

Never Stop

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[0 : 00] to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12.

We'll start here in verse 1. It says, 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.

Let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Robin, if you will, could you please open us up in prayer this morning? Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for bringing us all here. What a privilege it is to be in this house. We're here on. We're here to tell you that you can come and work by you and worship your Lord.

I pray that the message that you have for us today, you can receive with an open heart. I pray that you feel a preacher here today with a spirit, a truth, that you will be able to speak on your truth.

[1 : 16] Amen. That's what we get today with a great shed. I pray that you will be able to speak for this. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Amen. Whether we realize it or not, from the moment that we are born, we enter into a race of sorts. The goal would be to enter into a second race, and we'll get to that in just a moment. But the race, it may change course, it may change terrain, but it never ends.

And the only thing that ends that race, really, is death or the rapture. So the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9.24, Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize.

So run that you may obtain. The question is, obtain what? So before we're saved, that race is really to determine what your eternal destiny will be.

[2 : 37] You know, once we're born again, like I say, the clock starts ticking. And you have your life to figure out what will be the outcome or the end of your life, where you will spend all of eternity.

You know, you can choose to ignore that reality, but that reality will catch up to you at some point. The poets, the philosophers, the religious do-gooders, they like to call this.

What's the meaning of life? What is the purpose of life? What is the essence of life? Why were we put here on planet Earth? And what shall I do?

What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And so on and so forth. But once we start again, once we begin that race, we're in it to the duration.

And once we start, once we are saved, once we've figured out our eternal destiny, so to speak, then the race changes and we are no longer a race to determine our eternal destiny, but we race to obtain reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

[3 : 58] We run now that we might do all things to the glory of God, that we might, as Brother Rich reminded us, give none offense. We run now that we might be well-pleasing to him who has saved us with his precious blood, and that we might hear on that day, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

So if we look back just to that last part of 1 Corinthians 9.24, it says, So run that ye may obtain. And, you know, it's interesting.

You can look at that two different ways. You can say, so run, or run in this manner. And that talks then about sort of the essence of our race.

But the other way that we can look at it is, so run. In other words, if we run, there's a prize there at the end.

There's a prize for us to obtain. So run. So get going. So get running. And that's kind of where I want to focus on today. Now the surest way to not obtain at the end of our lives is to not run.

[5 : 11] And the surest way to not finish the race that we have ahead of us is to stop. It's to begin your race and then stop at some point.

So the key to finishing any race really is to keep going. It's to not stop. To never stop. And today what I want to do in our time here this morning is really just look at a few people who stopped. A few different ways that we stop along the way. The first person I want to look at are the first group of people. If we recall, and you don't need to turn there necessarily, in 1 Samuel chapter 30. But we'll back up a little bit and just kind of give a little context. David, if you recall, has two occasions where he has Saul really at his mercy, where he could have killed him. The second time that David has this opportunity, he flees after that for his life. And goes to Gath, to Achish, the king there, and seeks protection from him. [6 : 25] He and his men. And Achish gives them Ziklag. So they end up in Ziklag. And of course, sometime after that, Gath, or Achish, goes to fight with Israel.

Which is the occasion when Saul, of course, goes to find the medium. And so David goes up with the Philistines to fight against Israel.

And of course, the Philistine lords send David back saying, you know, what better way would David ingratiate himself to Saul than to turn against the Philistines and help them at that time.

So David returns to Ziklag. And upon returning to Ziklag, of course, he finds that the city has been burned. And that their wives and their children and all their valuables have been taken. David's men, of course, at that time then say, let's stone them.

David appeals to the Lord and said, what should I do? The Lord says, go after these people. So David goes in pursuit of the wives, the children, and the valuables.

[7 : 28] And as he goes, of course, he runs into an Egyptian slave who then takes him down to the people. And what we read then in 1 Samuel 30, verse 16, says, And when he, when the Egyptian slave had brought David down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines and out of the land of Judah.

These Amalekites had stopped to eat and drink and dance because they thought they'd gotten away with it.

They never expected that David would be so hot on their trail. Of course, they were on their way back to their city where they were from and stopped along the way to celebrate their big take, their big spoil.

These are the people who had stopped fearing repercussion for their actions. They thought that they'd gotten away with it and that there would be no consequence for their lawlessness.

Now, there's many an unsaved man who plays with the future of his soul because of a lack of the fear of the Lord. And by the same token, there is many a saved man who gambles away his future rewards because of his own lack of a fear of the Lord.

