

HOW TO FINISH THE RACE WELL (Hebrews 12: 12-17)

INTRODUCTION: Notice the word “*Therefore*” at the beginning of verse 12 which connects Hebrews 12: 12-17 to the preceding verses. Hebrews 12: 12-17 is an exhortation to live up to the truth taught in Hebrews 12: 1-11 which is all about running the Christian race with endurance. Hebrews 12: 12-17 consists of three commands to obey and two warnings to heed if we are to finish the race well.

FINISHING WELL - WHAT WE MUST DO

1. Accept the fact the race will be hard, resolve not to give up, keep running straight ahead with your eyes on the prize, and realize you cannot make it across the finish line ALONE, we need ONE ANOTHER.

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Hebrews 12: 12-13

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”

Isaiah 35: 3-4

2. Chase after PEACE.

Pursue peace with all men...

Hebrews 12: 14a

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Romans 12: 17-18

3. Be in hot pursuit of HOLINESS.

Pursue...sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. Heb. 12: 14b

Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil (MSG - leave evil in the dust). Proverbs 4: 25-27

He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment is sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Hebrews 12: 10b-11

FINISHING WELL - WHAT WE MUST GUARD AGAINST

As you run the race maintain a steady pace with God's GRACE, because if you fall behind, you will be caught and overtaken by:

1. BITTERNESS

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; Hebrews 12: 15

Note: God's grace will never fail, but we can fail to DEPEND on God's grace. A bitter person is a person who, in hardship, turns away from God's grace in despair, turning him into a hostile, antagonistic person dominated by resentment.

HOW TO OUTRUN BITTERNESS

- Remove any personal GUILT through repentance & restitution (Ps.139: 23-24).
- Realize bitterness is not caused by what another person did to me, but my RESPONSE to what they did to me, for which I am responsible to God (1 Peter 3: 13-15; Romans 12: 21).
- Regard my offender as God's TOOL to accomplish God's purpose in my life (Genesis 45: 8; Genesis 50: 19-21).
- Recognize BITTERNESS is assuming a right I never have, while FORGIVENESS is a responsibility I always have (Colossians 3: 13).

2. UNHEALTHY APPETITES

...that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. Hebrews 12: 16

DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL RUNNER'S DIET

- Keep your mind focused on God's PRIZE (Col. 3: 1-3; Philippians 3: 7-14).
- Keep your heart filled with God's PRECEPTS (Jeremiah 15: 16; Col. 3: 15-16).
- Keep your will following God's PLAN (John 4: 31-35)

Note: Do not make the mistake of trading in the rigors of the race for a life of ease & pleasure, because to do so puts you in danger of forfeiting the glorious REWARDS God has waiting for you at the finish line (Hebrews 12: 17).

