

**Mark 8: 34-38 and Hebrews 1: 1-4; "Let us Run with Endurance",  
Sermon # 66 in the series – "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by  
Pastor Paul Rendall on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in the Morning Worship Service.**

We have been going through this mini series on the House of Christian Discipleship and we have stepped outside of the Exercise Room through the door in the basement and we have come outside into the world of Christian Discipleship and we have begun to run the race. The last time that I spoke to you from this text I told you that in running the race of the Christian life, the object is to win the prize. The prize is the crown of righteousness which is given by the Lord Jesus Himself, to everyone who lives out the truth of the Word of God. The prize is held out to those who would "win Christ". He gives it to those who are counted worthy to stand before Him in heaven at the end of the race. There they shall hear His commendation of them; saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." It says in 1 Corinthians Chapter 9, and verse 24, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?" "Run in such a way that you may obtain it." When it says that only one obtains the prize, it does not mean that you as a Christian are competing against other Christians, and only one of you is going to receive the prize. Everyone who competes according to the rules, to the glory of God, will obtain the prize. Paul is trying to convey to us that we should run the race of the Christian life in such a way that we would obtain it; that we would compete against all those forces which would attempt to overcome us and drag us down to the pit in the end; those forces which, if they were to overcome you; they would keep you from entering heaven and winning Christ. As I have said before, it is not as though salvation is by your works, even the best of them. Your whole salvation, if you have received Christ by faith; rests upon Him and His finished work; His having run His race perfectly on your behalf; and His dying for you upon the cross. This running of the race and winning the prize; this winning of Christ and heaven; is rather your proving the reality of Christ in you; Christ who is the hope of glory. The competition is not with other Christians; to outdo them in your obedience. That would be pride and seeking your own glory. This race is rather a picture of how you will live your life; whether for Christ or for yourself. It is true that there are other people in this race of how you will live your Christian life, and they can either hinder you or help you depending on what their motives and actions are, in relation to you and to Christ. But ultimately they cannot harm you, for God has purposed that all things shall work together for good to those who love Him. Therefore any competition with other people is only in the realm of whether you will compete with them in a holy way, for the promotion of His kingdom and His glory.

So let me repeat, the true competition of which we are speaking this morning, is found in the race of your overcoming all those forces which would prove your confession of faith in Christ to be a false one, were they to prevail. The true

competition is to realize that you are in a race to promote Christ's glory and not your own. The true race will be for those who want to become most like Christ in the time that God has allotted to them. Paul says in verse 25 of Chapter 9 of 1st Corinthians, "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things." "Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty." "Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air." "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." Is it really possible that an apostle like Paul could have been disqualified at the last from entering heaven and receiving this prize; this crown? No, not from the standpoint of God's election. But we do not know our election except by our faith being in exercise as a living faith which runs the race with endurance. When we know the reality of the grace of Christ in our life, we really live, and we will really run. We will lose our life that we might find it. We will lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, and run the race with endurance. This is what we want to talk about today; running the race with endurance. What does this mean? I think that you will be able to run the race with endurance and promote the glory of Christ if you will deliberately choose, by God's grace, to do three things. The first is that you would lay aside every weight and sin. The second is to fix your eyes upon Jesus. And the third is to consider Him as you run; for He the One who has run before you. Then the next time that I preach to you, we will consider a fourth thing; that is, enduring the chastening of God as a part of our running.

**But 1<sup>st</sup> of all – If you would run the race with endurance you must lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets you.**

He says, "Let us lay aside every weight..." This is set in the context of the holy competition which you engage in, in regard to people who have lived and run in the past. These witnesses who went before you; they laid the aside weights and the sin; and even so; you too, if you are wise, you will do the same, by the grace of Christ. You should take notice of the faith of those who went before you; this cloud of witnesses; and then run like they ran, seeing what you can do for the glory of God and Christ and His kingdom. In our last sermon we looked at Noah. We saw that he didn't have any good examples to follow in his generation. He alone found grace, and he alone was righteous. There were only eight persons who were saved from that whole world of people. Noah and his wife; and their three sons and their wives. That was it. The truth that you should understand from his life, is this. When you run your race make sure that you lay aside the weight of worldly peer pressure. Your object in running the race is to win God's approval; not man's. You want to learn to run Christ's way, and not the way of people who do not want to honor God. Your real competition is with the holy saints who have gone before you and not with people of the World who are perishing now, and who will perish eternally in their sins, unless they are brought to repentance. Many a professed Christian in our generation is trying hard to see how worldly they can be, and still be a Christian. This is folly and it holds eternal danger. If a person lives this way, they have real reason to question

