is watching. Look who is in that crowd!!!

1. The 11th chapter of Hebrews, just preceding our text, tells who they are. Among the vast crowd are:

(a) Noah, who Faithfully built the ark, and withstood ridicule and criticism from his friends.



(b) Abraham, who left Ur of the Chaldees to become a wanderer because he had Faith in a Land of Promise; and who, in Faith, responded to God’s call to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac.

(c) Moses, in Faith, confronting the Pharaoh; and then, in Faith, leading the Children of Israel toward the Promised Land.

(d) And many, many others who remained Faithful in all manner of circumstances.

2. The enthusiasm of this crowd is contagious, and it helps the runner to be at his best.

B. Any last-minute details to clear away?

1. Are there any hindrances or any non-essential weights you are carrying?

Illustration:

Imagine an entrant for the Olympics, ready for the big race, carrying 50 or 100 pounds of lead, and unwilling to put it down.

Imagine Abraham, willing to serve God, but unwilling to quit the worldly things of Ur of the Chaldees, when those very things would hinder him from following closely to God.

- C. The worst enemy of “the best” is not always the bad, but sometimes that which is merely good.

Actual sins are easier to see and to want to be rid of than are hindrances.

Hindrances are things that are not evil in themselves, but they do keep us from running our best.

What hinders you from being your best for God? What hinders you from putting first things first?

III. Are there any sins to be put away?

- A. Remember – this letter was written to Christians who needed to put off the besetting sin!
- B. The sin dealt with in this portion of the letter is the sin of lack of faith.
1. To “get set” for this race:
 - a. Lay hold of deeper faith.
 - b. Learn to live every minute by faith.



Conclusion:

Now, preparations are made – you are ready!

Now you are at your best: free from hindrances in running well. The witnesses are watching. But, for you, the most important part is still ahead — the running of the race.

Some folks spend all their life just getting ready to do something, and never getting around to the actual DOING of it!

Lots of people have a hangup on organizational details and preparation. Both organization and preparation are good means to an end, but they are not an end in themselves.



I. HAVE THE RIGHT GOAL

- A. Just before you respond to the challenge of “GO”, check to see if you are headed toward the right goal.
1. What is your goal in life?

Popularity — Prestige — Possessions — Power?

2. Keep going toward the right goal.

*“Turn your eyes upon Jesus Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His Glory and Grace.”*

II. GO!

- A. For the Christian it is not an option, but a Divine command. Go:

WITNESS — TEACH — SERVE

- B. No more delays now.

Further delays mean you are just not running the race.

ILLUSTRATION

- *I'll teach when I know more about the Bible.*

GO – teach, if you know Christ, and learn more about the Bible as you teach.

- *I'll witness when my own life is more holy.*

GO — witness — not to your own life, but to Christ.

- *I'll work on committees when I have more time.*

GO and serve. All your time belongs to the Lord; you are only a steward of it.

- C. No turning back!

1. It is rough to be running in a race and be disqualified. Jesus gave us a rule for the race: “Don’t turn back”.

(a) You may find it necessary to “pace” your self at times — but don’t quit.

III. RUN WITH PATIENCE

- A. This is not a sprint, but an endurance run over an obstacle course.

- B. Run faithfully, zealously, but with patience.

IV. A PARADOX!

- A. We run this race as best we can; but it has already been won for us!
- B. Christ is the Finisher of our faith, and only He could ever say: *“I have overcome the world”*.

John 16:33: These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

But we can say, with Paul,:

Romans 8:37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.

CONCLUSION:

If we share in His victory, why do we have to be concerned about growing in the Christian life — about becoming stronger and more mature in our commitment to Him?

One day the saints will lay down their crowns at the feet of the Lamb of God. Will you have an imperishable trophy to spread at His feet when He is crowned Lord of All?

The time for the race — for winning trophies — is NOW.

Run the race of the faithful to that abundant, joyful, satisfying life.

If you have not been as faithful as you might have been, as faithful as you know He wants you to be, come to Him now for forgiveness, for renewal of strength, and for direction.



LOOK BEFORE RUNNING

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I. LOOK TO THE SAINTS

A. Read and study about the Great Cloud of Witnesses in Hebrews 11.

II. LOOK TO THE STADIUM

A. See what discipline is required.

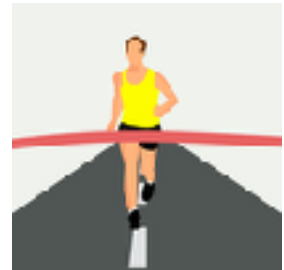
B. See what energy is required.

C. See what training is necessary.

III. LOOK TO THE SAVIOUR

A. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

B. In Him, we wear the victor's crown.



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