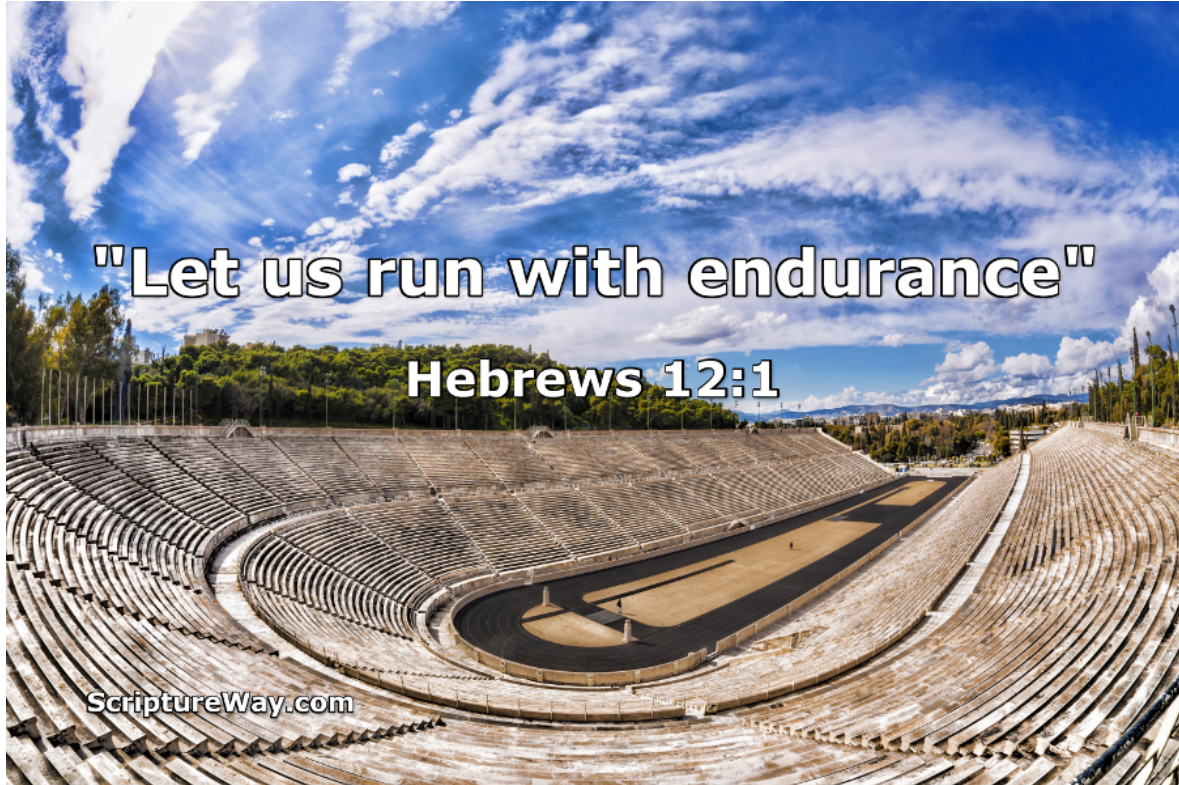


# “Let Us Run with Endurance”

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Let Us Run with Endurance - Hebrews 12:1 - Panathenaic Stadium (Athens, Greece) - Can Stock Photo - Used under license

***"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith ..." (Hebrews 12:1-2)***

This lesson explains the meaning of the phrases "let us run with endurance," "the race that is set before us," and "fixing our eyes on Jesus" in Hebrews 12:1-2.

***Consider.*** As a believer in Christ, are you enduring, remaining steadfast through the challenges in the spiritual race course that God has set before you?

## Introduction

In today's lesson, the writer of the letter of Hebrews compares the Christian life to athletes running in the contests of the ancient Greek games. The writer begins Hebrews 12:1 with "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us ..." The witnesses surrounding us inspire us not as spectators but by their examples (Ref. 1 below). The writer of Hebrews describes many Old Testament saints who were faithful in their witness for God (see Hebrews 11:1-40).

In Hebrews 12:1-2 the writer encourages believers to "run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus." Let's examine each phrase to understand the rich meaning that the Greek words convey.

