

Are You Running the Race God Set Before You?

Do you remember Timon from the movie *Lion King*? A funny guy for sure.

Do you remember his famous words from the movie?

“Do you mean there are a bunch of dead guys up there looking down on us?”

There are people looking down on us, but they are not dead. They are more alive now than when they lived on the earth.

“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:32).

The Bible says a great cloud of witnesses surrounds us. These are our brothers and sisters who went before us.

We could call them spiritual pioneers. Their message: run.

Run the race set before you.

Yes, we are in a race and God desires that we run with endurance.

“Therefore, since we are encompassed with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. ² Let us look to 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 seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Jesus is the captain of our running team.

Runners avoid extra weight. Serious runners purchase lightweight shoes and the lightest clothing. Christians should also run their spiritual life with a light load. When believers fall into sinful behavior it adds weight to their soul.

The believer is to lay sin and weight aside. For instance, the sin of pornography adds a weight of shame and condemnation on top of the original sin.

The sin represents a moment of failure for Christians. The weight comes after we commit the sin. Shame and condemnation follow the failure of sin. These are heavy weights to carry.

Added weight is a setup for failure for all runners. Extra weight is a detriment to winning a race and steals our endurance to run. Sin steals our enthusiasm and drains our endurance. Our endurance returns when we confess our sin. Confession accesses God's forgiveness, and repentance brings refreshing.

God says to confess our sin and He will forgive us.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Forgiveness lightens the weight of sin. God offers more than forgiveness when we confess or repent. He cleanses us. This cleansing is the cleansing of the soul. We can say the cleansing removes the weight of sin from our soul.

The Finish Line

Every runner in a race knows the exact location of the finish line. Even when the finish line is not in their eyesight, their focus is on the finish point.

The believer in Christ also has a finish line. We finish our Christian race because Jesus is the author and finisher of our

faith. This means our race begins at salvation and ends when our time on earth is done—the finish line.

We start our race with Jesus and we end our race with the prize of heaven.

Jesus started it, and Jesus finished it.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also. You know where I am going, and you know the way” (John 14:1-4).

Shame Conquered

Jesus despised the shame and endured the cross. Jesus endured as shame tried to get Him to stop running the race. Did Jesus model endurance for us? Yes.

Then Jesus ran toward the joy. Jesus also had a finish line: sitting at the right hand of God and dying for you and me. And removing our sin and shame.

The shame of sin is a heavy weight. Sin requires repentance. Repentance is a confession by a believer who has failed God. God forgives and removes the sin of those who repent. This is good news.

The grim news is that shame lingers.

Shame is a constant reminder that we fail God and fall short of His standard. The cross removed the penalty of sin and the power of shame. Jesus took “all shame” on the cross and all sin.

This was excruciating for Jesus to endure. We must remember Jesus took our sin and shame on the cross.

The cross is the power of God unto salvation, but it was not the finish line for Jesus. His finish line was sitting next to His Father and the joy set before Him. The joy that Jesus experienced was the joy of dying for you and me.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end.

The finish line for us is everlasting life.

That is our hope for you.

For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). {eoa}

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