

Scott A. Wood 2-2-2025
HEBREWS SERIES: PERSEVERE, HOLD ON, BELIEVE TILL THE END.
PART 12A: RISE TO RUN YOUR RACE

Good morning (Afternoon) my much-loved CVCHURCH family. Most of you know unless you're a guest today that I have had several health issues and that is why I have not been teaching for the last 3 months. It is such an honor to be back with you all today. The title for my teaching today is **RISE TO RUN YOUR RACE**. The last three months have been one of the most painful experiences in my life and were a culmination of over four years where I had experienced abscess, concussion, COVID three times, shingles, and discovered that I had a bad case of inflammation from a wisdom tooth I didn't know that I had. Once detected, I waited too long to address it. The combination of all these issues has come to roost over the last three months. During the painful trial I had many of you commit yourselves to pray for me and for my healing. Barbara Lesure was one of the first to come to me and ask to bring four to five prayer warriors to my house, lay hands on me, and pray over me. Barbara also leads one of our prayer groups on Monday nights, and they have prayed regularly for my healing and deliverance. The week before I had surgery, one of the women in the group prayed an incredibly powerful prayer. I must say, every week, Kathe would come home and give me three to four of your names saying you have been praying for me every day and night. You have all been so incredible in all the texts, emails, visits, and bringing or sending food. Before I start my teaching, I want to read, to you, the prayer that Artine Asadoorian wrote and prayed over me. She sent it to me the day of my surgery. I did not read this prayer before the surgery. I was in so much pain that I did not pay attention to my phone. Here is the prayer. **"Praying for the end to this season of pain and infirmity. Where there was weakness, there will be strength. All emotional bondage attached to the pain will be broken today. In Jesus' Name we plead the blood of Jesus over wounds that may have left scars, pain, and death to muscles, tissues, nerves, veins, and flesh. We plead Jesus' blood over them and ask that they be healed and new cell growth be multiplied all around the affected area! By His stripes and His blood, you are healed Scott! There will be a special anointing over the doctor today.** (This was Thanksgiving Eve). **He will work with care and precision, as if he were working on his own body. The nurses and practitioners around you will be especially attentive today and care for you with unexplainable energy and will! As you head home after the procedure, you will be pain free with no remnant of lingering pain or muscle memory! You will feel a renewing of your body and soul as you recuperate the next day or two. You will have a surge of energy like never before come over you! These things will come to be because of the Father's love for you and His desire to make His good and faithful servant well again! All powers, dominions, and principalities will be bound in Jesus' powerful Name! All illegitimate contracts against you will be null and void, never to be drawn up again! The ultimate Judge will sentence them guilty! Father God, we worship You with all of our heart, mind and soul! You are the Alpha and Omega Who reins over Scott's health and destiny! We believe and decree that You will make all these petitions for his health possible! In Jesus' mighty, powerful, matchless Name we**

pray! Amen! And You say, it is done when two or more agree to Your Will, it is done! May it be Your Will, Father, to restore Your son! Hallelujah and Amen!

Today we continue our exciting study through the book of Hebrews which we have titled **PERSEVERE, HOLD ON, BELIEVE TILL THE END**. Our passage today, Hebrews 12:1-4 fleshes out incredibly what it means to persevere, hold on, believe till the end.

The last two weeks we have looked at the faith of those who came before us in Hebrews 11—men and women who endured trials, overcame insurmountable odds, and trusted God through the unseen. Their faith is meant to inspire us to stand firm, know that the same God who was faithful to them remains faithful to us today.

Tom Schreiner, a New Testament scholar who was one of my TAs in seminary writes, **“The main point of the entire letter-sermon is this: Don’t fall away from Jesus. The readers must hold fast (10:19-25) and must not let go (10:26-31). They are not to abandon their confidence but continue to receive the final reward (10:32-39).**

Church, Chapter 11 the faith chapter lays out what **persevering, hold on, believe till the end faith looks like.**” Faith relies on God’s promises. Believing what He says even if we can’t see how it will be fulfilled. Faith looks to the future, banking on the Word of God instead of taking its cues from present circumstances. Faith trusts God in danger and distress, knowing He will reward His own. The entire book of Hebrews is leading to Chapter 12. The Pastor has laid out as examples of our Old Testament ancestors to serve as great exemplars of faith, but the supreme example is Jesus Christ himself.

The theme the Holy Spirit has given us for 2025 is **IT’S TIME TO RISE. It fits so well with by titled for these first four verses. RISE TO RUN YOUR RACE.** So, I want you to ask yourself **How can I, personally, rise to run my own race that God has specifically chosen for me?** Let’s unpack this together. Please follow along as I read Hebrews 12:1-2 **“¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.”**

Pt # 1. **Rehearse our witness’s legacy. Hebrews 12:1a.** Hebrews 12:1 a says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses.” Hebrews 13:22 the pastor calls this letter or sermon a brief exhortation. To exhort means to passionately implore someone or a group of people to take action. This pastor couches his passionate plea in terms of athletic imagery. He sees the Christian life in terms as a race that God has specifically chosen for each one of us. This is powerful loved ones. The O.T. heroes ran their race faithfully. One aspect of their faithfulness is that each one of these heroes demonstrated endurance. We are to rehearse this characteristic and develop it in our own lives. Endurance can be defined by David DeSilva as **“Persevering in the face of the pains and fatigue that threaten to overcome any runner, and to cast aside anything that hampers them from running and finishing.”** Loved church, we have the example of Jesus, who ran ahead of them and us and give us a shining example of endurance to strengthen against giving up or growing weary.