whether they are running the race. In 1<sup>st</sup> John 2, verse 15 it says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world." "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." John is saying that the one who loves the world does not have the love of the Father in him, so as to love Him enough to keep His commandments. 1<sup>st</sup> John 2: 5 says, "Whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in him." This true love of God is born when a person believes in Jesus Christ. Then the love of God is poured out within their heart by the Holy Spirit. But where true love exists in the heart of a person, it will compete with, and overcome, the love of the world. That is how it is perfected. That is how a Christian runs. Many professed Christians are competing with their worldly neighbors to see how many of this world's possessions and how many of this world's entertainments they can have and hold and enjoy, and still make it to heaven. Christ's spiritual joys, which He will most certainly give to them, when they seek for Him every day, they are strangers to these. When a person lives for the World, my brethren, he is not really promoting the glory of God and Christ. How can a person be found to be a true Christian in the final analysis if they are worldly?

The running of the worldly wise man is not the running of the Christian. The running of the worldly wise man is his trying to collect material wealth, and holding to his own self-sufficiency and self-righteousness instead of Christ. Instead of letting the World overcome you, you ought to receive the words of wisdom personified in Proverbs 8: 12 – "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion." "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate." "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength." "By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice." "By me, princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth." "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me." "Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness." "My fruit is better than gold, yes than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver." "I traverse the way of righteousness." (I run over the whole ground in the way of righteousness), in the midst of the paths of justice, that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries." This is not material wealth that is being spoken of; it is the true riches; the spiritual riches of grace and truth. A Christian, then, when they begin to run, is not seeking for worldly wisdom and riches, or popularity with their peers. They are seeking for godly wisdom and the true riches which Christ gives. In Proverbs 8: 32, it says, "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways." "Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it." "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." "For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; and those who hate me love death." That is true running. Standing at the gate before Christ, kneeling down at the line in prayer, and waiting for His instruction every day; His Word coming to you with power like a gun to set you to running. This is running the race when you are seeking for the approval that only God can give to you as you run. It says in Colossians 2: 3 that in Christ "are

hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You will need both to run, so as to obtain the prize.

It will be much better for each one who believes in Christ, if you will take the holy saints of old as your models and learn how they ran the race. They trusted in the promises of God and so should you. You find a sample of this in Hebrews 13: 5 – "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have." "For He himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" "So we may boldly say, : "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear." "What can man do to me?" The holy saints of old in the Bible, and the holy saints in all past generations, learned to separate themselves from the sinful worldly influences and in this way they overcame them so that they could win the race. You too, must learn to do this or it is possible that you may miss heaven and eternal life altogether. If you do not learn lay aside the weight of worldly thinking, your running will be greatly impeded or you may not run at all. The saints who have gone before you; their spirits are still alive in heaven and they are this "cloud of witnesses" who are looking down with the Lord Jesus, to see if you will run your race, and how you will run it.

Thank God that there are also living friends in our day and time; people who you may find in this church and other Biblically sound churches, who will be faithful to your soul and will tell you the truth when you stray into things which are spiritually not good for you. Praise the Lord, there are those who are running the race toward the goal of being righteous, with endurance. Do not shake your head at them. Do not disdain their counsel. It will be better for you if you can be as the Psalmist in Psalm 119, verse 63 who said, "I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts." Better to have godly friends who will lead you in the right way, running in the right direction, rather than that you, as a confessed Christian, should be led to run in the ways of the world. "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." "Flee from the wrath of God!" "Flee from the wrath to come!" But flee also the love of the World. Don't turn around and don't look back!" You don't want to be a hypocrite. And you don't want to be like Lot's wife; leaving Sodom and looking longingly back. She was turned into a pillar of salt, an everlasting monument to the just judgment of the Lord upon her. No, if you are in your right mind, you want to be a true Christian. You do not want to be a play actor. You want to be a true Christian no matter what the cost. You must lay aside every weight. Is that weight your love of money and riches? Then learn to give them away and invest them wisely for the kingdom of God. It is harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Is that weight that you wear, your poverty? James says in his epistle Chapter 2, verse 5 – "Listen, my beloved brethren: 'Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" Solomon says, "Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more." And he says again in Proverbs 30, verse 8, "Give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with the food allotted to me;

lest I be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' "Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God." You do not want to do either, brethren.

