

Today's message



HOW TO OVERCOME DISCOURAGEMENT

With Bishop Ronald K. Powell

Hebrews 12:1-3

- **Hbr 12:1** 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,
- **Hbr 12:2** 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.

Hebrews 12:1-3

- **Hbr 12:3** For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Discouragement is something that we all live with

- Discouragement is something that we all live with from time to time. It is easy for us to allow the pressures and burdens of life to overwhelm us and cause us to despair.
- Discouragement is a killer! Discouragement has caused many people to drop out of the church. It has caused them to quit on God. It has caused many preachers to give up the fight and lay down their Bibles.
- Listen to what John Calvin said about his life, *"In addition to the immense troubles by which I am so sorely consumed, there is almost no day on which some new pain or anxiety does not come."*

Spurgeon had this to say about his own battles with discouragement,

- *"Discouragement ... creeps over my heart and makes me go with heaviness to my work.... It is dreadfully weakening."*
- It is that way with many of God's precious servants this morning!
- Some in this very room may be discouraged in your walk with the Lord. You are thinking about throwing in the towel. You are considering dropping out on the Lord.
- But, before you do, I would like to remind you that God did not save you so that you could live your life in a state of discouragement.

2 Timothy 1:7

- *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."*

The Cure For Discouragement.

- That verse would seem to indicate that you and I do not have to live with discouragement as our constant companion.
- I think the Bible teaches us that it is possible to win the battle over discouragement.
- God has a plan to deliver you from the debilitating effects of discouragement. In fact, I think the verses that I have read to you this morning tell us much about accomplishing that.
- These verses give us a 3 step plan, that if followed, will inoculate you against the infection of discouragement as you run the Christian race.
- Let's take a few minutes this morning to look at these familiar verses one more time. Let them lift you from your valley and teach you *The Cure For Discouragement.*

I. COMMIT TO A LIFE OF FAITHFUL RUNNING

- **Hbr 12:1** 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,**

A. This Requires Preparation

- No one wakes up on morning and decides to run a marathon. That kind of race requires much preparation.
- So does the spiritual race. If we are to run well, then we must prepare properly.

1. Freedom From The Weights That Encumber -

- Anything that would hinder us from running well must be laid aside.
- (ie. Runners will strip away all that is not necessary so that they might run faster and farther. They get lean and light so that they can win their race.)
- What a lesson for the Christian runner! Anything that has more of you than Jesus does has to go if you are to run well!
- Whatever has your attention, your time, your resources, your strength, etc, it is a weight in your life. It has to be laid aside if you are going to run well. If it isn't dealt with, it will cause you to become discouraged!

2. Freedom From The Sins That Entangle -

- The picture here is of an athlete stripping himself down so that he can run well.
- In fact, the ancient Greek games were run in the nude!
- Can you imagine a world-class athlete running a race in an overcoat? Of course not! They shed everything they can so that they can run without entanglements.

2. Freedom From The Sins That Entangle -

- Again, this speaks to the Christian runner as well. Did you know that you will still sin after you get saved? That's right, you will still sin!
- You will still desire evil. In fact, one of the biggest shocks of the Christian life is how easily you can sin after you have been saved.
- You know, that thought will still grow into lust. That word may still slip out every now and then. That old anger may flare up out of control now and then.
- Your attitude might get rotten from time to time. Being saved doesn't prevent you from sinning, but your sinning does prevent you from running your race well!

2. Freedom From The Sins That Entangle -

- We are told here that those besetting sins, those things that are of a particular problem for us as individuals, must be dealt with.
- We are to remove ourselves from their presence. Get away from places where they can take place.
- Guard yourself against their attack. We have to get radical and honest about the sins that afflict us as believers.

Illustration

- I heard of an old mechanic that got saved. Now, he had a foul mouth before he met Jesus. And, after he was saved, he was still having a problem with his language. He talked to his preacher about the problem and the preacher came up with a plan.
- He said, "Every time you feel like using profanity, just sing a hymn instead."
- A few days later, the preacher stopped by this man's shop to see how things were going. He asked, "Hey Brother, how's it going." "Oh, pretty good", said the man, "but, I've sung every hymn I know today and made up three or four!")

God will help you!