[9 : 03] The fear of the Lord is a very healthy thing. Fear is a great motivation. Fear is cleansing. It's cleaning. Ecclesiastes 8, 11 through 13 says, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Though a sinner do evil a hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God. Job in Job 28, 28 says, And unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord. That is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding.

Proverbs 1, 7 says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. So one of the surest ways that we can cut our race short, one of the surest ways that we can forfeit reward, is to abandon our fear of the Lord.

And just give in to whatever pleasure, whatever whims that we wish, that we choose, and just do as we wish. Without a healthy and proper fear of the Lord, we can easily lose perspective and begin to envy those who themselves have no fear of the Lord.

[10 : 39] If you want, turn to Psalm 73. Psalm 73.

This is actually, it's a powerful psalm. Psalm 73 says, Truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore, pride compasseth them about as a chain.

Violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression.

[11 : 46] They speak lofty. They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore, as people return hither and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them, and they say, How doth God know?

Is there knowledge in the most high? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches. These are people who do whatever they want and they get away with it.

And this psalmist has asked himself, Why am I keeping myself clean? Why do I trust in the Lord when all these people aren't trusting in the Lord themselves? They're just doing whatever they want and there's no consequence or getting away with it.

And we can start saying, What's the purpose? Why run? Why run this waste? Why put the effort in? Why suffer? Why to withhold ourselves from so many things, whatever, when all these other people are doing it, getting away with it, and there's no consequence to it?

They're just living their lives carelessly, doing whatever they want without repercussion. It says, Verily I've cleansed my heart in vain. I've washed my hands in innocency.

[12 : 52] For all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning. If I say I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of the children. If I even speak this way, people are going to think I'm a fool.

So I just think it. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then, then I understood their end.

Surely thou didst set them in slippery places. Thou casted them down unto destruction. How were they brought into desolation as in a moment?

They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved when I was pricked in my reins.

So foolish was I and ignorant. I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee. Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory.

[13 : 59] Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

For though they are, they that are far from thee shall perish. Those that lack a fear of the Lord, they will perish. Thou hast destroyed all them that go whoring from thee.

But it is good for me to draw near to God. I have put my trust in the Lord God that I may declare all thy works. So a fear of the Lord is absolutely a healthy thing and to stop fearing the Lord is certainly one means of departing from our race.

And the second group of people we can look at is a way that people stop. If we remember Reuben Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh in Numbers chapter 32 and you don't need to turn there, I'll turn there myself.

We read Numbers 32 verses 1-5. Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle and when they saw the land of Jazar and the land of Gilead that beheld the place was a place for cattle the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses and to Eleazar the priest and unto the princes of the congregation saying Adaroth and Diben and Jazar and Nimrah and Heshbon and Aleilah and Shebam and Nebo and beyond even the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel is a land for cattle and thy servants have cattle wherefore said they if we have found grace in thy sight let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession and bring us not over Jordan so here's a people that that stopped short here the the promised land the land of Canaan was within eyesight of them it was just over Jordan and they were content to stay east of the promised land they were content to stop short the rich young ruler when he came to the Lord said you know what may I do to inherit eternal life and he left sorrowful because the Lord said one thing thou lackest you know you can run a 26 mile race a marathon 26.2 miles you can run 25 miles of that race and you run far and you run well but the reality is you've stopped short of the finish line you did not complete your race in 2nd Kings 3 1-3 we read speaking of one of the kings now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel and Samaria the 18th year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and reigned 12 years and he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord but not like his father and like his mother for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat which

made Israel to sin he departed not therefrom now

[17 : 27] Jehoram he made some some reforms you know all throughout Israel we read of different kings who made various reforms and we hear but the high places were still there Jehoram got rid of Baal but he did not get rid of the idols that were in Dan and Bethel you know some bury their idols as Jacob did in Genesis chapter 34 or 35 rather and some burn them as Josiah did and those who merely bury their idols can always return to them you know you bury them you can return to them at a convenient season you know we're all we're so prone to making temporary reforms in our life to appease God and then you know when things are well or when we've gone off astray on our race we can return to those sins once again because we didn't make a full end of them we chose not to burn them as Josiah did in scripture we see you know in the parable of the sower that some will bear thirtyfold some will bear sixty some a hundred you know what will be the amount of your life what will be the value of your service we read some perform the good will of God some the acceptable and some the perfect will of God according to

