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Faith to Run the Believer's Marathon 12:1 to 13:25



Figures of speech are effective teaching tools and are often used in the Bible. Several times the life of a believer is compared to warfare. Rabbi Sha'ul counsels us to endure hardship **as a good soldier for Jesus Christ (Second Timothy 2:3)** and to **put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11)**. He also uses **boxing** as a comparison: **I box in such a way, as not beating the air (First Corinthians 9:26; Second Timothy 4:7)**. The believer is often spoken of as a **slave of Yeshua Messiah**. Paul frequently refers to himself as a **slave, or bondservant, of Christ (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1)**. Jesus spoke of **His** followers as **lights and salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16)**. Peter refers to believers as **babes** and as **living stones (First Peter 2 and 5)**. But Rabbi Sha'ul was particularly fond of the figure of a **race**. He uses such phrases as **run in a race (First Corinthians 9:24)**, **running well (Galatians 5:7)**, and **run in vain (Philippians 2:16)**. This is also the figure used by the writer of **Hebrews** to the Jews who were encouraged to **run with endurance the race that was set before them.**³⁵⁸

But all the Jews to whom the book was written were undergoing persecution because of their break with Judaism. It was coming from their Jewish friends and relatives who resented their turning their back on the religious customs and traditions in which they had been raised. The affliction had largely been in the form of social and economic pressure, although some of them had been imprisoned (**10:34**). The writer encouraged them not to forget **God's** Word and to their suffering for **Messiah's** sake would produce holiness. They

should not look to **Mount Sinai** with fear, but instead, look to **Mount Tziyon**, representing the heavenly Yerushalayim, for grace. **Chapter 12** is a call, then, to persevere looking to **Christ** as our example. **He** endured the shame of the cross to bring us into fellowship with **ADONAI**. In the same way we should keep our eyes on **Him** as we **run the race** of life. We have received citizenship in an unshakable Kingdom, so let us show gratitude and offer our lives in acceptable service to **Him**.

The first eleven chapters of Hebrews do not emphasize specific commands to believers. There is an obvious lack of practical exhortations. Those chapters are pure doctrine and are almost exclusively directed to Jews who had received the Good News but needed to be affirmed in the superiority of the B'rit Chadashah. The exhortations in **Chapter 12** are general, encouraging them to run the race of faith with patience. But the specific practical exhortations for believers are found in **Chapter 13**. This fits the pattern of the New Covenant teaching, which is always doctrine and then duty, position and then practice. **Chapter 13** is not an afterthought, but is central to the message of the book of **Hebrews**: true **faith** demands true living.³⁵⁹