- That illustrates the problem we have with sin, but God will help you conquer it if you are sincere and will trust Him in the matter!
- He will give you victory over the things that hinder your race.
- Don't let the encumbrances of life and the entanglements of sin cause you to become discouraged in your race for Jesus.

This Requires Patience -

- We are told to "*run with patience the race which is set before us.*"
- We are said to be in "*a race*". This word means "*a struggle or a contest.*"
- Our English word "*agony*" comes from this Greek word.
- That sure does describe the road of life doesn't it? Sometimes life is good. The road is smooth and the way is easy, but there are other times when it feels like you are running blindfolded, uphill through a minefield!
- It seems there are times when life is a struggle! It is an agony! It is living misery! Those are the times that call for "*patience*". Of course, God never said it would be easy.
- In truth, He said just the opposite.

John 16:33

- **Jhn 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.

Job 14:1

- **Job 14:1** Man [that is] born of a woman [is] of few days, and full of trouble.

"patience" means "endurance".

- Now, the word *"patience"* means *"endurance"*.
- It means settling in for the long-haul. It carries the idea of commitment to the race in spite of the obstacles or the difficulties.
- We are not running a short dash, we are running a marathon! Don't be a ***Roman Candle Christian***. A little pop, a little flash, a little burst of excitement and then nothing!
- Just be steady! If you are a teacher, be steady. If you are a preacher, be steady. If you are prayer warrior, a witness, a church member, just be steady.
- Run your race and settle in for the long haul! Make up your mind to be committed to the race! Make up your mind that nothing will prevent you from running a good, patient race for the glory of God!

II. COMMIT TO A LIFE OF FOCUSED RUNNING

- **Hbr 12:2** 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.
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II. COMMIT TO A LIFE OF FOCUSED RUNNING

- As we run this race, we are to keep ourselves focused. We are to concentrate on things that will prevent us from becoming discouraged as we run the race. The writer tells us what those things are.)

A. Focused On The Person Of Jesus -

- *"Looking unto Jesus."* That is how the Christian life began! It all began with a look, **Isa. 45:22**. Looking got us into this race and keeping our eyes on Him helps us to do well as we run this race!

Notice the phrase in **verse 1**, "*the race that is set before us.*"

- Notice the phrase in **verse 1**, "*the race that is set before us.*"
- This seems to me to indicate that we each run our own race. I can't run your race and you can't run my race.
- Now, if I spend my time looking at you and how well you are doing, I may become discouraged in my own race.
- I might become defeated because I am not doing as well as you are. Then, I might try to run in your lane! Or, I might stumble over pride if I begin to think that I am doing better than you.

Looking at others

- I might even get discouraged if I think that the way you are running has an affect on my own race. If I allow your failures and stumbles to hinder me.
- In other words, if I keep my eyes on you and how you are running I am in trouble!
- The only way that any of can run well is for us to keep our eyes focused on Jesus. He is the only One we have to run for.

Jesus judges the race!

- Jesus is the race Judge. He is the Author and the Finisher of the race of life!
- He gives out the rewards. He disqualifies the runners. He calls the race and He is the One, the only One to watch as the race progresses.
- Get your eyes off the other racers and how they are doing! Get you eyes on Jesus alone and run a better race.

B. Focused On The Performance **Of Jesus**

- Not only should we keep our eyes on the Lord's Person as we run, but also on His Performance.

1. He Finished Our Race For Us

- As we run the race of life, let us take courage in the fact that Jesus Christ has already passed this way.
- He ran the race ahead of us and He has completed His race. In doing so, He completed ours as well!
- That means that as we run and face the pressures of life, we have Him to help us along the way, **Heb. 4:15-16**. He knew His share of trials in the race of life, but He successfully navigated His course. Look at what He endured:

Heb. 4:15-16

- **Hbr 4:15** For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin.
- **Hbr 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus knew His share of trials

- He knew His share of trials in the race of life, but He successfully navigated His course. Look at what He endured:

When You Think You Have It Bad:

- 1. He was born to an unwed mother - Mt. 1:18-19
- 2. He was born in a stable - Lk. 2:7
- 3. Born to poor parents - Luke 2:24
- 4. His life was threatened as a baby - Matt. 2:13ff
- 5. His birth was the cause of terrible suffering - Mt. 2:16ff
- 6. He was moved as a baby - Matt. 2:13ff

