

PURSUING THE RIGHT GOAL

Hebrews 12:14-17

Art Carey describes experience in Boston Marathon:

“...rigors of running 26 mi. are designed to finish off faint & faltering. 2 hr, 50 min, & 49 sec. My place: 1,176.

Joy of Marathon: finishing... doing what you set out to do.”

Hebrews deals with running *the marathon of life*.

Exhorts: keep going; trust God; remain faithful **11**

Exx. who trust God in hard times *encourage us*

Remove obstacles; run race with patient endurance 12:1

Supreme ex. of faith & faithfulness in affliction: **Jesus**

Willing to die on cross, to make possible our salvation.

Focus on *Him* so **we** don't grow weary running our race.

Exhortation against Discouragement 12:4-13

Hard times are part of **God's training program**.

God is taking us through rigorous course, designed to make us all He wants us to be. 12:10-11

We're urged to help each other to keep going 12:12-13;

2 POSITIVE COMMANDS lead to finish line: 12:14

1. Actively chase after peace with everyone.

—not look out for our interests & destroy one another.

2. Chase after holiness—be set apart—different

2 ways to understand comment about 2nd pursuit:

1) Pursue holiness: prerequisite to see God.

200+ passages: come to God by trusting Christ

Holiness is visible *result* of trusting Christ;

* 2) Pursue holiness: how people see God.

Through our unique lifestyle—God is revealed

=> We stand out like bright light in dark room.

To finish well in life's marathon: chase after peace & holiness

THREE NEGATIVE WARNINGS 12:15-17

Warnings worded in a **collective form**—addressed to all

We're ALL to **watch out for one another**,

1. Lest anyone miss out on God's grace. 15a

If we run away from God, we come up short of grace, lacking it when -we need it most!

We become so focused on suffering
that we don't take refuge in Him,
& don't experience His grace, to endure adversity.

2. Lest any root of bitterness spring up. 15b

In contrast to drawing near to God, we might become angry
because of rigorous training

Bitter root produces bitter fruit.

Bitterness causes lots of damage.

Bitterness contaminates others.

When life's hard, don't let bitterness take root & destroy
what God wants to accomplish!

Watch for bitterness. Don't let it take root!

3. Lest anyone become immoral or godless 16-17

Bible is full of examples of people who suffer loss, but inherit
God's blessing

Real danger: *escaping* physical suffering, but *missing out on*
God's blessing.

Esau's depicted as *carnal* person—tries to hang on to God &
satisfy appetites of flesh at same time.

Good desires lead Esau to make *bad* decisions.

Parents concerned: he marries 2 Canaanite women.

Sensual focus makes faithfulness low priority.

Esau sold himself, to satisfy his physical needs.

* **Not concerned about pleasing God.**

* **Concerned about satisfying his needs.**

* **Not concerned about living for God.**

We sometimes call such person ***practical atheist***

—not that they don't believe God exists.

It just doesn't make any difference.

Person ***sells self to same values as his neighbors,***
without taking into account what God wants

Living for God isn't a high priority

Esau trades spiritual blessing for bowl of stew

Spiritual issues make little or no *practical* difference

"I'm about to die... what good is the birthright to me?"

Focused on what we see & *touch* => misses blessing

No amount of repentance or tears can restore blessing.

He couldn't change mind & turn back clock. It's too late!

Appl.'s clear: Esau missed God's blessing.

If we don't avail selves of God's strength, become bitter because
 of our circumstances, exchanging spiritual blessings for
 momentary relief we'll miss blessing

If we stop focusing on goal, we'll never endure to end

We must stop chasing what world's chasing after.

Lest we miss out on grace He wants to give us.

Lest we become bitter & contaminate everyone

Lest we chase after satisfaction of our desires, comfort &
 contentment, & miss blessing God promises

So what's key issue here?

Danger of placing personal desires above God's desires.

How should exhortation change our lives?

**When life isn't treating us well,
trust God & hang in there.**

Focus on *Jesus* & what *He* endured,
then run *our* race with patient endurance.

God promises: faithful ultimately triumph,

He calls us to trust Him, draw near to Him, hang on to our hope,
and encourage each other.

Pursue peace & holiness.

Pull together; live a different lifestyle that glorifies God!

–cling to what God has given us, by His grace.

–guard against bitterness that will eat us alive.

–give 1st place to pleasing God, not satisfying needs

Joy of Christian marathon is found in *finishing*.

Will WE finish well!