

**SESSION 5**



**A REAL MAN BETTERS GOD'S WORLD:  
*HOW HE CONCLUDES***

**B**

# 1. Finish Your Race

A. Every born-again man starts his spiritual life with measurable handicaps and magnificent spiritual resources available to him, which is helpful because every day is a battle.

- As you age, you must fight against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. The fight **never** ends this side of heaven.

## 1 John 2:16:

“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”

*“Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.” - John Owen*

*“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...” - The Apostle Paul*

## 2 Timothy 4:7:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

- How you fight the good fight and finish the race **matters!** How do you stay in the battle and finish strong? The writer of Hebrews tells us:

## Heb 12:1:

“Run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

B. What does the author mean by run the race?

- The **race** is a metaphor for the life of faith. We are all in the race of the spiritual life.
- The race is set before you. It is not chosen or conceived by you.
- Who sets my race before me? **God**. You don't define it. God defines it.
- Everyone's race is somewhat unique. You are not called to run someone else's race. You are called to run your race.
- The race is **difficult** The Greek term for race is ἀγώνα (“agōna”), meaning agony. The race is something we often agonize in.

C. We are to run the race “with **endurance**.”

## Hebrews 12:1:

“Run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

- It's not that you run, but that you run with endurance—that you do not quit the race and fall back into spiritual apathy or worldly/sinful patterns of life.
- Spiritual endurance is the power to keep going month after month, year after year, even decade after decade, walking the path of obedience.
- Endurance is what you build up through struggles and trials that test your **faith**.

*“Life is pain... Anyone who says differently is selling something.” - Dread Pirate Roberts, The Princess Bride*

- Why do people stop **running**?

1. Personal sin.

*“Sin has the devil for its father, shame for its companion, and death for its wages!” - Thomas Watson*

*“First we practice sin, then defend it, then boast of it.” - Thomas Watson*

**Hebrews 11:24-25:**

“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”

2. Disillusionment with the **Church**.

*“Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves.”*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Life Together)*

3. Discouragement with suffering (yours or someone else’s).

**Hebrews 11:35-40:**

“Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated – of whom the world was not worthy – wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

4. Love of the **world**.

**2 Timothy 4:12:**

“Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”

5. **Wealth** that breeds arrogance or misplaced hope.

**1 Timothy 6:17-19:**

“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

**Revelation 3:17:**

“For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”

**D. How do you keep from losing heart and withdrawing from the race? How do you finish strong? The author of Hebrews gives three keys to finishing strong...**

## 2. Listen Intently

A. The first key to persevering in the Christian life is to give attention to the witnesses of the race.

Hebrews 12:1:

“since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses”

B. Who are the “witnesses?”

- The noun “witness” (martureo) is used over and over in Hebrews 11 (vv. 2, 4, 5, 39) and always refers to a verbal testimony.
- To witness [in this sense] is to speak about something; it means to **testify**.
- The people of Hebrews 11 (and elsewhere in the Scripture) witness to us by telling us (through their lives and words) the importance of trusting God, facing difficulties, and finishing strong.

C. This means you must listen to and consider the testimonies in Scripture—men and women who, through faith, persevered in serving the Lord.

- Abel: the sacrifice of faith (Hebrews 11:4)
- Noah: the work of faith (vv. 7)
- Abraham: the great obedience of faith (vv. 8)
- Joseph: a forgiving faith (vv. 22)
- Joshua: a conquering faith (vv. 14)
- Daniel: a faith that stands firm against the world (vv. 32)
- The first key to finishing strong is to listen to God in His **Word**. Listen to His inspired Scripture.  
*“I never saw a useful Christian who was not a student of the Bible.”*  
- D.L. Moody

## 3. Lay Aside

A. The second key to finishing strong is to lay aside...

- What do you lay aside? Two things:
  1. Every weight (Hebrews 12:1)
  2. And “*sin that so easily entangles*” (vv. 1)
- Every **weight** is anything that might hold you down spiritually. This can include: dependable, disciplined, and diligent, don’t be surprised when you are “promoted” by God.
  1. **Relationships** that cause you to sin.
  2. **Activities** that can cause you to sin.
  3. **Places** that can lead you into sin.
- If you want to finish your race, you must run from, literally, flee from, the things that might cause you to sin.

