



Better Belonging: Hebrews 11v39-12v6

In these verses, God speaks encouragement into weariness: an overwhelmingly joyful end is in sight; many have walked this way before us; and in the midst of suffering and hardship God is making us like Jesus. The writer describes the life of faith as a race or contest involving spiritual opposition (12v3-4) and hardship (12v7).

1) Run by endurance (11v23-12v1)

We are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses, the Old Testament believers of chapter 11, who witness/ testify (12v1) to God's faithfulness, power, providence and sustaining. The fundamental promise of that better, heavenly country (11v16) was always in front of them (11v39). We have received better, new covenant promises (v40) and see more of Jesus than they did. God has not changed. He will sustain us as we live by faith, just as he did them. This is not an impossible race, and they are cheering us on.

Example of the 'Hoplite' race (perhaps in English it should be called 'Hopheavy'!): when we take the spiritual contest seriously, we will want to throw aside everything that hinders and the sin that entangles (12v1) and 'run light'.

2) Run towards Jesus (12v2-3)

God encourages us by telling us to run looking towards Jesus (v2), who endured for us. His path was the way of the Cross (v2), and he experienced its shame; it was a gruelling death. He endured it for you and for me, with the joy of sharing his Father's throne before him (v2 & Rev 3v21).

Jesus knows all about what it means to face spiritual opposition (v3). As sons, we are running the same kind of race that Jesus, the Son and the perfecter of faith (v2) ran before us: the same kind of contest with its need to endure; the same hard suffering and dying to self; and the same joyful destination. We will get to share the throne with the Father and the Son, sharing in their absolute victory over all evil and death. Look towards Jesus, be encouraged and run towards Him!

3) Run as a son (12v4-6)

God says in v5, don't forget this encouragement from me if you've put your life in Jesus' hands: truly, "you are my son". No matter what our deepest regrets or the darkest places of our hearts, he has made us perfect forever by that one sacrifice of Jesus (10v14). Running as a son, we can endure struggle knowing God's love and acceptance (v6), and knowing this hardship is discipline (that is, 'training'/'correction') that God uses to make us even more like Jesus (v10). Jesus too learned obedience from what he suffered (5v8).

You are in the kind of relationship with God that Jesus has with the Father, knowing the same love and acceptance (John 17v26). You are sons. Don't lose heart: walk as Jesus walked, sharing in his sufferings, with the joy of sharing in his victory always before you.