Remember the word that Jesus says, that is it more blessed to be poor if it will take your heart off of the cares of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the riches of the world. Jesus says in Luke 21: 34 – "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly." "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth." "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." Some persons may lay great stress in their thinking that these verses refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and they will miss the point. The point of running the race is that at the end of it you may stand before the Son of Man. You cannot run the race if you are lazy. You cannot run if you are sensual. You cannot run it if you are proud, or covetous, or worldly. You must get all of these ideas of earthly wealth, fame, and glory out of your mind. You must shuck them as things which will weigh you down. There are many weights and many sins bound up in living for the World and for your flesh. Repentance is a duty for every day of the Christian life, just as holiness is a duty for every day of the Christian life. It is not just a matter of changing your mind once about the way that you have lived in the past, and then not going on to do something about it. It is confessing your sins where you see them and find them in your life; but it is more than that. It is forsaking them. Christ has died for your sins, and so you are forgiven of them if you have trusted in His atonement on the cross for them. They are washed away by His blood. They are covered so that God does not see them to punish them. But Christ did not save you so that you would continue on practicing them. He did not come to save you in your sins; He came to save you from your sins. He died to keep you from going back to practice them again. He suffered so that you would not love them any more. He who covers his sins will not prosper," it says in Proverbs 28: 13, "but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy."

Now we need very much to see that this is a duty to be regularly engaged in, in running the race each day. Each day you must lay aside those things which will weigh you down. Each day you must deal with the sins that you will find in your heart, your thoughts, and sometimes even in your words and actions. The actions to be taken are found listed in verses such as James 1: 21 – "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls." And 1 Peter 2, verse 1, where Peter says, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Peter is saying that these kinds of sins will not allow you to run for the glory of God. These are sins of the heart; sins that break out against other people in the way that you think of them. Instead of loving them and praying for them; you only focus upon the things that they have said and done which disqualify them from your considering them in a loving way, any

further. These kind of heart attitudes will lay you in the ditch in terms of your being able to run the race. In running the race there are things that you must put off, and there are things that you must put on. Look with me at Colossians Chapter 3, verse 8 – "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the Old Man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...." Ask yourself now whether you are indeed doing what this verse is describing? Are you putting off anger, and thinking badly of people around you? Are you putting away the hard and malicious thoughts of God, and your making Him out to be in some way different from the way that He is described in the Bible; a God greatly to be feared and revered in the assembly of His saints? Do you take His name in vain, or do you hallow it in prayer? Are you using good language or coarse language when you speak? This is how you may tell if you are laying aside the sins which so easily beset you. Then there are certain things that you must put on, which are found in verse 12, and following. Garments of salvation which are light. Tender mercies; they will not weigh you down. Kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering; they will spur you on to run faster. Let it true of you that you clothe yourself with these running garments.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> way that you run the race with endurance is to fix your eyes on Jesus.**

"Fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." You need to fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus in terms of the gospel that you believe so that you will be able to run for Him and with Him. He is the author of your faith. He is the author of the true gospel. You can only run if you have true knowledge. Some people do not understand that Jesus Christ is the author of their faith. They think of their Christianity as something that they make up their own mind on. But no one can be a disciple without the Word of God which tells them what Jesus is like. The way that we look to Jesus is two-fold. We look to see what the Word teaches us about Jesus. And then we look to our Living Lord in prayer and faith that He might give us the strength to run the race. In John Chapter 8 Jesus said, "If you abide in My Word you are truly disciples of mine." "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free, and you shall be free indeed." The people to whom Jesus was speaking were those Jews who had thought they believed in Jesus with a saving faith. But He confronted them over their bondage to sin. They said to Him in John 8: 33 – "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone." "How can you say, 'you will be made free?'" "Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.'" "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever." "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." When Jesus frees you, He frees you from the dominating power of sin, and He frees you to run the race. He gives you the faith to believe in Him. He gives you a new heart to love Him, new lips to speak of Him; new feet to walk in his commandments, and run the race of doing all to the glory of God.

