

Hebrews 12:12,13

Hebrews 12:12 (NASB) Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

This section of Hebrews 12 began with the exhortation: “Let us run with endurance the race set before us” (12:1). It concludes here with a similar exhortation to keep on running despite weariness and injury.

The Christian life is like a long-distance race. There will be times when we “hit the wall” and feel sorely tempted to quit. But we have ample resources with which to renew our strength – if we draw upon them. The “therefore” that begins this passage points us back to the resources previously described in 12:1-11:

- Earlier believers, who have completed their races, can provide us with inspiration and insight to run our races (12:1a).
- Jesus – who is not only our ultimate Example, but also our ever-present Helper – will be with us every step of the way (12:2,3).
- Our heavenly Father is training us through hardships, developing in us the endurance we need to get to the finish line (12:4-11).

Drawing upon these resources, we are to renew our commitment before God to stay in the race to which He has assigned us. This is what it means to “strengthen the hands that are weak, and the knees that are feeble,” and to “make straight paths for your feet.” Picture a runner who is exhausted and staggering off-course, looking for any



excuse to quit. But then he remembers the help that is available to him. This reminder re-energizes him, and he gets back on course toward the finish line.

Such is the imagery of this passage. But what does it look like specifically to recommit yourself to the race that God has set before you? Many related truths have been helpful to me over the years:

- Do you need to turn away from self-pity? It is a terribly debilitating habit. Ask God to help you to replace it with gratitude to Him. Thank Him for the privilege of having a race to run, and for all of the help He provides. Likewise, reject envy of other runners' current ease and good fortune. Affirm instead that God has selected both the race and the training that is best for you.
- Are you worrying about the challenges that might lie further down the road? Focus instead on being faithful to God for this one day. God will not supply us today with help for tomorrow's possible needs, but He will meet us with all the help we need to run today's course. What is it that you know God wants you to do today? What step can you take today in that direction?
- Are you focused on regret for your past failures? The older we get, the more potential regrets we accumulate, and the more tempting it is to live in those regrets. Alternatively, are you nostalgically focused on the bygone "good old days?" Both regret and nostalgia will hinder you. This is why, in another passage, Paul tells us to deliberately "forget" what lies behind and to "press on" toward what lies ahead (Philippians 3:13,14). Remember that God forgives you for past failures, and that He can work through them to deepen your appreciation of His grace. Remember also that He has great blessings in store for you in the future – so run toward them!



- Are you using your current “lameness” as an excuse to drop out of the race? Circumstantial adversities, emotional pain, and declining health make it easier to believe this lie. In physical races, injuries do indeed force us to the sidelines until we recover. But in this race, the author says: “Make straight paths for your feet, *so that* the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.” In other words, it is as we run while still lame that we experience healing. If you are willing to limp forward, doing what you can to follow God, He will meet you there with His recuperative power!
- Are you allowing yourself to be isolated from fellow Christian servants? Depression especially will make us want to be alone, but this kind of isolation will lead to increased negative thinking. Elijah isolated himself after Jezebel’s threat – and wound up becoming suicidal (see 1 Kings 19:1-10). So shun isolation, and “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace *with* those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:23). Tell a Christian friend about your weariness. Ask him for advice and encouragement. Pray with him for renewed energy. Then run alongside him as much as possible.


One last piece of advice: An important part of running the race is encouraging other flagging runners. That is what the author is doing in this passage (12:1-13). And earlier in his letter, he twice exhorted them to encourage one another.

- *Hebrews 3:13* *But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
- *Hebrews 10:24* *Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*



Thank You, Lord Jesus, for reminding me that the Christian life is a long-distance race. I need that reminder because I sometimes grow weary and am tempted to lose heart. Show me today how to resume the race You have set before me. Give me today the eyes to recognize fellow-runners who need encouragement, and give me the words that will help them to keep going until they see You face to face.

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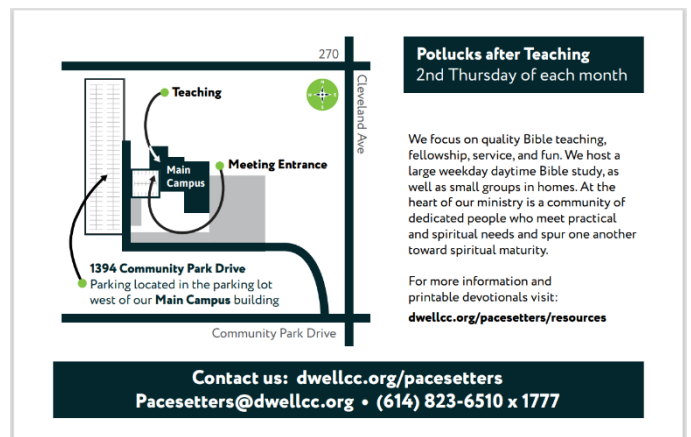


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