When You Think You Have It Bad:

- 7. He was raised in a despicable town - Nazareth - Luke 2:39
- 8. His father died when He was young - Mt. 13:53-58
- 9. He had to support His family - Mt. 13:55-58
- 10. He had no home and no place to lay His head - Mt. 8:20; Luke 9:58
- 11. He was hated and opposed by others - Mark 14:1-2

When You Think You Have It Bad:

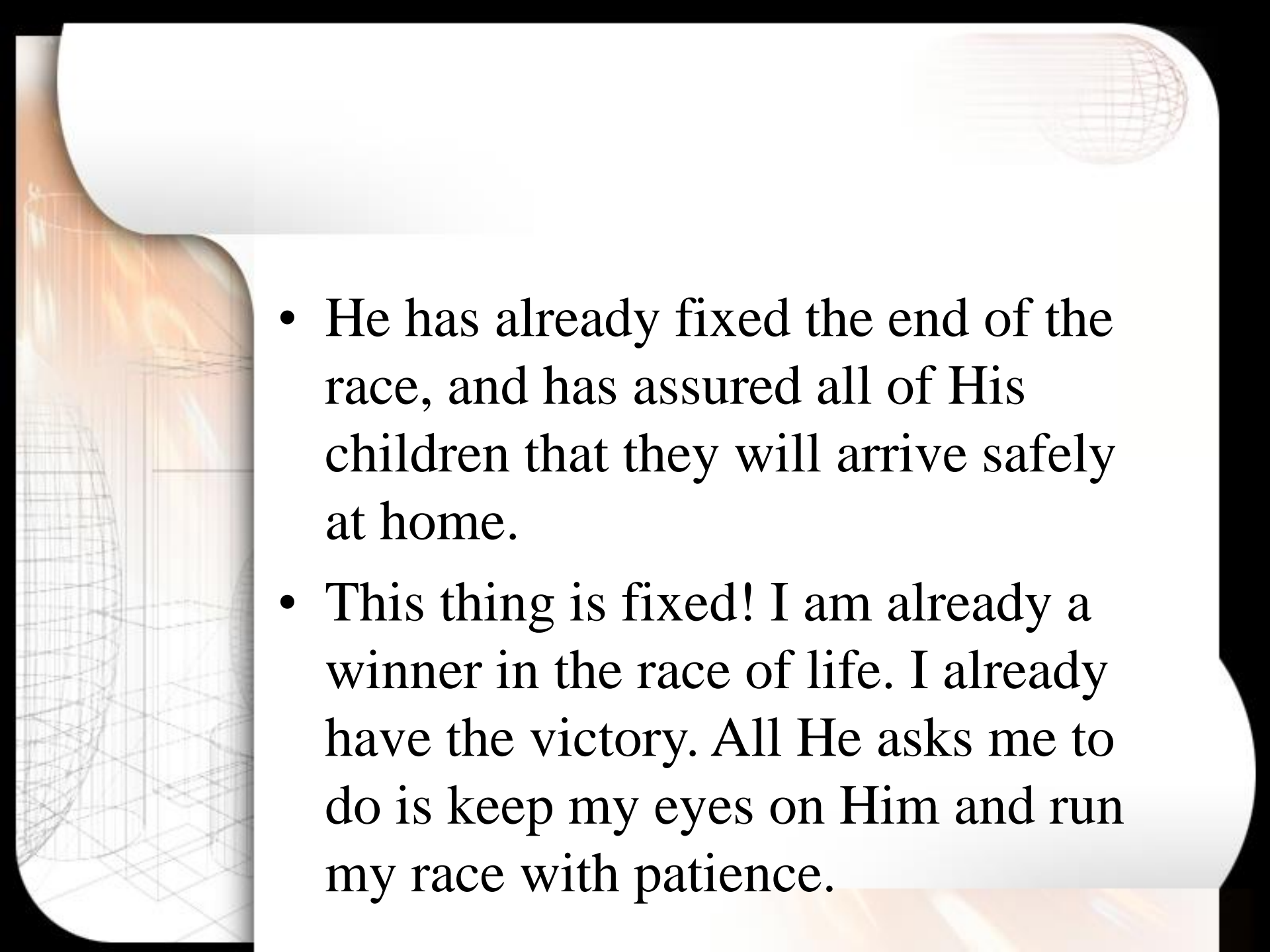
- 12. He was charged with insanity - Mark 3:21
- 13. He was charged with demon possession - Mark 3:22
- 14. He opposed by His family - Mark 3:21-22
- 15. He was rejected, hated and opposed by the audiences who came to hear Him speak - Matt. 13:53-58; Luke 4:28-29.
- 16. He was betrayed by a close friend - Mark 14:10-11; 18
- 17. He was left alone, rejected and forsaken by all of His friends - Mark 14:50.
- 18. He was tried before the high court of the land and tried with treason - John 18:33.
- 19. He was executed as a common criminal by means of crucifixion - John 19:16ff.

