**Greater Than All - wk 20 – Can’t Stop Running!**

**Endurance. Difference between running for Gump and us – he ran just to run – in Christ we run with purpose and don’t decide to quit.**

**We come to one of the most famous passages of Hebrews that really drives home the point of the letter.**

**Hebrews = Don’t give up but grow up! True faith perseveres.**

**(3 power packed verses!) Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, (in light of all those who lived faithfully for the LORD, never gave up, and are now in the kingdom of heaven) since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders (every weight) and the sin that so easily entangles. (Ensnares us) And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer (author) and perfecter (finisher) 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. (Refence to resurrection – he did not stay t in the grave)**

**Great declaration of who Jesus is – (the author and perfector) of faith = beginning and the end - creator of all things. The only one who could bear and endure the cross! Siting in full authority on the throne of God, ruler of all! (Explain right hand)**

**3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (Lose heart – NIV)**

**Anyone feel like that? Weary and heavy hearted?**

**Still Thinking of Quitting?**

**For those who are checking out and debating inside…**

**\*\* Remember those before us (v1) “Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses… let us throw off… and run…” (Witness for us or of us?)**

**Athletic event picture - great cloud (not just ch 11) cheering and celebrating! Those in heaven can see you and watching! Though we cannot interact with them- I do believe they see us! I think of when my mother died, Summer – 6/7. She will see us.**

**Ephesians 3:10 His (God’s) intent was that now, through the church, (His people) the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**All of Heaven is watching the purpose of God unfold - our faith on display. Spectators of heaven observe the players of earth.**

**They faced trials – they did not quit – they made it – I can almost hear them cheering (you can do it!) they are a witness to us!**

**11:2b For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame… 3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.**

**\*\* Remember the cross of Christ (v3)**

**The cross was not a joy. The reward of redemption for us was.**

**God took on flesh and blood – endured the cross for our salvation – seeing our redemption as the reward for his suffering.**

**He endured scorn, shame, embarrassment, accusation, insult, beatings, physical pain, crucifixion - for the joy of rescued souls!**

**It is the very same reward that cause many to endure suffering to share the message of the cross with the world under persecution.**

**Sadly, many find themselves brave for the things of this world – yet cowards towards Christ. Just saying his name can be a struggle. (let’s say it now)**

**When Life gets hard – when you start to questions your faith.**

**Remember those before us – Remember the cross of Christ!**

**The football – blind dad illustration. Our father in heaven sees you!**

**What do we do with this? Throw off and run!**

**Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, (heaven is cheering us on!) let us throw off (lay aside / get rid of) everything that hinders (the weights) and the sin that so easily entangles.**

**Let go… (throw off 2 things)**

* **Let go of the hindrances – let us throw off everything that hinders**

**(The weights) are not necessarily sins – but they hold you back. They weigh you down – hinder us from running. (Illus?)**

**When good things become bad**

**It is time to change life’s price tags and priorities.**

**\*\*\* Sometimes we must let go of the good things to embrace the God things!**

**A hobby, activities, dreams, pursuits, your past, the could have been’s and should have been’s – the if only’s = weights.**

**Start off easy to carry, then become tiring and dangerous**

**\*\* What are the weights you need to let go and lay aside?**

* **Let go of the sin (…they easily ensnare us… – KJV – the traps)**

**We have diff sins that so easily trap us. Diff for each of us. What is easy for me to avoid may not be for you / vice versa.**

**They are a trap of our flesh! Baited w/ what each of us craves.**

**Truth is - we like the bait so much we accept the traps – it brings temp pleasure- they cling closely. They feel safe, until they kill you.**

**It does not say attack the spirit of anger, porn, or gossip and pray against demons – but thru the HS, we are to get rid of our weights & sin that hold us back. (Cut it off, throw it away - Matt 5)**

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So, I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.**

**We let go (throw off) and run! 11:1b-2 And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus…**

**Let us**

**“Let us run” - Not stroll, peruse, meander, or even walk away – we run! You don’t just find yourself at a finish line –**

**Following Jesus is not a dash – it’s a marathon.**

**Spiritual running is not for the lazy.**

* **Let us run with endurance**

**“Let us run with perseverance…”**

**Predetermined to not give up! You don’t know what tomorrow will bring – but today I am determined to live for the king!**

**Morning I was diagnosed – “whatever is wrong with me… I will serve and follow you.”**

**Romans 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**I might be broke, or have plenty – I might be healthy, or be sick – I might have everything, or lose everything – but I am convinced Christ will never leave me and I will never quit!**

**race (Gk: agona) translated – contest, conflict, contend, struggle, fight**

**(Phil 1:30, Col 2:1, 1 Thess 2:2, 2 Tim 4:7, 1 Tim 6:12 – fight the good fight = agona)**

**No matter the struggle or the punches I take – I keep going!**

**Many start the race (they like what the finish line offers) but many never finish. They were out for a stroll. (4 soils – Mark 4)**

**As Paul says in Phil 3:14 - I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

* **Let us run (with perseverance) our own race**

**“Let us run… the race marked out for us”**

**We each have a diff race (diff struggles) they take us to diff places and diff victories and struggles. But we run the race we have been given!**

**Acts 20:24 I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.**

* **Let us run with eyes fixed on Jesus**

**“Let us run… fixing our eyes on Jesus”**

**Forest Gump Endurance. Difference between running for Gump and us, he ran just to run - in Christ we run with purpose, and we don’t quit.**

**We are not just running we are following Jesus!**

**“Fixing our eyes” – intentional look - clear change of focus. Fix your gaze, turn your eyes (Summer telling dogs - don’t look)**

**How do we stay on track? Not by looking at our feet but looking head. Fixing our eyes on Jesus. We don’t fix our gaze on our snares and sins – but Jesus alone.**

**We don’t just look to his example – we look to him.**

**He is the source of our hope and strength.**

**Like a father who stands at the starting line and is there to welcome you at the end of the race – and at our side all the way there!**

**2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer (author) and perfecter (finisher) of faith.**

**Jesus is the pioneer, the starting point, the author…**

**Jesus is the perfector, the finisher, the one who completes it…**

**The author and finisher of faith - starts with him and ends with him. He is the one (thru the HS) who convicts and empowers us and works in us to perfect and finish us for his glory.**

**Phil 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**

**He not only starts it he finishes it in us.**

**Jesus – “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

**The finish line has been defined – the kingdom of God. To stand before the throne. We run for the finish line.**

**If we persist – we will be in that crowd one day – cheering on the generations that follow – leading by our example and perseverance.**

**Today Paul (believed to be the writer of Hebrews) is in that cloud of witnesses – facing his death he wrote…**

**2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.**

* **SO, Let go – of the weights and sins – that drag you down**
* **AND, Let us run – with endurance – the race set before us – fixing our eyes on Jesus.**