



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

You Can't Quit

October 2, 2022

Hebrews 12:1-3

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*12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder 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. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*

*(Pastor prays)*

From time to time, we are all tempted to quit. The race is hard, the road is long and there is no end in sight. People are mean, work is terrible, and the anxiety won't go away. It's all you can do to put one foot in front of the other and you're not sure how many more steps you can take. When you've heard people say they are at the end of their rope, and you feel like you don't even have a rope. If you were dead inside or trapped in sin or just in a fog, then this passage is for you. It's written by a pastor to a group of people that are right on the edge of collapse. Chapter 11 has listed a whole army of people that have gone on before us and finished their race and now he turns to me and you in the arena; beaten and battered but unbowed. But don't quote the Poem Invictus. Because we are not masters of our own faith; but because we are children of God, bought and paid for by the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus. We belong to him. We are saved by his grace, empowered by his love and strengthened by his spirit. And now we are the

ones running the marathon and many of us have hit the wall. We're a wind rain left we're going to actually make it. you are wondering how you're going to make it through this. God in his goodness has landed you on this passage at this point in your life so you can be saved, healed, strengthened and encouraged to take the next step and to never quit. There's too much at stake. God is too good and the gospel is too strong and the grace is too real for you to quit now. The writer has dropped us right into a racing metamorphosis, not a Sprint but a marathon and he sees us faltering at mile 20 out of 26. This passage is designed to give you a second wind so that by God's grace you finish strong and take your place with everyone else that's listed in Chapter 11. It's not over yet.

### By God's grace and for his glory you will finish the race

This passage gives us a blueprint of how we finish to the glory of God. Let's take a look at the first step.

#### **Trust in the good sovereignty of God**

It's not just that God is in control but that our good God who promises good and does good as in control. Let me show you where I get that. Join me right in the middle of verse one. *12:1b let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,* there are a couple of things I want you to see here in this phrase.

God sets the course, not you. We run the race that is set before us. It must be noted that we don't get to choose the course we run, the make up of our personality, or they did construction of our DNA. we don't get to pick the place we were born, the parents we have, the color of our skin, the way we were raised. This race is set before us by God himself and he has done so for his own purpose by his own counsel and by grace saved you to run this race. This is the one he made and you are to run it with endurance. When Paul is giving his famous explanation of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, he goes on to say in ephesians 2:10, *<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared*

*beforehand, that we should walk in them.* He created you for this, to walk through all of this to the glory of God so that people will see your struggle and how you walk through it and give praise to the God that gives you strength. Furthermore notice...

**The course isn't easy.**

That's by design. Run the race with endurance. The word race here is *Agon*. It's where we get the word agony. Paul always uses this word to denote hardship. And philippians he uses it to describe suffering. In colossians he uses it to describe striving. In first thessalonians it is used to describe opposition and in first and second Timothy it is used to describe fighting.

This life, this race is a test of endurance and patience. It's holding up under the strain and doing so for the glory of God. Isn't that what Paul said in second Corinthians 12:9. *<sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Ask God to give you eyes to see his grace. Ask guy to give you strength for the race. Thank God for the struggle. By God's grace and for his glory you will finish the race. Trust in the good sovereignty of God.*

**Take courage, you are not alone**

Go back up to the top of verse one and come forward with the first phrase. *12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,* OK, now he's looking back at Chapter 11 and all those people he named that had finished their race by faith and he sees them as a throng of people that are sitting in the arena stands watching us to take our turn. But these are not any ordinary Panther fans that go to the game and wear a jersey and hope for the best, no matter how misguided that might be. No, these are not just random spectators, these are witnesses, martyrs. These people have suffered and beaten and sewn in two and poor and been in the arena like you. They know what it's like. They know how hard it is. They know what it means to suffer and to make it anyway. That you are not the first person to hurt this bad or to

fail this miserably, you are not the first one that ever doubted or wanted to give up. The great cloud of witnesses have been on the field of battle and now are in the stands to lift up and encourage, bearing testimony to the faithfulness of God. and that by his grace, if they can do it, so can you.