Christ endured it all!

- Jesus has been through it all and He is the perfect Coach for those running the race today.
- So, instead of looking every else for the help you need, find your help in Jesus and in Him alone!

2. He Fixed Our Race For Us

- I will let you in on a secret this morning. Jesus has not only already run our race, but He has fixed it so that you cannot lose! He has already won the victory, and He shares that with us.
- **1Cr 15:57** But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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- He has already fixed the end of the race, and has assured all of His children that they will arrive safely at home.
 - This thing is fixed! I am already a winner in the race of life. I already have the victory. All He asks me to do is keep my eyes on Him and run my race with patience.

I have fought a good fight

- Not in competition with you or anyone. This is my race! I have already won. All that remains is just to finish my course.
- However, I want to do well, so that I too can say what Paul said at the end of his own race, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*", 2 Tim. 4:7.

III. COMMIT TO A LIFE OF FULFILLED RUNNING

- Another lesson that we can draw from this passage is the truth that this life does not have to be a discouraging venture, but that it can be a fulfilling adventure.
- Let me share three brief truths that make this a reality for you and me:

A. The Fulfillment Of Remembering

- When discouragement begins to seep into your life and mine, let us remember what Jesus Christ did for us.
- To think that He would do that for you and me is evidence of His love for us and of His work in our lives.
- May I remind you that when the Lord is in your corner, you have nothing at all to fear, "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*", Rom. 8:31.
- Remember to "*consider Him*" when the dark days come.

B. The Fulfillment Of Reward

- Jesus has run His race and paved the way for you and me. He has already assumed His place at the Father's right hand. He sat down there, signifying that His work of salvation was finished forever.
- But, may I remind you, that when the clouds of discouragement begin to gather on the horizon of your life, that what Jesus enjoys this morning in heaven is also mine and yours?
- His heaven is our heaven! His place of reward is ours too. He promised us that He would make a place for us there and that He would return to take us home some day, **John 14:1-3**.

That is enough sunshine for the cloudiest of days

- Instead of being discouraged as you run your race, always remember that it is not in vain, **1 Cor 15:58**.
- There is a fulfillment in knowing that God is keeping records and one day He will reward those who have run the race faithfully.

C. The Fulfillment Of Resting

- Even as we run the race there are times when our steps grow heavy and our pace slows down. We get weary here.
- However, let us remember that we are not home yet. There is a rest for the people of the Lord, **Heb. 4:9**. There will come a day when we can un-harness the burdens from our shoulders and sit at the feet of the Master in glory.
- There will come a day when He will wipe away the tears of sorrow and exhaustion from our eyes, **Rev. 21:4**.
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Life The Place of Labor

- Let us remember that this life is not the place of rest for the servants of the Lord. It is the place of labor and faithful service!
- Therefore, do not grow weary, **Gal. 6:9**. One day, we will join Jesus by the river of life in glory and there we will rest in His presence from the burdens of this life

Resting in the race

- By the way, it is possible to rest in this life, even as we run the race.
- How? By keeping the focus on Jesus and by learning to abide in Him, **John 15:5; Matt. 11:28-30.**
- He will let you run a race that will leave you fulfilled and rested

Conclusion:

- Don't let discouragement get you down!
- If you are battling today come to Jesus. Let Him refocus your priorities, lighten your load and equip you to patiently run your race for His glory.
- There is help in Him, don't leave His House without it!