

“The Race”
Sunday, May 17, 2009
By Pastor Peter F. Paine

Hebrews 12:1-2

1. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us], and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
2. Looking unto 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 set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Bible says that we are all in a race. If you are reading this today and thinking “I’m not in a race,” Pastor Paine pointed out that you might want to reevaluate that thought based on scriptures. In Hebrews, we read that we are running a race toward something eternal, and we don’t just have to finish this race, we have to finish it well.

To enter the Boston Marathon, runners need to have either won another marathon that would qualify them for status to enter, or they need to have completed another race within a specified time. Many people will run in the Boston Marathon and never receive any kind of monetary reward. The only reward they will have from completing the race is the pride of having participated and finished in such a prestigious race. The race that is talked about in the passage in Hebrews is very different. No one will be excluded regardless of their past track record, and the rewards are more amazing than anything we could ever imagine for everyone that finishes well.

Pastor Paine talked about five areas of our lives we need to focus on in order to finish the race well.

5 Areas to get in order:

1. Purse- Our money is something that we need to have in order so we can focus on running the race well. If we are distracted by our money (or in most cases our lack of money) it is hard to follow God with all our heart. There are several ways we can make sure our focus is right when it comes to seeing our purse from God’s perspective. First, we have to know what’s most important:

Matthew 6:33

1. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

There is a saying that goes: “want what you want, but want what you have”. Pastor Paine talked about the value found in being content. There’s nothing wrong with wanting things, but a problem can come when we no longer thank God for the things he has already given us, and only focus on the bigger and better things we see on the horizon.

Hebrews 13:5

5. [Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

2. People- Across the world, believers make up the body of Christ. Everyone that is a believer and living a life that follows Christ is part of this body. In our own congregations across the country and around the world we are families. God gives us this family for support as we follow Him. He knew that we would need each other.

Proverbs 27:17

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

God allows us to build relationships that will make us stronger and better than we can be on our own. Pastor Paine asked us to think about what it would mean for the world around us today if we started to build relationships that were focused on bringing out the best in those around us with our coworkers, brothers and sisters in our natural families, shipmates, and everyone that we come in contact with.

Malachi 2:10

Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

I Corinthians 12: 12-31

12. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ.

13. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14. For the body is not one member, but many.

15. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17. If the whole body [were] an eye, where [were] the hearing? If the whole [were] hearing, where [were] the smelling?

18. But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19. And if they were all one member, where [were] the body?

20. But now [are they] many members, yet but one body.

21. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23. And those [members] of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely [parts] have more abundant comeliness.

24. For our comely [parts] have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that [part] which lacked:

25. That there should be no schism in the body; but [that] the members should have the same care one for another.
26. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.
27. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.
28. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.
29. [Are] all apostles? [are] all prophets? [are] all teachers? [are] all workers of miracles?
30. Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?
31. But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

There is a temptation to start feeling sorry for ourselves when we don't do something as well as the people around us. But in this passage in Hebrews, we learn that we all have something valuable to contribute that is unique to us. God qualifies everyone who he calls to bring something personal and necessary to the table for him.

3. Position- Pastor Paine asked each of us to ask ourselves the question "What do I want? Position or effectiveness?" Jesus was a perfect example of how we should seek position. We shouldn't. He washed His disciples' feet after dinner at the last supper.

Matthew 20:27

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Matthew knew that being a servant was the best way to prove you are a true leader. It is better to be a blessing than to be blessed. Even though this seems like an oxymoron since it would be impossible to bless anyone without first having been blessed by God, what is important is what we focus on. If we are looking to gain position by being the "most blessed" or gaining status, we are not focusing on serving. Instead, if we hope to be effective and be a blessing to others, we can run the race with patience and with the right focus.

4. Purpose-

I John 3:8

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Jesus' purpose was so clear that it could be stated in just one sentence. Is that the case with our lives? Pastor Paine referenced Rick Warren's book *Purpose Driven Life*. He said that if someone was handed a brand new invention with no explanation, chances are, it would not be very obvious what it was intended for. Asking the invention its purpose would do no good, we wouldn't get a response. Instead, the only way to find out what it was created for would be to ask its creator or to read the owner's manual. The same is true about me and you. Asking us what we are created for will not get

great results. Most times, we are confused about what we are supposed to be doing. Defining our purpose is challenging at best, but if we ask our creator (God) and read our owner's manual (the Bible) things become clear.

Here are some passages from our owner's manual that will help us start to find our purpose.

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

John 15:17

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

John 15:1-10

1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.
2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every [branch] that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.
4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.
5. I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast [them] into the fire, and they are burned.
7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.
9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.
10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Matthew 28:19

19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Acts 2:38

38. Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

5. Passion- "Am I in love with the race?" Pastor Paine asked each of us to ask ourselves this question. He described the excitement he and his four brothers and sister would have as they went to sleep on Christmas Eve. In their household, there was a rule that no one was allowed to wake Mom and Dad up before 5:00 am. Anyone that is a parent can appreciate just how kind that rule was. The Paine Kids were so excited to get up on Christmas morning, time was no issue to them. Are we that way when it comes to God? Do we find it hard to sleep because we

are so anxious to find time to time in worship, read, and live our daily lives for him? That is the kind of passion that will make the race worth running.

If anyone reads this and doesn't have this kind of passion, it can be found in Christ. If maybe you're reading this and you used to have this kind of passion, but it's not there anymore, God can give it back to you. Pastor Paine encouraged all of us to look for this kind of passion in our relationship with God. He told us to ask God for it in our personal prayer time, and it will be worth it.

Revelation 3:14-16

14. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

God wants his people to be passionate about him.

If we can start to focus on each of these five areas of our lives, finishing the race won't be so hard. We can finish, and we can finish well!