

Unburdening Yourself

No serious runner goes into a race weighed down by heavy clothing, and mountain climbers carry only the absolute essentials. These athletes know that anything extra will become a burden and a hindrance to achieving the goal set before them. Apparently, even animals understand this principle.

The roads and trails where we take our morning walks are also occasionally used by horseback riders, and today I noticed something interesting. On the shoulder of the road, just at the base of a significant hill, I saw a scattering of horse manure piles of various vintages. It looked to me as if whatever noble steed is regularly ridden on that route has made a habit of “unburdening” itself of excess weight before beginning the long climb. Smart move. No use carrying that useless baggage any further.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

What entangles you and hinders you from running your best race for the Lord? What weighs you down and holds you back? Is it the heavy burden of unconfessed sin that saps your strength (Psalm 32)? Is it bitterness or resentment, an unwillingness to forgive someone who has injured you (Ephesians 4:31-32)? Is it love of money or an enchantment with the things of this world (1 Timothy 6:6-10)? Perhaps enslavement to unhealthy thoughts or habits has mastered you (2 Peter 3:19), or a crippling load of pride trips you up (Proverbs 16:18).

We are all runners in a crucial race, not competing against each other but to complete whatever course God has marked out for us individually. Sometimes the way is smooth and level. But other times we are called to go through difficult circumstances or into hostile environments, where we feel we’re fighting a long, uphill battle. The challenge is difficult enough without dragging along excess baggage. Time to jettison the garbage so that we can fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7)!

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish (refuse, dregs, dung) in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him... (Philippians 3:7-9)