

More “Let Us” from Hebrews 1-12-03

Hebrews 12:1-4, 26-29; 13:13-15

We have begun this year by taking a look at the word “let” and the “let us” passages in Hebrews. We have made a list of these on the bookmark in your bulletin so that you can keep them in your Bible as a reminder throughout the year. Today we will be looking at the rest of the “let us” passages in Hebrews beginning with Heb. 12:1-4 (NIV).

1 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. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Remember that this passage follows the Hall of Faith chapter 11. The word in Greek for ‘therefore’ is used only one other place in Scripture (1Thessalonians 4:8). It means that because of the argument presented from 10:19 through chapter 11 we can see that there is this cloud of witnesses that have already been in this race. Those men and women of faith that have gone before us are now pictured as spectators in a stadium. The seats are almost full. Their testimonies cheer us on. They shout for us to keep at it and not give up. They faced the world and all the temptations, and they were tripped up sometimes with things that entangled them. We can read their stories and learn from their mistakes. This passage suggests that those who have gone before us are aware of what is going on in the earth.

Commented [notes1]: ⁸ Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. 1 Thess. 4:8 (NIV)

Last week my friend George Brueland went into that great coliseum in the sky. One of his favorite expressions was, “Go for it!” See what God has called you to and do it with your whole heart. He lived that! He would see a hurting soul and talk to them with a tender gentleness that always won their hearts. Then he’d pray for them, and soon they’d be praying to receive Jesus. Just as Abel’s blood still calls out from the ground, George’s testimony still yells, “Go for it!” He ran his race, but you and I are still running ours. The testimony of his life and the testimonies of all those who have gone before us speak to us as we run. They say, “God is faithful. He will help you endure. Trust in Him and you will not be disappointed.” Every time you remember a departed brother or sister, or read the story of the faithful in Scripture, the testimony of those in the grandstands is calling to you to run in the power of the LORD with your whole heart.

Now here is the first “let us” in the passages today. *Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles...* The Greek runners ran in the nude. They did not want any article of clothing to get in their way. A robe would easily trip them up, entangling them. We try to run with the strangest things. Whatever you are trying to run the race with, it is going to get in your way. Some of us try to

run the race with trust in man's wisdom, or the security of material wealth, or some compromise with sin. It will slow you down and trip you up. Those heroes of the faith know how easily those things can hinder your race. Their testimony speaks to us today, telling us not to get entangled with the world. Hezekiah tried to finish his race carrying the pride of possessions. King David tried to run for a while carrying the load of lust and lies. Jacob tried running with a trust in his own scheming ability. Those things tripped them up and entangled them.

Notice the passage says, "easily entangles". You think you can get away with it but before you know it you are all wrapped up in it and falling on your face. So throw aside everything that hinders! That takes a step of faith to believe that God has good intentions for you, that He knows what is best. It also takes vision to see that the things of God are the only things that last, and that laying up treasures in heaven is infinitely better than collecting treasures here. What is slowing down your race? What are those saints in the stands telling you through their testimony to drop? Consider that when you read their stories.

Next week five churches will be preaching the same sermon on lifestyle warfare. We are in a battle for this city. The Kingdom of Darkness has claimed Sedona, but we say he can't have it. We are claiming it for the LORD. There are a number of things we can do to see that happen, but they need to begin with each of our lives being a testimony of Christ-likeness. The only way to do that is to let go of whatever is hindering you and slowing you down. You'll have to do that before you can really run competitively. How do you think a marathon runner would do with a 20-pound dumbbell? That is vivid picture of a lot of Christians trying to run the race of faith. It will trip us up and probably injure us. If you think that thing is worth clinging to, hold it up beside the cross, where you see the love of God for you. That should be a reality check. Then, toss it, and cling to the cross. That is the litmus test. Does it compare with Jesus?

The second "let us" is "*let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*" That reminds us of the earlier passages in Hebrews that told us to cling to our faith and our hope. We need to endure to the end. Life is a marathon, not a sprint! A marathon runner sets his eyes on the farthest point ahead so he will pace himself properly. A big burst of speed will not help if it causes you to quit later on. We need to be determined that by God's grace we will finish the race well. Each of us has a calling and a mission in life. If we quit before we get there we will never know all that God had in store for us. Consistency is the key. Keep walking in the Spirit. Keep in the Word. Keep loving and forgiving with your whole heart. Don't allow bitterness to creep in. You can throw aside the weight but then you have to keep running. It doesn't do any good to just set it aside for a while and then pick it back up next time around the track. You have to forsake it because you have seen by revelation that it is of no lasting value. Persevere!

"*Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*" How is the race marked out for us? The Word of God tells us what the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit are. We have more than the leading of the Spirit; we also have the clear

authority of the Word. Don't try to get away with stepping out of bounds. The Word of God marks out our racecourse for us. Don't let the enemy talk you into some compromise that nullifies the Word of God. God spoke these words to Judah through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 66:2b (NIV) *"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."* That is how to run this race, in humility, with a contrite spirit, and trembling at God's word.

Listen to how Paul describes the way he was running the race.
1 Cor. 9:24-27 (NIV) ²⁴ *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.* ²⁵ *Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.* ²⁶ *Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.* ²⁷ *No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

The Hebrews passage tells us to run the race marked out for us. This passage tells us to run so as to not be disqualified. You can be going through the motions and it isn't of any value because you are out of bounds. Here Paul says to make your body submit. Don't run with a goal set by your old nature, the respect of men, the pride of life, and those fleshly desires that have no eternal value. That is to run in vain.

