

RUN THE RACE WITH PERSEVERANCE

Pastor Joseph Hovsepian

Hebrews 12:1-11

The Christian life is a Marathon, not just a sprint, as some make it to be. We must stay in the race and finish the race, Apostle Paul said: *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”* **2 Timothy 4:7**

Apostle Paul in Hebrews 11 had taken his readers into the past, starting from creation, to show them how men and women of the Old Testament won the race of life through faith.

And now, he wants them, (the believers) to remember that they too are in this race of life, and they must run it effectively and finish the *“race marked out for us.”* (v.1)

The picture here is of an arena.

The Spectators are the heroes of faith listed in the previous chapter (11).

The Runners are the believers going through life with it's trials and difficulties

A Marathon is a test of fitness, endurance and perseverance, it requires faith, commitment and discipline....

To finish the race we must follow the basic roles all Olympic runner follow.

- 1) **We Must Run:** A runner must declare his or her intentions to run
- 2) **We Must Prepare to Run:** Get rid of anything that will slow us down or trip us. Have you ever seen a marathon runner with a load on his back, or a suitcase in his hands?
- 3) **We Must Run in the Right Race:** “Marked out for us”
- 4) **We Must Run to Win:** *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”* **1 Corinthians 9:24**

“No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” **1 Corinthians 9:27**

5) **We must Examine the Purpose of Our Race:** Running aimlessly, just for the sake of running is useless and in vain. Apostle Paul preaching the Gospel said: *“But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.”* **Galatians 2:2b**

6) **We Must Watch out for Obstacles:** Obstacles are the enemy of the runner – things, people, etc

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7) **We must Persevere:** Continue toward the goal.

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Phil. 3:14

8) **Focus on The Goal:** In the race of faith we must keep our eyes constantly focused on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith.

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12-14

9) **“Endure Hardship as Discipline”** (vs.7)

Discipline must not cause despair but rather it reassures us that we are God’s children and that should encourage us to persevere.

“Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.” Hebrews 12:10

If you run the race faithfully, you will be able like Paul to say: *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award to me on that day- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7-8*

The award is not a gold medal, but, a crown of an eternal life.

James 1:12 - *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.”*

1 Corinthians 9:25 – *“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”*

Apostle Paul faced many hardships and yet he persevered: **Acts 20:24** - *“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”*

Jesus said: *“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.” Revelation 3:11*