

GOING FOR THE GOLD

WILLIS 9/7/09

HEB 12:1-3

Touching on what we did last week in the message “Never Give In, Never Give Up,” we seemed to have struck a chord that I felt compelled to hone in on a bit deeper this week and develop further this whole virtue of endurance.

- **As you well know Christ likeness is the central focus of this congregation. Bearing the image of the imager is our primary aim.** Well you can't get too far into the image of Christ before you come face to face with the key virtues of endurance and discipline.
- Our race is a race of endurance. Endurance is not a seasonal virtue that we need only on occasion or a special needs virtue fashioned only for the weak. **Though fully God, Jesus the pattern Son modeled a life of endurance.**

As I reflected on last week's message, I realized it would stop short if it only exhorted us to never quit but didn't also exhort us to go for the gold. **A “never give in” attitude is essential yet the other side of that all important coin is running the race so as to win the gold.**

- Both of which underscore the centrality of endurance and discipline. When in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty this virtue of endurance becomes an anchor for the soul. We are rapidly moving into a fear base culture that uses the threat of terror as its leverage point.
- In his new book “Fearless,” Max Lucado writes “They are talking layoffs at work, slowdowns in the economy, flare ups in the Middle East, turnovers at headquarters, downturns in the housing markets and upswings in global warming. The plague of our day, terrorism begins with the word “terror.” Fear it seems has taken a hundred year lease on the building next door and set up shop. Oversized and rude, fear herds us into a prison and slams the doors. Wouldn't it be great to just walk out?”
- The more we hear of future possibilities and necessary preparations, the more Jesus will want to distinguish us with a fearless disposition. **Fearlessness is a two sided coin with faith, hope and love on one side and a never give in run for the gold mindset on the other.**

Heb 12:1-3

The example of the pattern Son was a never quit, never give in, and run so as to win the gold lifestyle. So **in our quest to become like Christ we must embrace this same never quit, never give in, run so as to win the gold mindset as our driving disposition.**

The Apostle Paul picks up this same sentiment in 1Cor 9:24-27 where he says, "...run in such a way that **you** may win. (Turn there) Here we see the same disposition of endurance and discipline that we saw in Heb 12.

- **Intentionality, self control, focus, discipline and endurance...these are the virtues of a winner. These are the ingredients that go into the making of a never give in, go for the gold disposition.**

How do you run in such a way that you win? Running to win takes us back to Hebrews 12 where the writer exhorts us in four specific requirements in going for the gold.

1. **Lay Aside Every Encumbrance and Entangling Sin: v.1** the writer likens our walk to race where the weights that would hold us back must be thrown off, every generational iniquity beginning with every false perception concerning the character of God.
 - The doubting of God's love, the questioning of God's goodness is not just an innocent stage in our developmental process; the enemy uses these seeds of doubt as entangling sins that must be thrown off for us to go for the gold.
 - **You can run the race encumbered but you will never win the gold. You can run the race entangled in sin but you will never win the prize.** The gold is reserved for those who run without encumbrance and stay free of entanglement.
 - Encumbrance: "anything (good or bad) that holds you back." **Encumbrances are seldom defined by a "right or wrong" standard; encumbrances are defined by do they advance the kingdom standard.**
 - Anxiety in the midst of uncertainty is an encumbrance throw it aside. Fear in the midst of the race is a sin, throw it down, if you give it an inch it will "take a 100 year lease on the building next door and set up shop."
2. **Run the Race with Endurance: v.1** endurance in relationship to this race called life is defined by a never surrender to circumstance...never succumb to trial mindset. Though fully God, Jesus was the Master of endurance...
 - Resisting to the point of shedding blood yet for the joy set before Him He endured the brutality of the cross and never gave up. It is this same Jesus who now indwells us meaning this same spirit of endurance empowers us to run and not grow weary.
 - Marriage is not a sprint; marriage is a marathon so choose endurance in the face of conflict and you will win. Spiritual warfare is not a random fire fight, it is an all out spiritual war so choose endurance in the heat of the battle and you will get the gold.
 - **Please don't hear me saying we are coming into difficult times so we will need endurance, we are to run with endurance regardless of the times.** Good times, bad times, hard times, easy times...it is just as easy to quit in success as it is to quit in failure.
 - Never succumb to the ease of success or surrender to the torment of failure.
 - **Never let up in the perception of good times or give in to the fear of difficult times, run with endurance regardless of the times and you will run for the gold.**

3. **Fix Your Eyes of Jesus: v.2** literally, “keep on fixing your eyes on Jesus.” The course we run will keep on twisting and turning so to go for the gold we must keep on fixing our eyes.
- In an age of free will, to go for the gold we must know how to command that will. **We command the will when we “fix our eyes, set our mind, turn our heart, incline our ear, confess with the mouth.”**
 - Fixing our eyes on Jesus is the willful turning away from anything that isn’t contributing to our advance in the race. When our eyes are fixed on the author and finisher of our faith, there is no wasting of our lives in activities of neutrality.
 - If you waste your energies in the pursuit of neutralities you will never run as to win gold. **When it comes to going for the gold, the issue isn’t right or wrong, the issue is will that decision advance you in the race or cause you to fall behind?**
 - Fix your eyes on the author and the finisher of your faith and you will not waste your life on relationships of neutrality, entertainment of neutrality or any activity that keeps you in neutral so you aren’t advancing toward the gold.
 - Without the fixing of our eyes there will be no finishing of the race. To finish the race we must fix our eyes on the finisher.
4. **Consider Him: v.3** as the pattern Son Jesus is to be the consideration that motivates or every action. Jesus is not just the consideration of spiritual decisions only; every action of our lives should only be made in full consideration of Him.
- It is our consideration of Jesus that keeps us from growing weary and losing heart. Our consideration of His endurance takes the focus off ourselves fixes it on Him who gives strength to the weary and enables them to mount up on wings of eagles.
 - **Considering Him focuses us. Going for the gold is all about having a winners focus.** Considering Him prepares the mind to go for gold. Considering Him prepares the heart for gold. Consideration of Him is God’s preparation of us.
 - **Consider Him first and you will win gold.** Run with the consideration of His Kingdom first and you will finish gold. How many fights could we avert if we consider Him first? How many bad decisions could we prevent if we would consider Him first?
 - Consider Him first and you will win every fight! Consider Him first and there won’t be a bad decision!

So to the never quit, never give up mindset, we now add the disposition to go for the gold. To bear the image of the imager is to run this race called life with the endurance of He who is the author and the finisher of our faith...He who already finished.