

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=Lesson 6
Hebrews 12

INTRODUCTION: The entire chapter deals with a race. The Apostle Paul obviously was interested in the Olympic games and the running of a race. He likens the Christian life to a race—its beginning, running and finishing. For the study of this chapter, we will be interested in the race.

- I. THE SPECTATORS. Notice in Hebrews 12:1a the words, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.” These “witnesses” are the spectators in the grandstand. A representative group is listed in Hebrews 11. The Apostle Paul likens the Christian life to a race. The runner is on the track. The spectators are in the grandstand. The Old Testament saints listed in chapter 11 are watching us as we perform and run the race.

The word “wherefore” in Hebrews 12:1 connects the two chapters. Wherever “wherefore” is mentioned, it means something has gone “before.” It is a connecting word. Let us notice some of the spectators and what they may be thinking.

1. Noah. Notice Hebrews 11:7. Imagine how Noah feels when he looks down and sees us not standing alone for Christ and not being willing to stand by ourselves. Think of how he stood! Think of how he must feel as he watches us when we are unwilling to stand.
2. Abraham. See Hebrews 11:8. Abraham left his home and everything he had—his kindred, his family, his race—to look for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God. He gave up everything for the will of God. Think how he must feel when he looks down from Heaven and sees us not willing to give up things for God and not willing to do God’s will. Let us always be careful to realize that Abraham is watching us while we run the race.
3. Moses. Notice Hebrews 11:23. Moses could have been the king of Egypt. He gave up the throne, power, authority and riches of Egypt. He chose rather to suffer affliction with God’s people. He counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. As we are prone to gather riches and wealth, let us think of the fact that Moses watches us from the heavenly grandstand. Is he proud of us when we want fame, popularity, power, authority, and money? Moses is watching us as we try to garner things for ourselves.
4. Joshua. See Hebrews 11:30. Ah, what faith Joshua had as he caused the walls of Jericho to fall! When our faith is weak, we should stop to realize that the great man of faith, Joshua, is watching us. When we have battles to fight, we should be reminded that Joshua is in the heavenly grandstand.
5. Gideon. Notice Hebrews 11:32. Gideon was not afraid of the mighty armies of the enemy. When we fear, let us remember that Gideon is watching us from the grandstand.
6. Jephthah. Read Hebrews 11:32. Jephthah had promised God that if He gave him the victory in battle, he would sacrifice to God the first thing that came walking out of the door of his house when he came home from battle. To his great surprise, it was not an animal; it was his daughter! He had made the promise; he kept the promise. Whether or not he should have killed his daughter is not the issue. The issue is, when we make promises to God, we are expected to keep them! When we promise God we will tithe, for example, and do not keep that promise, Jephthah, the great keeper of his promise, is watching us from the heavenly grandstand. It is a serious and dangerous thing for us not to keep our vows to God.
7. Daniel. Notice in Hebrews 11:33 the words, “stopped the mouths of lions.” When we do not stand for Christ as did Daniel, when we are not willing to pray and take our stand, Daniel watches us and

must lament our compromising. Let us always be mindful of the fact that Daniel is in the grandstand watching us.

(Teacher, talk about other great characters in history, not only in the Bible. Talk about loved ones. Perhaps a mother is watching, a father is watching, a sister is watching, a brother is watching, a grandmother is watching, a grandfather is watching, a pastor is watching, or some friend is watching. All of those who died in Christ have joined the heavenly grandstand and are watching the race that we are now running. Here is a good opportunity to teach the pupils a tremendous motive for living righteously.)

II. THE CLOTHING FOR THE RACE.

1. We are to lay aside every weight. See Hebrews 12:1. A person who runs a race does not run with weights on his feet, nor does he wear heavy shoes and an overcoat. He strips down to the bare essentials, for he does not want to have heavy weight stopping him as he runs. There is nothing wrong with an overcoat except that it is not good for a race. There is nothing wrong with heavy shoes except that they are not good for a race. There is nothing wrong with wearing heavy garments, but heavy garments will not help one to win a race. There are things that are not sinful in themselves, but Christians cannot do them if they want to run the race profitably and win the race for God. (Teacher, list some of these things. List some things that we Christians should not do, that are not necessarily sinful in themselves, if we are going to run the race and win the battle for God.)
2. We are to lay aside every sin. Notice this in Hebrews 12:1. The runner who wins a race has certain training habits. He cannot smoke, and he cannot drink. Certain things which would shorten his breath and cause him not to win a race are things he cannot do. That means we are to lay aside every sin, realizing we are watched from Heaven by Jesus and all of the saints who have gone before us.
3. We are to run the race with patience. It means we are not to give up. This does not mean we are to slow down and be slowly patient. If we are behind, we are to try harder and stretch more. We should never give up in the race.

III. THE STARTER AND FINISHER OF THE RACE. In Hebrews 12:2a, notice the words, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." In other words, Jesus is the "starter." He is likened to the man who stands with the gun and pulls the trigger for the starting of the race. Jesus is the beginner of the race. No one can begin the race unless he is at the right starting point. (Teacher, teach something about the plan of salvation here. Notice that one cannot get in the race unless he starts right. Jesus is the starter. Go down the "Romans Road." Use Romans 3:10; 3:23; 5:12; 6:23; 5:8; and 10:13. Give the plan of salvation.)

Notice that Jesus is also the "finisher." We are to keep our eyes on Him. When a racer runs, he is not supposed to look back or look to the side; he is to keep his eyes on the finish line. Jesus is the finisher. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we can win the race!

IV. THE CHASTENING. Read Hebrews 12:3-15. If we do not run the race well, we are chastened. God loves us and chastens us if we do not do His will, stay in the race, and run it well.

CONCLUSION: The wise teacher will find many, many ways to teach this lesson. The race, a grandstand, spectators, etc. all appeal to children and young people especially, for they are all concerned about athletic contests. You might discuss something about the alumni of the institution. A person who has played on a team graduates from school. He then goes to watch this year's team play. He once played, but now he is in the grandstand. He is an alumnus of the institution. This is what the Bible is teaching. Those who have lived and

died in Christ have run the race. Now they join the grandstand alumni association and are watching us run. Let us do our best to run the race effectively for God!