

Title: Give up to Gain
Text: Hebrews 11.23-28
Theme: Living for Eternity
Series: Living for Eternity – 2005, pt.3
Prop Stmt. If you fail to plan, then you are planning to fail.

Read: Hebrews 11.23-28; 12.1-3

Living for eternity means that we view all of life through the lens of what will be gain in the eyes of heaven. From this passage in Hebrews 11 we have seen the impact that a parent's faith can have upon a child. Parent's who live with an eye on the future teach their children the value and wisdom of giving up now for gain in the end. That is not the message of our culture. But we do not live according to the rhythm of the world, but our tempo is established by the pulse of God.

The example of Moses and the rest in the hall of fame of faith in Hebrews 11 are here in this text so that we will live in harmony with them. Notice how chapter 12 begins.

Therefore! In light of all of these men and women of faith who's shoulders we are standing on, the author tells us three times – "Let us." Let us throw, let us run, let us fix our eyes. These are commands for action and for attention. These messages will do you no good, unless you put these truths into practice. The three points of this message reflect the 3 "let us" of the text.

1. What to get rid of

A. The things that hinder

Of course the imagery in this passage is that of a runner, who is discarding clothing that is preventing him from running at optimum speed. Look, if you have something that is keeping you from running as fast as you need to run, get rid of it.

B. The sins that entangle

In addition to that, we have to get rid of the sins that entangle. You cannot run when your shoelaces are tied together. When you put these two phrases together it seems to me that the author is acknowledging that there are two categories of things that keep you from running after Christ like you should. The first is things that hinder. Now, these things that hinder may not necessarily be wrong. But, they have become a hindrance because you have allowed them to become an idol.

For example, you may have a hobby, that in and of itself is fine, but when the pursuit of that hobby is keeping you from building relationships in your family, or is keeping you from growing as a follower of Christ, or is distracting you from more important things – hey, get rid of it. There are some obvious sins that entangle us. The sins that entangle us

are not things that you need to pray about and ask God what you ought to do about them, you already have that answer – get rid of them.

Question 1 – What are the things that are hindering you? Too much TV, too much work, too much internet, too much video games, too much attention on your appearance, what?

Question 2 – What are the sins that entangling you? How many of you are bitter at someone? The list of sins could be really long, but this one can serve as an example for the rest. When you are bitter you think you are punishing the other person, when in reality you are destroying yourself. That is the nature of sin. You think that you are using it to get what you want and all the time it is using you. So...what are you entangled with that you know you need to get rid of? Identify it right now.

I am going to come back to this in a minute, but I want to finish going through these verses, because I want you to see the motivation behind our getting rid of these things. Why do we get rid of these things? We get rid of them so that we can run.

2. What to do – Run!

A. Run with perseverance

The Bible does not teach that we run this race in order to earn salvation through our self-effort. It does teach that genuine followers of Christ will run and they will persevere in their running.

Your life as a follower of Christ is a marathon. If you have been sitting on the shoulder nursing a sore muscle, let's go – it is time to get back into the race. If you say, nope, that's it – I quit. Whoa!! Hold the phone – that could be a serious indication that you never became a follower of Christ.

Run with perseverance. This is no time to quit. Why is it so important that you manage your time? So that you can use that time for eternal matters. Why is it important that you manage your money? So that you can use the resources that God has given you for eternal matters. Why is it that you model for your children living for eternity? So that you can show them that the gospel is very, very serious. Think with me! How will your first 30 seconds into eternity change your view of your priorities right now? Will all of that anger, bitterness, self-centeredness be worth it then? The things that you are living for right now – those things that you think that you really, really want, that you can hardly live without – will it be worth it – then?

B. Run the race marked for you

What is that race? It is the race that Jesus ran. Look, if you have no interest in living the way Christ lived, don't kid yourself and pretend that you are a believer.

3. How to do it - Run

I love this part of the text because it shows us what the goal is. We do not give up things so that we can take pride in what we gave up and compare ourselves to others. No way! We give up what we do not need and what we cannot keep in order to gain what we have to have and what we will never lose. We follow Jesus. That is why the text says – when you run – run like Jesus.

A. Run with your eyes on Jesus (because He fought for faith)

He is the author of the faith. He is the perfecter of our faith and He fought for faith as he kept his eyes focused on the future. He laid hold of the joy that was coming instead of only focusing on the shame. Verse 2 is very clear as to why we have to run with our eyes on Jesus – but do you?

When you are running a long distance race, it is so beneficial to have others around and to have someone running who is setting the pace. Many marathons do that (explain). But, a pacesetter does not do you any good, if you are not actually taking advantage of it and running with your eyes on Christ. I think that most of you would agree with me that this is how we should live and this is what we ought to do – but do you?

How do you run with your eyes on Jesus? How many of you take some time to pray in the morning? How many of you actually take some specific time to read and meditate on Scripture during the day? How many of you make your worship with God's people and sitting under the preaching of the Word a weekly priority? If you are not feeding yourself, you are starving yourself. You cannot run with your eyes on Jesus if you do not look at Him. You have to look at Him and that happens by looking at Him through the means that He has established for you, which is His Word and His Church. Some of you are worn out with life because you have been running in your own energy. You cannot do this alone.

B. Run, considering His example

In your hours of self-pity think of Christ and His endurance. In your hours of loneliness think of Christ. In your hours of rejection, think of Christ. In your hours of disappointment, think of Christ. In your hours of pride and self-exaltation – think of Christ. Run! Run, considering Christ and consider, think, meditate and marinate on His endurance in spite of the opposition that He encountered. He gave up it all in order to gain it all.

Living for Eternity is the call to give up the temporal in order to gain the eternal. This is how followers of Christ are called to live. Jesus established the ultimate profit and loss question when He asked, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" That question, assumes that you know the difference between what is gain in the world and what is eternal gain for your soul. That is why the fight for faith starts with our thinking. You have to think the way He does about your life. Whose life is your life? Your life ultimately belongs to Him. Your day ultimately belongs to Him that he has

entrusted into your hands to be used for His glory. You need to start your day realizing that this is His day. When you get a paycheck you need to ask the Lord – do I really deserve this? Did I work this hard? And then, thank Him for His provision and ask Him how does He want you to manage the resources He has entrusted to you? Take an inventory of your talents and abilities. Who gave those to you? God! Whose are they – ultimately? – God's! How are you using those gifts and abilities to advance His purposes and to make him known? If you do not run that way, then the very things that God has given you to manage will become weights that will burden you in the race.

Get rid of the sin, run with perseverance, but run with your eyes fixed firmly on Christ.

Recently Cathi and I listened to a couple in the church tell us the story of their daughter who was diagnosed with cancer and died at the age of 23 after being married for 2 years. This week one of our families who lost a child at birth sent me a letter telling me of their battle for faith, and their fight for joy in the fall-out of this grievous event. For these people, and for many of you who have still have the taste of tragedy and loss in your lives, the theme of living for eternity is a needful and hopeful one. You see, when some of your treasure is already in heaven, it can be incentive to set your heart on things above. But you have to fight for that view. Living with that view comes as you fight for your joy in Christ. That really is what spiritual warfare is about. We are fighting for our joy in Christ. We fight to believe God's truth and not the lies. Your view of tomorrow, your longing for heaven affects your decisions today.