### 1. Let Us Run with Endurance

*Definitions:*

*Run* -- The Greek word for *run* [*trechó*] (*trekh'-o*) means *to run or walk hastily* (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance - Ref. 2). Figuratively, *trechó* means *to advance speedily, like an athlete moving forward with full effort and directed purpose* (HELPS Word-studies - Ref. 2). Also see 1 Corinthians 9:24.

Like the athletes in the ancient Greek games, we are to advance *with full effort* in our Christian lives towards the goals that God sets for us (Philippians 3:13-14).

*Endurance* -- The Greek word for *endurance* [*hupomoné*] (*hoop-om-on-ay'*) means *patience, and steadfastness under the challenges that God allots in our lives* (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and HELPS Word-studies - Ref. 3).

As believers in Christ, as spiritual athletes, we are to endure, to remain steadfast, unswerved from our faith by even the greatest trials and sufferings (Ref. 3, James 1:2-4). Jesus himself *endured* the cross - for the joy that was set before him (Hebrews 12:2 italics added, Ref. 4).

God promises to give us the strength to endure. "They who wait for the

Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

## 2. The Race that is Set Before Us

*Definitions:*

*Race* -- The Greek word for *race* [*agón*] (*ag-one'*) in Hebrews 12:1 means "a contest (*struggle*), a grueling conflict (*fight*)" (HELPS Word-studies - Ref. 5). The Apostle Paul uses the same Greek word in 1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good *fight* of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12, italics added). At the conclusion of his ministry, Paul refers to the race he has run as a fight, "I have fought the good *fight* [*agón*], I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7, italics and brackets added).

Like Paul's experience, the race that God sets before us may be a struggle or a fight (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). However, God promises he is with us always through those struggles. Moses said to his people, "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). Jesus said to his disciples and says to us today, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

*Set before* -- The Greek word for *set before* is *prokeimai*, which means *to place before, in front of, and to be appointed* (Thayer's Greek Lexicon - Ref. 6).

God is the One who sets the race course before us, and not we ourselves. Secular texts and self-help books may teach us to set goals without input from God. However, as believers in God and disciples of Christ, we should seek to know the goals that God has appointed for us, and then we press on to reach those God-given goals with the skills and endurance that God supplies us. The Apostle Paul gives us his example. "Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

If you don't know what goals or "next steps" God has in mind for you to accomplish, ask him. "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). "The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

### 3. Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus

*Definition:*

The Greek word for *fixing* [*aphoraó*] (af-or-ah'-o) in Hebrews 12:2 means *looking away from all else, to fix one's gaze upon* (HELPS Word-studies - Ref. 7). Fixing our eyes on Jesus requires not only looking to Jesus but also turning away from all else that distracts our eyes including worldly lusts (1 John 2:15-17) and the sin that entangles us (Hebrews 12:1).

Hymn writer Helen H. Lemmel captures the meaning of fixing our eyes on Jesus in the hymn, "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus" (Ref. 8):

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace."

As believers in Christ saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), we are to turn away from all worldly lusts and sins that distract our eyes and turn our eyes exclusively to Jesus who is the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2).

### Summary - the Main Principles in this Lesson

1. Like the athletes in the ancient Greek games, as believers in Christ, we are to advance *with full effort* in our Christian lives towards the goals that God sets for us.
2. As spiritual athletes, we are to endure, to remain steadfast, unswerved from our faith by even the greatest trials and sufferings. God promises to give us the strength to endure.

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3. The race that God sets before us may be a struggle or a fight. However, God promises he is with us always through those struggles.
4. God is the One who sets the race course before us, and not we ourselves. If you don't know what goals or "next steps" God has in mind for you to accomplish, ask him.
5. As believers in Christ saved by grace, we are to turn away from all worldly lusts and sins that distract us and turn our eyes exclusively to Jesus who is the author and perfecter of faith.

*Apply.* Be a spiritual athlete. Run with endurance the race that God has set before you. Complete your race faithfully with your eyes fixed on Jesus.

### **Related Lesson**

"Do Not Love the World" (1 John 2:15-16)

### **References**

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