Dr. Ruckman the three adjectives describe three different wills of God for the Christian not three different aspects of the same will of God so there's the good will of God which which God approves but he doesn't necessarily accept in the sense of rewarding what you are supposed to do then there's the acceptable will which means the Christian is not just doing right he's actually trying to serve God and God rewards that service but is not but that service that we perform is not specifically the job or the will that God had for our lives then there is the perfect will which is the Christian doing exactly what God wants us at precisely the time that he wants it done so again are we burying our idols are we burning them are we searching are we seeking the perfect will of God for our lives are we searching something just a little bit less are we discontent with the good or the acceptable will of

God remember Paul said I die daily the Lord is looking for a full surrender of our hearts and of our lives as we are recently reminded by brother Jared you know the Lord is not as he said he's not simply going to take our hearts and seal them it's up for us to offer them to him daily he wants our whole hearts and not something short of it in 1st Kings 11 verses 4-6 we read about Solomon and says for it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not perfect for the Lord is God as was the heart of his David his father for Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites and Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord and went not fully after the Lord as David his father did will you run a full and complete race or will you stop short Psalm 119 says blessed are they that keep his testimonies and that seek him with the whole heart and Psalm 119 10 says with my whole heart have I sought thee who let me not wander from thy commandments so number one don't stop fearing never stop fearing number two don't stop short in your race finish should run all the way to the end there's a third way that we can stop David and this is a well known passage we all know it really well so we don't need to linger too long on it but in 2 Samuel 11 1 we read David stopped doing what he was supposed to do stop doing what he had been called to do

David was called to fight the Lord's wars Solomon was called to build Paul was called to be a preacher to the Gentiles and we need to ask as the apostle Paul did Lord what will thou have me to do we need to figure out what it is that the Lord wants us to be doing that the time to fight is now fight what fight the flesh fight the devil fight the world the time to run!

[23 : 09] now each of us have our own race and there's no one else who we can enlist to run that race for us there's no one else that can fight for us you know this race is a personal race Paul exhorts us to fight the good fight to faith that we might obtain a full reward of the judgment seat of Christ we know that Paul fought that good fight and he says in the next book the book of second Timothy that he has fought his fight and finished his course so we need to as well fight a good fight that we might finish our course well so number one don't stop fearing don't stop short and never stop fighting a fourth way that we stop in our race we can find in

John chapter six we just went through this not too recently in Sunday school with pastor but in John chapter six starting in verse 59 and again you don't need to turn there if you want but here is the discourse on the bread of life and it's picking it up in verse 59 we read these things said he in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum many therefore of his disciples when they heard this said this is a hard saying who can hear it when Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it he said unto them doth this offend you what if you shall see the son of man ascend up where he

was before it is the spirit that quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing the words they speak unto you they are spirit and they are life but there are some of you and he said therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my father and from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him and why because they stopped believing so not only do people stop fearing and they stop short may stop fighting but there are many who stopped believing many stop running because they run into issues of unbelief we know that the gospel is to the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greek it's foolishness but biblical truth can be a challenge to Christians as well as Peter said in his epistle when he spoke of Paul he said in speaking of Paul's epistles when he says that there are some things that are hard to be understood and there are you know there's things that's hard to understand when we sometimes it feels like the Lord is far from us and biblical truth just does not apply to our life but the reality is we're not going to learn everything overnight it takes daily reading daily prayer it takes a constant study of the word of

God and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit and it takes a humbling of our own selves and a childlike faith if we're going to have the belief that we need to stick around in this race all the way to the end if you remember when Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration he had an encounter with a man whose son was possessed with a dumb spirit which the disciples themselves could not cast out and as he came upon the scene of this man the boy had been thrown violently to the ground by the us and Jesus said unto him if thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth and straightway the father the child cried out and said with tears Lord I believe help thou mine unbelief you know in those moments when we're struggling with belief when we're struggling with a weak faith we need to cry out ourselves unto the

Lord and ask that he would help our unbelief memorizing scripture which reminds us this often times on Wednesday nights but memorizing scripture and marking up your bible is a great help during times of unbelief in the back of my bible I've written down some exceeding great and precious promises and things that you can look to and reflect on when things get difficult when your belief starts to wane you know what let me just read these really quickly to you promise number one says but my God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus we find that in Philippians chapter four promise number two I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me again Philippians chapter four promise number three he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of

[28 : 40] Jesus Christ that's Philippians chapter one promise number four the Lord is faithful so that we may boldly say the Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me that promise can be found in Hebrews chapter 13 a fifth promise!