I'm not a runner but I have run a few marathons. One of the worst was the SunTrust marathon in Richmond and about mile 21 I was falling apart and started walking. Random spectators in street clothes and drinking Starbucks hollars, this is a race, run don't walk. It was absolutely demoralizing and I struggled to mile 25. Three or four of the runners that had finished the marathon and were covered in sweat got the metal and were walking back on the course having finished their race. They were saying, you're almost there, you're almost there, don't quit now, you can make it! That's what's going on here. Trust in the good sovereignty of God. Take courage you are not alone, there is a great cloud of witnesses. by God's grace and for his glory you will finish the race. Let me give you a third thing to help you run the race for God's glory.

### **Get Rid of some stuff**

there are some bad things and some not so bad things. Let me show you where I get this idea. Look At the middle of verse one. *let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely*, lay aside, get rid of excess weight. It's a running metaphor. The lighter you are, the faster and longer you can run. Sumo wrestlers and marathon runners look different. The weight is a distraction and not necessarily a bad thing but neutral. But it somehow getting in the way of you running the race God set Out for you. Now this will be different for each person so it can sometimes be hard to know if something or someone is a distraction and needs to be gotten rid of. It could be a person, a thing, a dream. There are five questions I would ask and there might be more.

Is it a distraction from the Lord's day? Is it a distraction from church, worship and gathering. Is it a distraction from the Lords work? Are you able to do

ministry, go on missions, share the gospel with your neighbor. It could be busyness That hinders your own call to ministry.

Is it a distraction from the Lords word, is it Twitter, video games, books, screen time, laziness or even working out? Is it a distraction from the Lords people? Do you have time for your D group, community group, regularly meeting with other believers and have fellowship? Is it a distraction from the Lord's will. Do you Saints a clear call or burden or desire to know God? Lay aside the weight. Let's move on in the text. Lay aside sin which entangles us that we cling so closely. The general word for sin or sinful practices is hatred, anger, envy, lust, lying, doubting, ignoring God, questioning and complaining. It's interesting that he tells us to lay aside the sin that clings so closely. It's a warning that we may not realize. This is what Paul says in ephesians 4:22-23. *22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,* this is God warning Cain in genesis 4, sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you. You must master it. This is what the puritan John Owen said that you need to be killing sin or it will be killing you. How do you do this? Take an honest assessment. Repent were necessary. Resolved to live for Christ. Ask God to help to get rid of some stuff so that by God's grace and for his glory you can finish the race. I'd like to give you one more how to end this passage.

### **Don't be slack in your devotional life**

In verses two through three you have one command that is said in two ways. *2 looking to Jesus, the founder 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. 3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.* Looking to Jesus. This is looking away from everything else and concentrate and focus on Jesus. Consider him. Roll it around again and again in your mind. Just thinking about Jesus seems vague. What am I to think? There are at least four things to dwell on devotionally. Dwell on the

finished work of Jesus. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. The author and perfecter, the founder and perfecter, the pioneer, the one that did it. The one that completed it. What is he talking about? He's talking about the glorious gospel that will save you; the goodness of God, given to us in Jesus. He's talking about Jesus living perfectly in the place of sinners. Jesus going to the cross and taking the wrath of God because God punishes sin. And he punished it all on Jesus. He died and then God raised Jesus from the dead on a Sunday so that we might live victoriously, joyfully. Think about that.

Dwell on the mission of Jesus. *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross*, his eyes were on the joy, looking through the cross to the other side. The joy of pleasing the father. The joy of saving sinners. The joy of defeating Satan and the joy of resurrection on a Sunday.

Think about the endurance of Jesus. He endured the cross, despising the shame. At Golgatha he looked through to the joy.

Think about the victory of Jesus. Verse two says, *and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God*. He is our reigning Lord, our savior and king, our intercessor, giving us hope and a strength and in verse 3 the preacher says, consider these things so that you don't grow weary and faint hearted, so that you don't quit. By God's grace and for his glory you will finish the race. Trust in the good sovereignty of God. Take courage, you are not alone. Get rid of some stuff. Don't be slack in your devotional life and don't ever quit. Start the race with the gospel And ask God to help.

Come and pray.

*(Pastor prays)*