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Lufkin TX

Hebrews 12: The Call to Endurance

Introduction:

(**NOWNESS**): Water is one of the most amazing and powerful natural forces in the world, oceans, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, rapids, tsunamis, flash floods, just to name a few of the powerful events caused by water. Water also creates and is host to some amazing things such as, the Grand Canyon, the Great Coral Reef, 33,600 different species of fish, along with 10.4 million residential pools, 309,000 public swimming pools in America alone, 4 main ocean basins, millions of lakes, and 76 rivers over 1,000 miles long across the world and here are five of the longest...

- Danube River 1,847 Miles in 58 Days
- Mississippi River 2,360 Miles in 68 Days
- The Parana River 2,484 Miles in 24 Days
- The Yangtze River 2,487 Miles in 40 Days
- The Amazon River 3,273 Miles in 66 Days (Longest Swim in History)

Martin Strel or better known as the “Big River Man” is a 62 Year Old gentlemen born in Slovenia who holds 5 Guinness World Records for swimming the entirety of the five rivers I just stated, (Repeat the Rivers with the amount of Days it took him to Swim them). He has done what many people would define as the impossible and pushed human limits to a point where many could never dream of pushing. During these extreme and treacherous swims Martin would be losing around 600 to 700 calories every hour, he has been bitten by Piranhas, struck by lightning, had numerous infections. His skin has peeled off like tape, he’s lost teeth, and much more.

Nevertheless, through it all, the ups and the downs, the pain, the injuries, and the sheer distance

and time, Martin never stopped, Martin pressed on, Martin Persevered, and Martin Had Endurance...

(THENESS): The first three verses of Hebrews chapter 12 are often times called or titled “The Call to Endurance.” Hebrews is a powerful and meaningful text. Many scholars are not sure who the author of Hebrews is, but the audience is most widely acknowledged to the Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem at this time. During this time, they are facing terrible scrutiny and persecution, therefore this writing is to give them hope and challenge them to stay strong and persevere during this trying time. This challenge by the author is one of great depth and power that must not be looked over as we “must throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” in order to “run the race marked out for us with endurance fixing our eyes on Jesus.” The author understands that there are things that get in our way, times are hard, we struggle, but he wants us, he implores us, and he empowers us to endure. The word endurance is defined as “the fact or power of enduring an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way.” IN the ancient Greek it translates to “hupomone” meaning the patience to sit down and master things, it is a determination, unhurrying and yet delaying, which goes steadily on and refuses to be deflected or defeated. As Christians today how is our endurance? How is our endurance with faith? How is our endurance with Hope? How is our endurance with Love? How is our endurance with life? The highs and the lows, the ups and the downs the things that “hinder and so easily entangle us” are everywhere and we often times fix our eyes on other things, making our endurance struggle.

BIG IDEA: Church family this morning I beg of you, I implore you, and I pray for you that we as a body, as Christian today, that we endure. That we throw off the things that hinder and entangle us so easily that we continue to run the race set out for us, and that we fix our eyes upon

Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith, because **WITH JESUS WE CAN ENDURE ALL THINGS.**

Transition: The first step we see the author ask us to do here, is to throw off the things that hinder and the sin that so easily entangles”

Movement #1: Throw off

To “throw off” to “remove something” to “let go of” to “get rid of” these are all phrases we are very aware of and something we may do day to day - with physical things, or maybe just ever year or so when we have a garage sale. But here we see Hebrews asking us to throw off very specific things in our lives. The first thing he is asking for us to remove are things that hinder us. To hinder something is to provide resistance, delay, or obstruction to something or someone. This can be physical, mental, or spiritual. There are things in our lives that provide resistance from being the best that we can be as followers in Jesus Christ. Maybe this is social media, maybe this is that one friend that has influence over you, maybe it’s that one bad habit that you just can’t seem to kick. Maybe it’s alcohol, pornography, or the itching desire to please those around you no matter what it takes, or the drive for success through monetary value rather than your relationship with loved ones and Jesus Christ. There are a number of things that can affect our lives and hinder them from being more Christ like and being able to endure the race we are running. As the things that hinder us secondly the author asks us to throw off the sin that so easily entangles us. Now these two things flow together and reflect each other. The words “easily ensnare” or “easily entangle” translates to the ancient Greek word (Euperistation) which can be translated four ways “easily avoided, admired, ensnaring, or dangerous” as we see here some sins can be easily avoided but are not, some sins are admired yet must be thrown off, some sins are ensnaring and very harmful, and some sins are more dangerous than others...

