



Let Us run With Endurance the Race



**Twelve Steps to a Good Year
(Part 11)**
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living that God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry. This week I'm going to continue and complete the theme that I've been following for the last two weeks, "Twelve Steps to a Good Year."

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It encourages me greatly to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please, take time to write to me, even if it's only a brief note.

Each of our twelve steps to a good year is taken from a sentence in the epistle to the Hebrews, beginning with the words, "let us." So far we've looked at eight successive steps

which were: (1) Let us fear; (2) Let us be diligent; (3) Let us hold fast our confession; (4) Let us draw near to the throne of grace; (5) Let us press on to maturity; (6) Let us draw near to the Most Holy Place; (7) Let us hold fast our confession without wavering; (8) Let us consider one another. Let me urge you to remember my suggestion that as we go through these successive steps, you commit them to memory.

Today we're going to look at the ninth step, which is found in the opening verses of Hebrews 12. I'll read the first two verses of that chapter:

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The step we're looking at today, the ninth step, is found there in verse 1, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." However, because of the circumstances of the English translation, I need to add a word of explanation about

that verse. If I go back over the complete verse, it goes like this: "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and then let us run with endurance the race." Now in the English translation there are two "let us" phrases in that one verse, which is perfectly legitimate translation but it so happens that in the original Greek, the first phrase, "lay aside every encumbrance," is not in that form in the original. It's a participle which goes, "Laying aside every encumbrance, let us run with endurance the race." So, the real "let us" phrase on which we need to focus in that verse is, "Let us run, with endurance, the race that is set before us."

You see, there and elsewhere in the New Testament, the Christian life is compared to a race. This implies a specific course marked out before us in advance, and success in the Christian life consists in completing the course in accordance with the rules of the competition. I want to point out to you in my talk today, in light of the fact that we are confronted with this race that is set before us, four requirements for success in the race. Each one of these requirements is found in the New Testament.

The first requirement is a right mental attitude. This is exemplified by the words of Paul in Philippians 3:10-14, where speaking about his relationship to Jesus Christ, he says this:

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being conformed to his death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Paul had a specific objective. He says somewhere else, 1 Corinthians 9, he didn't run aimlessly. He had an aim before him. He knew what the goal was. This determined his mental attitude. Then he goes on to say:

"Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect [or complete], but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

He has the vision that Christ laid hold of him for a purpose, and that the fulfilling of that purpose means he has to relate to the purpose. He has to be determined that the purpose of Christ will become his purpose. He continues again:

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: 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."

You'll notice that the phrase "I press on" occurs twice. I believe that's the mental attitude that you and I need to share, "I press on. I have a goal. I haven't arrived but I know where I'm headed." The last time he uses the phrase he says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." There is a reward for those who successfully complete the race. There's always been a goal in mind, and let's remember that we don't want to lose our God-appointed reward.

The second condition for success in this race is self-control, and this is illustrated again by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25. Again, he compares the Christian life to competing in an athletic contest. I think it's a really good parallel, and one that's vivid for us today because we are so often confronted with this theme of athletic contests in the newspapers and in television, so it's very vivid for us, and the same principle still applies. Paul again speaks about the race. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, he says,

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win."

That's an objective. And then he goes on to state this second condition:

"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They, then, do it to receive a perishable wreath [that's the prize], but we an imperishable wreath."

So, if we're going to win the prize, if we're going to win the race, we've got to meet the conditions of self-control. It's so obvious, I think, from athletics. Every athlete who succeeds in world athletics today has to exercise the most rigorous self-control. He has to "go into training," as we say. He has to control what he eats, he has to control when he sleeps, he has to control the amount of exercise he takes, and he also has to control his psychology. He has to build up the right kind of attitude. He can't give way to negative thoughts. He's got to go into that race with a positive attitude that he's going to achieve victory.

All this is equally true for us as Christians in our race. We cannot win the race without self-control.

The third condition for victory in this race is stated in the verse in Hebrews 12:1 that we've already read. It is

endurance. "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." This is one quality which is essential to the Christian character if we're going to achieve real spiritual success and fulfillment. We have to cultivate endurance.

What's the opposite of endurance? I think it's giving up or quitting. Christians cannot afford to be quitters. When God commits us to something, we've got to set our face and go through with it. There's a close relationship between self-control and endurance. That's why I put them in that order, because in actual fact, without self-control we won't achieve endurance. We've got to master our weaknesses. Otherwise, every time we're tested in the area of endurance, some kind of weakness, emotional, psychological, physical, will get us down and we'll give up just at the point we should have been holding on and enduring.

The fourth condition, it says, is to have our eyes fixed on Jesus. This is stated in the next verse of Hebrews 12, verse 2:

"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the Cross..."

So, that condition is we've got to look to Jesus. In other words, we can't run the race in self-reliance. Looking to Jesus means He's our example, we put our confidence in Him, He's the author, the beginning of our faith; He's the perfecter, the one who will bring us through to victory.

Now let me in closing read you the testimony of a victor, the apostle Paul. This is what he says in 2 Timothy 4:7-8:

"I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. In the future there is laid up 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 loved his appearing."

Paul knew he had won the race, he had finished the course, and the prize was there waiting for him. That's a glorious testimony, isn't it? It can be your testimony and my testimony if we meet the conditions. There are men and women today in the world, I've known a number, of whom the same was true. I've seen them complete their course and they could say, like Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time and I'll continue this theme, "Twelve Steps to a Good Year." Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the tenth step.

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Website: derekprince.com





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