

Strength and Grace for the Race

The Race is Long. Come Along Side One Another, Spurring One Another on to the Finish Line.

1. Focus on the Race

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. – Hebrews 12:1-4

“It was sheer faith in God, unsupported by any visible or tangible evidence, that carried him through the taunting, the scourging, the crucifying, and the more bitter agony of rejection, desertion, and dereliction. “Come down from the cross, and we will believe,” they said. Had he come down, by some gesture of supernatural power, he would never have been hailed as the “perfecter of faith” nor would he have left any practical example for others to follow.”¹

2. Understand your Father’s Purpose in Discipline

⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

⁶For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

¹ FF Bruce

¹²Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. – Hebrews 12:5-13

3. See to Your Brothers and Sisters

¹⁴Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; -Hebrews 12:14-15

4. Remember Esau

¹⁶...that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. -Hebrews 12:16-17

And he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.” Then he said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?” But Isaac replied to Esau, “Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?” Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, *even* me also, O my father.” *So Esau lifted his voice and wept.* (Genesis 27:35-38, emphasis mine)

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