God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work that's in 2nd Corinthians chapter nine promise number six for I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord that of course is in Romans chapter 8 in the final promise and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose again in Romans chapter 8 you know when our belief starts to suffer it's good to be reminded of the faithfulness of God to recall his promises to return to the those precious things those precious truths that we can find in the word of

God a fifth way that people stop is found in Luke chapter 12 verses 41 to 48 Luke 12 verses 41 through 48 and this is one of the parables of Jesus and said then Peter said unto him Lord speak us out this parable unto us or even unto all and the Lord said who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat and due season blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath but if that servant say in his heart my Lord delayeth his coming and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens and to eat and drink and to be drunk and the Lord of that servant will come in a day that when he look not for him and an hour!

when he is not aware and will cut him in sunder and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers another way that people stop in their race is when they stop looking for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is to us another it's a precious truth and as Christians we ought to be looking up looking for the day of our!

[31 : 44] redemption! Titus 2.13 says looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the Lord of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ according to 1 Thessalonians 4.18 we are to be comforting one another with this great truth the reminder that he's coming he's coming soon so hang in there run just a little bit further don't depart from your race the Lord is coming soon so we are to be watchful and alert to redeem the time because we know not what hour our master will return and the last one the last one that I want to talk about really quickly is perhaps the most perplexing one of all it's found in 1 Kings chapter 13 and this is the one that really ought to hopefully take hold with each of us if you recall in 1

Kings 13 it's the story of the prophet who goes to warn Jeroboam that he needs to clean up his act let me just start reading here at the beginning of the chapter chapter 13 of 1 Kings and that behold there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense and he cried against the altar and the word of the Lord and said oh altar altar thus saith the Lord behold a child shall be born unto the house of David Josiah by name and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee and he gave a sign the same day saying this is the sign and it came to pass when king

Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God which had cried against the altar in Bethel that he put forth his hand from the altar saying lay hold on him and his hand which he put forth against him dried up that he could not pull it in again to him the altar also was rent and the ashes and pray for me that my hand may be restored me again and the man of God besought the Lord and the king's hand restored him again and became as it was before and the king said unto the man of God come home with me and refresh thyself and I will give the reward and the man of God said unto the king if thou will give me half thine house I with it thou cam as so he went another way and returned not by the way that he came to

Bethel now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel who went after the man and it says in verse 14 this prophet went after this man and found him sitting under an oak here's a man who had just done really an astonishing thing for the Lord he had been called to go up and warn Jeroboam and he had done that he was told to return a different way that he came so he is on his way home and he stops and we don't know why he stops the scripture never tells us why he stopped you know things were going good in his life he was clearly at that time in the will of

God he performed exactly what the Lord asked him to do and he stopped he didn't stop because of unbelief he didn't stop because of a lack of faith he didn't stop because of fear he stopped short in one sense but he stopped and we don't know why he stopped you know and there are plenty of good people plenty of Christians who are doing everything they're supposed to be doing they're in the word of God they're in prayer they're in church week in and week out and then they stop and we don't know why they just stop you know a year ago I remember speaking up here and I mentioned that people depart they depart quickly you know sometimes it's not a process of time where they start to slowly go away from what they're doing they just one day disappear they one day just quit they depart from the faith

[37 : 17] I remember saying there's some of you who are here today possibly they won't be here a year from now and as I looked out I know I saw shocked faces because I didn't say it's possible that somebody won't be here I said there's somebody here that's not going to be here like I said immediately once the words left my mouth I kind of caught myself and said I didn't mean to say that I really should have said that it's likely it's possible that somebody and for any of us here that think that we can never go back to where we were before we should never think that way but for the grace of God any of us can depart can stop can wander off from our race so we need to make sure that we never stop because people stop for all the wrong reasons or for no reason at all and that ought to be like

I say that should be frightening to every one of us to know that we can be so close to the finish line and stop and end up squandering our full reward for no reason at all we just depart and we are warned that in the last days people will depart let that not be us let our hearts be such that we are fully surrendered to the Lord that we are fully yielded to him that we are committed to finishing this race that we have before us that there's nothing that can happen nothing that will get in our way that will prevent us from finishing our race never stop never stop let's just close in prayer and then we'll take a few minutes in between Lord thank you for this message today I don't know if it was to others if it was to me myself

I know that when I first started preparing this wasn't the message I had in mind! but you seemed to change what it was that I would share this morning because obviously we need to remember that we are in a race and we never know when that race will end we need to be committed to that race we need to be finishers in our race Lord and we pray that you would help each one of us Lord to run with patient endurance that race which is before us that we would not depart to the right or to the left that we would not stop for anything for any reason whatsoever Lord I ask that you would be with us throughout the remainder of this morning I ask that you would bless the preaching your brother reach as he comes up here next hour thank you Lord for saving our souls and pray these things in this precious saviors name
Jesus name amen