Lived Experience: Now as all of yall are well aware of my Dad is hmm a little on the OCD side of things especially when it comes to his yard. Every Friday is like Christmas day for him as he gets to go outside and work on the yard, mowing, weed eating, edging, trimming, and for some reason blowing the driveway of leaves and pine needles like it won't just be covered again in 30 minutes. Now each winter my Dad goes out and cuts back, or throws off all the plants and trees, he even cuts back the Crepe-Myrdals all the way. By this time, they are all withered and frozen out, he is literally throwing off the bad things on the plants... each summer we get to see them grow back, more beautiful and bigger than they were the year before and they are ready and able to endure the hot Texas summer. We see this idea depicted in the Gospels, John chapter 15 verse 1-2 states: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes."

Application: In our lives today, we are like these plants and bushes, and Here in Hebrews we are being called to throw off the bad things. As Christians we must notice the things that hinder us, and the sins that easily entangle us so that we are able to throw them off. Church, in order to endure and persevere today towards Jesus Christ, we must throw off, cut off, and prune the sinful things out of our lives and look towards Christ, because **WITH JESUS WE CAN ENDURE ALL THINGS.**

Transition: Our second step towards endurance that the author of Hebrews discusses is to run the race marked out for us...

Movement #2: Run the Race Marked for us:

This phrase and word race is used multiple times in the Bible – both Old and New Testament. We see it in Ecclesiastes 9:11, 1 Corinthians 9:24, and Hebrews 12:1 and even in Psalm 19:5. "to run the race." We all know what a race is, and we all know what running is - but

what exactly is the author of Hebrew's referring to here? Race in ancient Greek is translated to "agona", meaning conflict or struggle of many kinds, which sounds pretty accurate to me when I go for a run, which is very very very rarely. What does it truly mean to run the race marked out for you? Paul discusses this idea in Acts 20:24 where he states, "However, 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 Gods grace." We also see this idea of "marked out for us" in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you , plans to give you hope and a future."

Lived Experience: I am not sure how many of yall have been to Waco within the past year... but DO NOT GO!! Waco traffic and construction may be the death of all of us... one day this road is opened, and one day it isn't. One day there are no potholes, the next day there are only potholes in the road. One day the lights work, the next you're at a stop sign red light backed up all the way down Waco drive and you don't think you will ever make it home. The race we are running through Waco does not have a path to follow, and it is not marked out for us in any way...

Application: Church family Christ has gone before us all, he has paved the way, he has set our life in stone, he has died on the cross for our sins so that we may live a full life in and through him. We are just to run the race set out before us. We are to be good stewards, we are to spread the gospel, we are to love the poor and the hurting and the marginalized, we are called to run after Christ because Christ grace and love abounds. Therefore, when we get heaven, we will hear those sweet beautiful words saying, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Because **WITH JESUS YOU CAN ENDURE ALL THINGS**

Transition: You have endured and persevered, you have thrown off the bad, you have run the race marked out for you and lastly and most importantly we must fix our eyes on Jesus.

Movement #3: Fix our eyes on Jesus

It is October 18th.... How in the world did we get here? Just yesterday it feels like it was March 13th and we were getting ready for the NCAA Tournament, we were in the middle of spring break and the only thing we were worried about was making sure we could survive the last few months of school and make it to summer vacation. Then suddenly the impossible happened, disaster struck, our world was turned upside down... and has continued to turn upside down for the past few months. Church family I am tired... I am tired of COVID, I am tired of political duress, I am tired of left vs right, black vs white, Christian vs non-Christian. I am tired of the hate, tired of the sickness, tired of the dying, tired of the hurricanes, of the fires, and of the unknown. There are days and weeks, that I don't think I can endure, there are times where I want to throw up my hands and yell WHY GOD WHY, JUST MAKE IT ALL STOP, WHERE ARE YOU GOD??? Running this race, enduring this race of life right now can be hard, and can often times feel impossible. BUT our God is stronger than anything we can imagine, as Ephesians 3:20 says, "now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us." Therefore, after we have thrown off the things that hinder and so easily entangle us, after we have begun to run the race marked out for us, let us most importantly fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, because through and with him **WE ARE ABLE TO ENDURE ALL THINGS.**

Conclusion:

Endurance... a word we all know, something we usually connect with sports and physicality, something that doesn't come easily. We are called to endurance with our walk with

Christ, called to endurance in our everyday lives, and called to endurance as a church family. Let us throw off the things that hinder and so easily entangle us, let us run the race marked out for us, and most importantly let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Because church family if we do those things... our lives will be a whole lot better.