

1. The letter to the Hebrews, whose author is unknown to us with certainty, was very likely written during the Neronian persecution of Christians. It was likely at a time when Judaism was allowed but not Christianity. And so the Jewish Christians decided simply to abandon Christianity and go back to Judaism. The writer sharply warns the readers not to do that because it would amount to denying everything.
2. Therefore the theme of endurance is very pronounced in this letter. It is mentioned three times in our text: In vs. 1 "let us run with endurance." In vs. 2 "Jesus endured the cross." In vs. 3 "Jesus who endured such backtalk from sinners." Evidently the readers were about to apostasize.
3. Vs. 2 clearly shows us Jesus as Savior, the One Who endured the cross. But vs. 3 clearly shows us Jesus as example, the One Who endured so many sins of the tongue from His enemies. This resulted in Jesus shedding His blood. But vs. 4 says: "You have not yet suffered to the point of losing your blood in your fight with sin."
4. Vs. 1 reminds the readers of the host of OT saints who are now in heaven. Many of them were mentioned and described in chapter 11. These saints are witnesses, examples for the NT believers. They endured by looking forward to Christ. We endure looking back to Christ. We are at an advantage.
5. Vs. 1 uses the metaphor of a runner in a race. He must run strenuously, laying aside every encumbrance. The Christian's encumbrance is his sinful flesh which is constantly impeding him. By the way, vs. 1 also says that God Himself has laid the race before him, just as in vs. 2 it is implied that God laid the course out for Jesus.
6. The word "looking away" at the beginning of vs. 2 in Greek means "looking exclusively at." In other words "fix your gaze upon." Jesus is called "the Author and Finisher of the faith." The same word for "Author" is used at Acts 3:15 "you killed the Author of life." See also Acts 5:31. Jesus is the Author of the Christian faith from beginning to end. It is all by His gracious favor, His gift to sinners.
7. Because of the joy of heaven Jesus could endure the cross and think nothing of the shame caused by sin and sinful mankind. And that is why Jesus told us at Jn. 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." Cf. also the joy of Job (19:26) or that of Paul, II Tim. 4:6-8. Though Paul was in chains in prison and was facing death, he was confident and joyful.
8. The expression "sat down at the right hand of God" vs. 2 means that His saving work and suffering are forever past. The only unfulfilled event is His second coming to judge the living and the dead.
9. The Christian's greatest source of danger is spiritual tiredness mentioned in vs. 3. A runner dare not relax his pace. A Christian dare not let spiritual weariness overcome him. Christians do grow weary. But they must flee immediately to Him Who gives rest lest their weariness become a habit and vice. A preacher must think of this when he preaches. He has weary souls sitting before him.
10. Vs. 3 speaks of backbiting and venomous talk. Jesus' enemies constantly treated Him thus. Saul treated David this way. Joseph's brothers too. We must face it also but don't let it weary you.
11. On vs. 4 read Hebr. 10:32-36. The readers had not yet lost blood because of their faith and their fight with sin, both theirs and others'. In other words: "You can suffer more than you already have. Quit your complaining." Parents must encourage their children. Teachers must encourage their pupils. And pastors must encourage their hearers. They are constantly fighting their own flesh and the attacks of Satan and the world. A pastor who does not encourage the weary is not doing his work in a God-pleasing way. He is a hireling.

Theme: HOW WE CAN RUN THE RACE OF LIFE WITH ENDURANCE

Introduction: In all ages spiritual weariness is a grave danger to Christians. It can be caused by their own sinfulness. Or it can be caused by Satan who employs circumstances of persecution against them. Or it can be caused by personal attacks from other people. But Jesus went through all of that before us and instead of us. We must look to Him!

I-We Must Fix Our Eyes Solely On Jesus Vss. 2-3

*Faith* A-He alone can save us. Vs. 2. Our text tells us that, as we run the race of life, we must fix our eyes on Jesus. Why? He is the Author and Finisher of our Christian. He not only paid for our sins and took on Himself the curse we deserved but He also has given us the faith to accept this salvation. He has done this through the Word of God which is sharper than any two-edged sword. Hebr. 4:12. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith just as He was for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who are now in glory.

B-He is our great example. Vs. 3. Our text tells us that just as Jesus endured the awful language of His enemies, so can we endure. He abides by us. Hebr. 13:5. The time will come when people curse us as they cursed Jesus. That causes us to become discouraged. We grow weak. Maybe we begin thinking that it's just not worth the grief. What if Jesus had given up? What if Jesus had given in to weariness? That would have proved disastrous for us. Likewise, if we grow weary, disaster results.

II-We Must Lay Aside the Sin Which So Easily Besets Us. Vs. 1

In a race the runner removes anything and everything which would impede his speed and endurance. Runners dress as naked as possible to win. Likewise our text tells us to rid ourselves of the sin which so easily entraps us. We all have that sin. It is the sinful flesh, the flesh with which we were born, the flesh we will carry about until we die, the flesh which contains no good thing, the flesh which can never be corrected. As Luther says in his catechism we must drown the flesh with all his lusts every day. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are constantly luring us. To resist the flesh is a strenuous fight every day until death.

III-We Must Remember The Host of OT Witnesses Who Have Preceded Us. Vs. 1.

Chapter eleven of this book gives us a catalogue of people who have fought the good fight of faith. Abel offered a good sacrifice to God by faith. Enoch was taken to heaven without dying. Noah endured the flood by building the ark which saved him and seven others. The greatest example was Abraham who by faith left his fatherland, believed the promises of the Messiah and sired the promised son at an advanced age. By faith he was willing to give up his only son. By faith Isaac and Jacob followed in Abraham's footsteps. By faith Joseph endured the mistreatment of his brothers and even became governor of Egypt. Moses was a great man who endured untold hardships from his own people just as did Jesus. These OT saints had the joy of heaven before them just as Jesus did. Vs. 2. Again and again, especially in the Gospel of John, Jesus promised His disciples the joys of everlasting life after this life. And later Paul said: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glories which shall be revealed in us."

IV-We Have Not Yet Lost Our Lives. Vs. 4. This vs. is practically saying that our fight with sin, both in ourselves and from others, could be worse. Our sinful human nature easily pities itself. That is a dangerous thing to do. Can we suffer more than we are suffering now? Yes, if God so wills. And He can make a way to escape.

Conclusion: We are like runners in a race. It is a hard race. It causes us to grow tired. But we can do it. With God nothing shall be impossible.