I want to caution any of us that have a negative attitude towards sports and competition. The Holy Spirit saw fit to inspire this Pastor, Paul, Peter and other biblical writers to use sports and especially personal training to keep our selves fit both spiritually and

physically. This is one reason I listed for you all the different difficulties I have experienced over the last four years because I didn't understand why I was having all of these maladies and still be in good shape. The pastor will challenge us passionately to understand that your personal relationship with Jesus Christ is likened to a race. In the context of the race DeSilva writes, **"... a person willingly chooses to endure physical discomfort, to submit to the reproaches of a trainer, to curb luxury and to turn aside from many delights enjoyed by the nonathlete or the fully participating member of the dominant culture. The metaphor of athletic competition provides the recipient of Society's censure and hostility an essential reorientation to that experience, turning a victim into a competitor and raising his or her dignity correspondingly. Athletic imagery turns debilitating experiences into endurable ones since there is now the prospect of victory, even if that victory is to be attained not by turning the tables on opponents but by merely enduring to the end of the contest."** We are to rehearse the cloud of witnesses and their ability to endure, to stay focused and faithful to the race that God called each one of them. Again, think through the standout qualities of the heroes and how you can apply it to your own life. Abraham stands out for me. The pastor says in 11:17-19 that it was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing Him. Abraham vs. 19 says he reasoned because Isaac was the answer to God's promise that if he was successful in sacrificing Isaac God was able to raise him from the dead. Again, we see that faith is taking God at His Word and trusting that He will fulfill His promises and that He is a righteous God and a God of character. Faith trust God to do what He says He will do. Genesis 22:12 the angel of the Lord stopped Abraham from following through sacrificing Isaac **"I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me your only son."** Application point loved ones. **Where is God testing you to see if you are willing to surrender everything in your life. Where are you holding back a specific area where in essence, you're saying you can have this but not this. This is essential rising to run your race that God has given you to run.**

II. **REMOVE ALL HINDRANCES.** Hebrews 12:1b **"Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up."**

The Pastor states that to run a race effectively requires running unhindered and unencumbered. We're told to strip off every weight and obstacles. One outstanding hindrance being sin itself. What weight specifically does the Pastor have in Mind? **Anything that would keep one from running forward and finishing the race.** Just as runners shed unnecessary weight or restrictive clothing before a race, we must examine our lives for anything that slows us down. Loved church, hindrances are not always overt sin they can be good things that distract us from the best, our relationship with Jesus Christ and our witness to our culture. It could be a misplaced ambition, an unhealthy attachment spiritually, emotionally, relationally, financially, vocationally, intellectually, physically, politically or sexually. It can be a myriad of fears you might have that holds you back from running your race successfully. Sin, on the other hand, clings tightly, tripping us up and preventing us toward forward momentum. Schriener writes, **"The Pastor recognizes the power and attractiveness of sin. The Christian life is not easy; it takes strength and discipline, just as ardor and determination are needed to run a race."** All hindrances and sin must be stripped out of our lives if we're

to run effectively. To rise up to effectively run your race you must **1. Rehearse your witness's legacy. 2. Remove all hindrances.**

III. RUN WITH ENDURANCE. Hebrews 12:1c **“And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.”**

The Pastor instructs us that the Christian life is a race, one that requires not just a strong start, but perseverance to finish well. The Pastor uses this athletic metaphor to emphasize the intentionality and endurance needed to live a faith filled life. Races, especially long-distance ones, are grueling. They require focus, stamina, and the willingness to push through exhaustion and pain. In the same way our walk with Christ demands spiritual endurance, as we navigate challenges, distractions, and opposition. William Lane is helpful when he writes, **“The admonition or warning to run the race with endurance makes explicit the element of struggle that is integral to maturity. There must be a firm resolve not to drop out of the contest but to exert every effort to cross the finish line despite hardship, exhaustion and pain.”** James says it perfectly in James vss. 2- 4, **“²Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³For you know that then your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”** What is your race? **It is everything that you have experienced and are experiencing now.** My present race included all the physical pain, fevers, leading through Covid, standing up for biblical justice and integrity and leading our renovation and an intensity that at times seemed overwhelming. When the Holy Spirit breathed into my mind the year **2025 IS THE YEAR TO RISE.** I knew at that moment that God has been working a new level of endurance in me because I am determined to run my race well and finish for Jesus. He has entrusted my race into my hands. He has entrusted your race into your hands. No one else can run it for you. Hear me loved church. It is time to rise and run your race. As we close for today and prepare our hearts to receive communion, what are the challenges, distractions, and opposition that you are experiencing that you're hearing the Holy Spirit say to you, **“During this season, I want you to lean-in to developing endurance, perseverance, and toughness.”** Whatever your race involves in this time in your life it is time to engage your race. Hear me loved ones. The Holy Spirit has called you to an intense time of training. We are not going to do the same 'o' same 'o'. It is not the routine as regular. It is time to lift more weight; to pick up your speed; to let go of certain hindrances and to strip off the weight, metaphorically, and for some of us literally to get into race readiness. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you as we close out our service this morning.