



Keeping your eyes on the prize

April 29, 2019

HEBREWS 12:1-2 NIV - (1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

This lady went to her pastor, and she said... Pastor I won't be attending church anymore.. He said, may I ask why... She said, I see people on their cell phones during service, some are gossiping, some just ain't living right, they are all just hypocrites... The pastor got silent, and he said, OK... But can I ask you to do something for me before you make your final decision... She said, what's that... He said, take a glass of water and walk around the church 2 times and Don't let any water fall out the glass.. She said, yes I can do that... She came back and said it's done... He asked her 3 questions. **1.** Did you see anybody on their phone? **2.** Did you see anybody gossiping? **3.** Was anybody living wrong? She said I didn't see anything I was too focused on this glass, so the water wouldn't fall.... He told her, when you come to church, you should be just that **focused on Jesus**, so that you won't fall!!! The moral of the story... When you focused on others there is no way you can be focused on Jesus....Distractions!!!

The writer calls his hearers to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." An ancient writer could use the word "*onkos*" to mean "mass, weight, heaviness, bodily fat," or more positively, "fullness." In line with the sports imagery of verse (1), the word could refer to a runner stripping of burdensome clothing or losing excess bodily fat. For success one had to get rid of anything that would "hinder breathing or the free movement of the limbs." So the Christ-follower must lay aside "everything that hinders" if the faith race is to be run triumphantly. More specifically, we are to get rid of the "entangling sin". The author does not seem to have a specific sin in mind, but rather understands any sin as hindering progress in the faith.

The main clause of **12:1-2a** is translated with "let us run." This image of "running" emphasizes that Christ-followers have a course to complete or a goal to reach, and must exert effort if the Christian life is to be lived faithfully. The author has in view, however, a marathon rather than a sprint, as seen in the phrase "with endurance." The effort called for, consequently, is a sustained effort that goes the distance, following through on one's commitment with dogged determination. This is how we must run "the race marked out for us."

SCRIPTURE READING: PROVERBS 2:2-5

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: When the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his and your future!