The Apostle Paul was a man who did not know that he was in bondage to sin until the Lord struck him down with light and grace on the road to Damascus. He was running, but He was running the wrong direction. He was persecuting Christians. His was the race of a proud self-righteousness Pharisee. His was a sinful self-confidence in his own ability to keep the law. But the Lord became the author of Paul's faith. Paul knew that he could not have possibly believed in Christ, had Christ not humbled him greatly and changed his heart in the New Birth. Paul knew that he could not have even begun to run the race unless the Lord had given him abundant grace, and had commissioned him to the work that he would do for Him as a preacher, an Apostle, and a teacher. But from that moment on, Paul preached free grace. He always remembered who it was who had set Him free to run. Listen to what he says toward the end of his life. Acts Chapter 20, and verse 17 – "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church." "And when they had come to him, he said to them: 'You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jew; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'" "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me." "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." You can see from the way that Paul expressed this, that the more that he personally suffered loss, the more that He rejoiced, because he knew that he was running his race well all the way to the finish line of his death.

You need to understand that Paul's message and his preaching were according to the truth which had been revealed to him personally by the Lord; but it was also truth that was confirmed by the other Apostles. He knew that he needed to run with true knowledge and wisdom in relation to the doctrines that he preached. He thought that he had, but he needed this confirmed. So he says in Galatians 2: 1 – "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me." "And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain." Paul's running had to be according to true knowledge of what the gospel was. If his preaching was not the truth which could be confirmed by the other Apostles; his running, his preaching of what he thought was the truth, would have been in vain. You, too, need to check out the gospel that you have believed. Is it the Biblical gospel of salvation? Or is it something that you or some other man has made up? If it is not the true gospel, you are running in vain. It was because the believers in the churches of Galatia did not know and understand the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ that they were hindered in their running. In Galatians 5, verse 7, Paul says to them, "You ran

well." "Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" To run is to obey the truth of the word of God; that word which is Apostolic teaching. They had been hindered by those of their friends and the peers who thought that they were teachers; who thought that the ceremony of circumcision was what was essential to a person's being saved. But Paul says in verse 1 of Chapter 5, "Stand fast therefore, in the liberty by which Christ has made you free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." What a weight some of these young believers had. They would never be able to run by attempting to be justified by the law. Paul says to them in verse 4, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." "For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." That is how you begin to run. The weight of the false doctrine of justification by works and justification by the law has to be laid aside. You walk and you run by faith working through love in Christ in the Christian life. By the Spirit's power you pray for the righteousness of Christ to be developed in your life by trusting in His precious promises, and running in the way of His commandments; so that as you run, you are obeying the truth of God's word; you are loving and serving others; you are not running as one who is being condemned for your attempts to live righteously to His glory; you are running toward the realization of the full hope of righteousness which is more and more becoming a reality in your life. You are becoming more like Christ and you know because of the promise of His word that you will become perfectly so, when you see Him face to face. Do you have this vision of Christ as the Perfect One, the Holy One? Do you see Him as the author and perfecter of your faith? Are you fixing your eyes upon Him as you run?

**This leads me to give to you now the 3<sup>rd</sup> way that you can run the race with endurance; it is to consider the sufferings of Jesus as you run.**

Verse 3 says, "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become discouraged in your souls." I will not have time to develop this truth today, but only give you a taste of it. In your running the race to live out the truth of God to the glory of God by looking to Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of your faith; you are to remember what He endured to purchase your salvation. He endured hostility from sinners against Himself. And yet this did not kill His joy. You ought to remember this joy that He had in His sufferings which was one of the main motivations that He used, in order to run His race to successfully overcome the devil, resist temptation, and overcome the world. This motivation of the joy of what His sufferings would purchase for us, led Him finally to the cross. That cross, and death on it, was His finishing line. It is your finishing line too. You are to have the same motivation as He did while you run your race. James Chapter 1 says, "Consider it all joy my brethren, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." "And let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." You are to have the same goal line to cross; being faithful unto death. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians

Chapter 3, and verse 12 – "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, (that is; in running the race and being faithful to do what He has called me to do) that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." You see, it is possible to become discouraged while you run, but if you will only remember what Jesus endured for you, it will become the way for you to win Christ and win the prize of the crown of righteousness. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2, verse 3, to Timothy – "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.." Verse 5 says, "If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. Verse 8 says, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained." "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the Elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." You see, Paul was running to win Christ; he was running to the glory of God. He was running not only that he might obtain the prize, but also enduring all things that the elect might also obtain salvation. He had this motivation in his mind when he ran: Verse 11 – "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." "If we endure we shall also reign with Him." This is the prize for which Paul ran. And it is the prize for which you and I should also run. We will speak more on this subject next Sunday.