When a marathon runner sets his eyes ahead of him, it keeps him pacing himself for the long haul and helps to keep him from worrying about the present difficulty during the run. The next "let us" tells us where to fix our eyes, where we should keep our focus. ² *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...* (Heb. 12:2 (NIV)) We turn away from the distractions around us, the things that would trip us up, the present difficulties, and we look at the goal. And what a goal He is! The One who loves us like no other. The perfect Savior, the truest friend! What a goal! Where are your eyes fixed? What are you running toward? I guarantee you that if it is anything other than Jesus, it is much less attractive and certainly much less valuable. Fix your vision on Jesus.

Have you ever notice that you can see the reflection of what someone is looking at in his or her eyes? If you'd like the most beautiful eyes possible, fix your eyes on Jesus. What we focus on we become more like. Have you ever noticed how couples start to look like each other? If you want to look more like Jesus in this coming year spend more time with Him. Fix your eyes on Him. Run to win the prize, not just to cross the finish line. Jesus ran with perseverance because He could see the joy that was set before Him. Do you envision the joy that is set before you? To keep from getting weary, we are told to keep looking at Jesus' example. We have all the other saints' testimonies to learn from, but our ultimate example is Jesus. He went through the cross, because He believed by faith what was on the other side. Will you endure because you have the promises of God that He will finish the work He started in you? That word translated "author" can also be translated "trailblazer". He went before to show you how to run the race. He blazed

a trail to the Father. You have to have your eyes fixed ahead. He had His eyes on what the Father was doing. We need the same kind of forward focus on what Jesus is doing.

Heb. 12:26-29 (NIV) *26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."
27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain.
28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,
29 for our "God is a consuming fire."*

All the things that could trip us up in the race are things that will one day shake until they fall. All created things will be shaken and consumed. Do you value shakable consumables? Interesting we call things consumables! But we are receiving an unshakable, nonconsumable Kingdom. Let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

It helps to run the race within bounds when we have the big picture. Here is the big picture, everything you can see will be gone in a hundred years, except possibly some of these red rocks, and eventually they will be gone too. What can be shaken will be shaken. All that will remain is the Kingdom of God and the Lake of Fire. That's the big picture. The Apostle Peter says, and I paraphrase, "When you look at it like that, consider what kind of a life you should live!" (2 Peter 3:10-13 (NIV)) How thankful and worshipful we ought to be! We should be worshiping with reverence and awe. We ought to be so overwhelmed that God called us from vanity to eternal value, from destruction to life. If not another single good thing happened to you in this life, you could thank God to the day of your death for redeeming you. With awe and reverence you could worship until your last day. So why don't we? We get too used to His mercy and grace. We are often spoiled ungrateful children that need difficulty to make us realize how abundantly blessed we are. Let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

Commented [notes2]: ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness

With reverence and awe is the only acceptable way to worship. We must be careful to not take the things of God lightly. Aaron's sons did and died in the process. Uzzah did and died. Annanias and Saphira did in the New Testament and they too dropped dead. Our God is a consuming fire. He is holy, and He is just. The only acceptable way to worship is with reverence and awe. Never enter into worship halfheartedly. I'm asking the LORD to help us learn to worship in spirit and in truth. That is one of my prayer requests for this year. We need to worship Him acceptably with reverence and awe. There needs to be that dynamic tension between His incredible love and His holy justice.

Heb. 13:13-15 (NIV) *13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. 14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

When the Levites performed the sin offering, they took the body of the bull and burned it outside the camp. In the same way, Jesus was taken outside of the city where His body was crucified. He wasn't considered good enough, clean enough, for inside the city. They took Him out like garbage. This "let us" tells us to go outside with Him, considered as garbage along with Him. Let's go to Him, being identified with Him. Let's be considered as He was. Let them kick us out. We don't belong here. They send us away because we are not of this world. We are looking for the New Jerusalem. We look for the city built by God, a city that will last. We realize that fame and acceptance here on earth is fleeting at best. We want to be known in the halls of heaven. Gabriel the Archangel told Daniel the prophet he was highly esteemed. It wasn't on earth. They were trying to kill him down here. He was highly esteemed in heaven! Remember the verse earlier that said that the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at the Word, were esteemed by God? Where do you want esteem, on earth or in heaven?

Let us go to Him. He is always calling, "Come! Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let's share in His reputation and insults. If it is for His name then we are very blessed. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Let him who hears say, "Come!" Come to Him who made Himself of no reputation in this world because of His vision for the next. Jesus said, "That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15) Are you afraid to be identified with Jesus because He isn't an esteemed thing in our culture? Would you prefer the esteem of men rather than the esteem of God? You usually have to choose one or the other.

Let us continually offer that sacrifice of praise. God has called us out to an eternal purpose. He has prepared a place for us. He has a ministry for us to do that has eternal value. We better praise Him. God despises murmuring so intensely, because considering His goodness to us, we should by all rights be overflowing with praise. When we aren't, we need to examine where we are at spiritually. Praise is a sign of spiritual health. Murmuring is a sign of spiritual sickness.

Let us review these last "let us" passages from Hebrews.

1. Let us throw of whatever hinders our race.
 2. Let us run with perseverance.
 3. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.
 4. Let us be thankful.
 5. Let us worship acceptably with reverence and awe.
 6. Let us go to Him sharing His shame.
 7. Let us continually offer praise.
- I hope you will keep this bookmark in your Bible, and review it often.

Just as in our last study, these passages are in the subjunctive tense. They warn us that if we don't heed them we will face consequences. We are in danger of slipping away from our relationship with God if we neglect these. God has given us these directions to help us endure and grow. It is up to us to take heed to them. Will you? None of us can do it for another. We must individually realize the need to live these passages by the grace of God.

Commented [notes3]: 15 He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.

Luke 16:15 (NIV)