Coronavirus Social Distancing Daily Devotion #22

Endurance Is Key

**Hebrews 12:1-2 (NASB)** *1  “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, 2  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*.”

I remember years ago watching a track meet on television. What I remember most was the guys who were running the distance races. I remember thinking, why is the guy in the back of the pack the one who often wins the race? When I said something about it, my dad said they were pacing themselves. I had never heard of pacing, so I asked what that meant. He said that’s when the guy who knows what he is doing, allows the other guys to go out fast and burn themselves out so he can catch up and beat them because he has preserved his strength. But then he said that the guy who paces himself knows that if he keep his eye on the finish line, he’ll know when to kick it into high gear so he can pass the others just before they get there.

I have never forgotten that conversation. In fact, when I was in high school, I was on the track team and ran distance. Mind you I never won, but I tried to practice pacing. What was interesting is I found myself getting stronger. Pacing was helping my endurance. I found that I could last and feel much better at the end of the race.

As I got older, I became much more aware of the importance of pacing. Pacing yourself in life builds a tremendous amount of endurance. I have watched many people burn themselves out even pastors in ministry, because they didn’t build their endurance. But most importantly they didn’t keep their eye on the One who called them to ministry – the “finish line”.

Beloved, I don’t expect you to identify fully with either running on a track team or being in ministry as a vocation. But what is clear is that the Lord uses this illustration to make His point. There have been many, many godly people who have suffered through great and tragic circumstances. Yet they survived because they held on to their faith. The kept their eyes on Jesus. You see, if we allow ourselves to get distracted by everything around us, we will not finish this life well. There are many distractions in our race:  money, time, jobs, relationships, entertainment, wanting things to be different, COVID-19. And these distractions can and often do cause us to forget what our real purpose is and Who is at the finish line.

Jesus is the greatest example of endurance. He suffered mercilessly at the hands of the most wicked people of His day. Yet He always remembered His purpose and His goal. What that means for us is that we cannot let something like this virus and social distancing and being quarantined or even bad decisions by leaders or anyone else to distract us from our real purpose. That purpose is to be godly, to live our lives each day with Jesus as our focus. Always looking to Him and at Him so we know when to speed up in the race and when to pace ourselves.

In this current race it’s kind of like being on the backstretch and knowing you have half the race to go and are close to running out of energy. Right now, you need to pace yourself. You need to stay steady.  Don’t burn too much emotional energy about what is going on with this virus, because Jesus is just around the turn. You must be patient and wait. You must settle yourselves and let go of the jitters of wanting to be out and about and getting back to “normal”. You must remember that Jesus knows exactly what He is doing, and if you will just keep going, not worrying about what will or won’t be, you will finish joyfully. But, if you burn all your emotional energy, you will potentially miss the most glorious finish any athlete ever had.

**Hebrews 12:3 (NASB)** *3  “For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart”*.