

Running the Race of Life

There are weeks when the Christian life feels like flying — legs fresh, lungs full, prayer flowing. There are other weeks when it feels like running through treacle: the same verse three days in a row, a worship song half-sung under the breath, and a quiet ache that asks, *am I getting anywhere?*

Both are part of the race of life. Scripture has never pretended otherwise.

Paul wrote about running often, and never made it sound easy. *"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross."* (Hebrews 12:1–2). He urged the Corinthians, *"Run in such a way as to get the prize."* (1 Corinthians 9:24). And near the end of his life he could say, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* (2 Timothy 4:7). The image runs through the New Testament — the Christian life as a long, deliberate, costly run toward Christ.

Three things stand out in Hebrews 12 for us this week.

First, it is a race — not a stroll. Paul never sold the Christian life as a comfortable chair. He spoke of straining forward (Philippians 3:13–14) and disciplining the body (1 Corinthians 9:27). Tiredness is not always failure; sometimes it is evidence of running. *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* (Galatians 6:9).

Second, it is marked out — for you. Every believer's race is measured and tailored by God. *"We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Ephesians 2:10). The course before you is not your neighbour's. It is yours — your terrain, your pace, your hills, your finish line. Comparison is a great thief of perseverance.

Third, fix your eyes on Jesus. Not on the runner ahead, the runner behind, the crowd, or the wound from the last lap. Peter learned this on the water: the moment his eyes moved from Jesus to the wind, he began to sink (Matthew 14:30). When our gaze drifts, the legs grow heavy.

So how is the race actually run? Three disciplines for the week ahead.

Lay aside the weight. Hebrews 12:1 names two categories: *"everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles."* Not every weight is sinful — but every weight slows. The extra commitment. The relationship that drains. The grudge carried for years. *"Bear with each other and forgive one another."* (Colossians 3:13). Runners do not run in heavy coats.

Pace, don't sprint. The culture rewards speed; the kingdom forms character. Some fruit needs a whole season — sometimes a whole life. *"He who began a good work in you will*

carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6). Be faithful in today's small step.

Run together. The race is personal, but never private. *"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together."* (Hebrews 10:24–25). That is why we gather, why we meet in small groups, why RCF gathers at Virginia Lodge and Strodes on Sundays, in person and online, from Egham, Runnymede, and beyond. The lone runner slows sooner than they realise.

The secret hidden in Hebrews 12:2 is this: Jesus endured the cross *"for the joy set before him."* Future joy fuelled present endurance. The strength to run today is not produced by gritting the teeth, but drawn from the joy at the finish line. *"Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."* (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Whatever lap you are on — flying or treacle — hear this. You are not behind. You are not disqualified. You are on the course marked out for you, with the Pioneer of faith running ahead, a cloud of witnesses cheering you on (Hebrews 12:1), and the Lord waiting at the line.

Lace up. Lay it down. Look up. Let us keep running. Together. All the way home.

Questions

- 1.** When you look at this season of your life, does the Christian race feel more like flying or like running through treacle — and what do you think is shaping that? (**Hebrews 12:1**)
- 2.** Where do you find yourself comparing your race to someone else's, and what does that comparison cost you? (**Ephesians 2:10**)
- 3.** What is one *weight* — not necessarily sinful, just heavy — that the Lord might be asking you to lay down, and what makes it hard to let go of? (**Hebrews 12:1**)
- 4.** Who has spurred you on in your faith recently, and who might God be nudging you to spur on in return? (**Hebrews 10:24–25**)
- 5.** When endurance is hard, what "joy set before you" do you fix your eyes on — and how does that change the way you run today? (**Hebrews 12:2**)