B. “*Sin that so easily entangles*” means to put away all sin that entangles and trips us up.

- This is a call to live a life of **repentance**.

- Repentance is not limited to one's conversion experience. It is not a one-and-done kind of thing. It is a **lifestyle**.  
*"Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said Poenitentiam agite [repent], willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance." - Martin Luther, 1st Thesis*  
*"Repent: the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." - King Jesus, Matthew 4:17*
- Isaiah repented when he saw the glory of God when he saw with clarity the holiness and majesty of God (Isaiah 6:6). That is a great pattern for you. The more you see God's glory, majesty, and holiness, the more you will recognize your need to repent.
- **Repentance** is the measure of maturity in a believer—an indication that he truly understands God and himself.  
*"Repentance is a sweet sorrow... the more of this sorrow, the more pleasure." - Jonathan Edwards*

## 4. Look Up

### A. The third key to persevering in the Christian life is to **look** to and focus on Jesus.

#### Hebrews 12:1:

"looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter 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. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."

- This is a call to look to Jesus with the eye of faith—to set your **mind** on Christ.
- Look to Him as the author and perfecter of your faith (vv. 2). "Perfecter" speaks of Jesus bringing you to maturity, completion, and perfection.
- This is a call to ask Jesus to help you persevere in the faith. Jesus **authored** your faith. It is His work (and pleasure) to mature your faith.
- This is a call to pray to Him: *"Lord, help my unbelief."*  
*"Nearness to Christ brings likeness to God. The more you see Jesus the the more of Jesus will be seen in you." - C. H. Spurgeon*

### B. You focus on Jesus by:

#### 1. Looking to the **Person** of Christ.

##### John 1:14:

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

##### 2 Corinthians 3:18:

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."

- A constant view of the glory of Christ will revive our souls and cause our spiritual lives to **flourish** and **thrive**.

*“Herein would I live; herein would I die; hereon would I dwell in my thoughts and affections, to the withering and consumption of all the painted beauties of this world, unto the crucifying of all things here below, until they become unto me a dead and deformed thing, no way fit for affectionate embraces.” - John Owen*

2. Look at the **perseverance** of Christ.

Hebrews 12:2-4:

“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”

- Jesus endured the cross, its shame, and hostility from sinners.  
*“The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough for its sparks to fall on us.” - John Stott*

*“The Spirit does not take His pupils beyond the cross, but ever more deeply into it.” - J. Knox Chamblin*

3. Look at the **perspective** of Christ, “Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2).

- What joy? Future joy! Jesus’s sacrifice was a present sacrifice for **future** glory.
- Jesus went to the cross for the joy of pleasing His Father.
- Jesus went to the cross for the joy of purchasing a people for His own possession.
- Jesus went to the cross for the joy of providing a covering and cleansing for His people’s sins.
- Jesus went to the cross for the joy of establishing a kingdom of perfect righteousness..

**C. God has set a race to run before you. Run it with endurance. Finish the race.**

- Do not return to the worldly pattern you formerly walked in. Instead, finish **strong** by:
  1. **Listening** to the testimonies of the Old and New Testament saints. Their races have much in common with yours. They persevered in faith. Read their stories in the Word of God! Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of Christ.
  2. **Laying** aside the sin that entangles our lives. Sin trips us up, weakens us spiritually, and discourages us, making it much harder to continue running the race of the Christian life.
  3. **Looking** to Christ. Look to His person—His virtue, His power, His grace and truth, His mercy and love, and His faithfulness. Look at His perseverance in the face of hostility and violent persecution. Look at His perspective—He endured it all for future joy—the joy of pardoning, possessing, and sanctifying a people.

**D. This life is not the end. Listen, lay, and look your way into eternity!**

## **Your Table Discussion Questions**

1. The Apostle Paul describes the Christian life as a *race* and a *fight*. Why do you think he uses these metaphors? Is this how you experience the Christian life? Explain.
2. What sin(s) in your life is hindering you from running your race? What do you need to do to lay it aside? Explain.
3. Love of this world will hinder your race. In what ways do you love the world more than you love God? Where have you elevated His good gifts above the Giver of the gifts? Explain.

## **Your “BetterMan” Reflection:**

Before our next session, take a moment this week to reflect on your notes and then answer the following question: *“Is there a person in your life who ran his race and finished strong? What do you remember about him? How was he most like Jesus?”* Write your answer below.