

Rev. Tom Johnson

Hebrews 12:1-2

Scripture tells us in Hebrews chapter twelve to lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and run with endurance the race that is set before us.

The word “race” comes from the Greek “agona.” It’s where we get the word “agony.”

They’ve just extended the time of isolation and social distancing till the end of this month of April. This is indeed, as President Buss recently said, not a sprint, but a marathon.

The forerunners that went before me, who gave me advice about running the marathon, told me that the race might begin on pure adrenaline. I would feel elated, excited as I started out running those twenty-six point two miles. At some point, you start to settle in, and you feel strong after a few more miles. And then you begin to question why you are out there a little bit. And that’s when it becomes important to use your mind. It becomes a *mental* race. And then every runner—no matter how seasoned, no matter how good—at some point will hit the wall. It might be mile eighteen, twenty, twenty-two, twenty-five, or twenty-six point one! At some point, they hit the wall, and they realize that they don’t have the strength and capacity and the mental fortitude to continue any longer. This is when a runner must not run just by virtue of their training and their physical strength or their mental discipline, but now they must run with their heart and their spirit, believing they can do it, listening to the fans cheering them on, and for the joy set before them cross the finish line.

When we hit the wall, it’s a good thing while we’re running because we realize that we must be resourceful and draw our strength from *every* resource that we have at our disposal.

The writer of Hebrews continues to say that we should do so fixing our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter and sustainer of our faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross—same word as endurance—He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus is our forerunner. He is the One Whose endurance won us the race, Who endured body, mind, and spirit, setting His goal and His eyes upon the finish line. And that treasure and that joy that filled His heart was you and me. The forgiveness He won, the eternal life that He purchased for us on the cross through His suffering and through His endurance.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus is a recognition that we cannot run this race by our own strength. We must rely up on Him, Who is the author and perfecter, the giver of the gift of faith, and the strength that will sustain us.