

Ordinary Time - 20th C

The Letter to Hebrews says, "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." – it reminds me of something I read:

We are competing in the arena – right now, as we live our lives
Up in heaven all the saints and angels are watching us – cheering for our victory

We may struggle and face many obstacles, but

We have a great crowd of witnesses who are cheering us on.

We have a Heavenly Father who loves us and will help us when the pain is too great.

We have a Savior, who left his place in heaven and came to earth to show us how to run the race.

If we will keep our eyes on him, we can finish the race!

There are some secrets to winning a race that also apply to our spiritual lives

Its in this sentence:

"throw off everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

The **first** secret is: **Get rid of everything that slows us down.**

You can't run **fast** with **3 overcoats - combat boots & a super-sized backpack**

God wants us to **shed** all of our **excess baggage**.

WHAT ARE WE CARRYING THAT IS SLOWING US DOWN

We should be running a Spiritual Race to win - so shed everything holding us back

Selfishness, laziness, envy, lust, and greed, every doubt and fear -

There is no room for those things in the heart of a Christian – they slow us down

But that's not enough. The Second Secret: "let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us"

Runners can be **thoroughly** streamlined and still **lose the race**.

They can get **distracted** by their **competitors** and take their **eyes** off the **finish** line.

They can **despair** by the **long stretch of track & despair** (TOO HARD).

To win the race, they must stay focused on the finish line.

And this is the **second secret** to **victory** that the Letter to the Hebrews offers us.

It tells us that we will **persevere** in our race, and we will **win** our race **only** by

"keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith,"

Only if we **stay focused on Christ**, SO – We need to know him better and better,

He is our coach, training us to persevere through life's trials and tribulations,

But to **do** that, we have to **discipline** ourselves just like the **best** runners.

We have to train our minds and hearts to ignore the distractions of the world

We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus – like our coach encouraging us on.

Life is like a race that has been set before us.

We may struggle and face obstacles, but we have a great crowd of witnesses who are cheer us on.

We have a Heavenly Father who loves us and will help us when the pain is too great.

We have a Savior, who left his place in heaven and came to earth to show us how to run the race.

If we will keep our eyes on him, how can we help but finish the race?