

A Sermon: “Run with Endurance”
From the text Hebrews 11:29–12:2
By Rev. Peter Blank
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Introduction: The Race We Are In

The writer of Hebrews paints a breathtaking picture: God’s people passing through the Red Sea, marching around Jericho, toppling kingdoms, enduring persecution, and keeping faith even when they never saw the promises fulfilled. And then comes the call to us:

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

The Christian life is not a stroll in the park. It is a race. Not a sprint, but a marathon. And the only way to finish is with endurance.

Heroes of Faith: Ordinary People Who Endured

Hebrews 11 gives us a roll call of heroes—not perfect people, not flawless saints, but ordinary men and women who kept running.

By faith, Moses led the people through the Red Sea. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell. By faith, women received their dead raised to life. By faith, others endured chains, torture, and even death.

The point is clear: they didn’t quit. They didn’t stop running when the race grew hard. Their witness now surrounds us, urging us to keep going.

Why We Need Witnesses

We need witnesses because running is hard. Fatigue sets in. Doubt creeps in. Culture whispers, “Slow down. Quit. It’s not worth it.”

That’s why Hebrews tells us to remember the witnesses—to hear their voices saying, “We endured, and so can you.”

I think of Reinhold Schmidt, a pastor in communist East Germany. When others fled, he stayed. For 35 years he and his wife Ingeborg served faithfully under pressure and persecution. He never surrendered. At his funeral, hundreds came to honor a quiet soldier of Christ. His life still says to me: keep running with endurance.

Not all witnesses are famous. Some are the parent who works two jobs to raise a family. Some are the grandparent who keeps praying when no one else does. Some are neighbors or teachers whose steady love makes Christ visible. Saints are, as one child once said, “the people the light shines through.”

Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus

But the greatest witness is not in the stands—it's on the track. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

Jesus ran the race before us. He endured opposition, betrayal, and the cross itself. He did not quit, and because he finished, we can keep going. The witnesses cheer us on, but Jesus runs with us. His endurance is our strength.

Modern Example: Prefontaine's Guts

Here in Oregon, we remember Steve Prefontaine—"Pre." He never won Olympic gold, but he left a legacy because of the way he ran. Prefontaine said, "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift."

He didn't believe in coasting or saving energy for the final lap. He ran every race all-out, stretching himself and everyone else around him. He ran with grit, courage, and endurance. Young runners still look to his example for strength. My brother Ted held Pre as his long distance running example to this day.

That's the image Hebrews gives us. Don't coast. Don't hold back. Give it all, because Christ has already run ahead of you, and his victory is sure.

The Call to Us

So let me ask: who are your witnesses? Who are the people whose endurance helps you keep running? And just as important: who might be watching you? Someone—your child, your friend, your coworker—may be looking to you to see how faith runs in real life.

You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to be famous. You just have to keep running. Keep trusting. Keep forgiving. Keep showing Christ's love.

Conclusion: Run with Endurance

The race is long. The hills are steep. But we are not alone.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin, and let us run with endurance the race set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

So a Run with Endurance Checklist:

1. Lay Aside What Weighs Us Down

Ask: What's slowing me down in my walk with Christ?

This could be unhealthy habits, resentments, or simply busyness. Endurance comes by shedding the unnecessary weights that sap our energy.

Practice: name one "weight" this week that you will set aside to focus more fully on Christ.

2. Remember the Witnesses

Keep a “cloud of witnesses” close—both biblical figures and contemporary saints.

Practice: Make a short list of 3–5 people whose faith inspires you. When you’re weary, recall their stories and let their example encourage you.

3. Fix Your Eyes on Jesus Daily

Faith endurance doesn’t come by willpower alone. It comes by continually re-centering on Jesus.

Practice: Begin each day by reading one Gospel story of Jesus. End your day with the prayer, “Lord, keep my eyes on you.”

4. Run With Others, Not Alone

Races are easier with teammates. Faith endures in community.

Practice: commit to a small group, prayer partner, or Bible study. Or choose one person to encourage in their faith this week.

5. Embrace Small Acts of Faithfulness

Endurance is not about one heroic act but about thousands of steady steps.

Practice: look for one daily act of faith—an encouraging word, a quiet prayer, a moment of service—that keeps you in the race.

6. Remember the Finish Line

Endurance is fueled by vision. We keep running because we know Christ has already secured the victory.

Practice: when life feels overwhelming, picture the finish line—Christ waiting with arms open. Pray: “Lord, give me strength to take the next step.”

That is our calling. Keep running. Don’t quit. Run with endurance—because Christ has already run the race, and his victory is our strength.

Amen.