

## **SERMON THEY ARE ROOTING FOR US, LET'S REPRESENT**

### **Hebrews 12:1-2a**

**(1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (2a) Looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.**

### **Introduction**

Each section of God's Holy Written Word, sometimes called a pericope, can stand on its own, but a more thorough understanding can be achieved when we connect the previous section to the section now under careful study. This is especially true of Paul's letters. Chapter twelve of Hebrews is closely connected to chapter eleven. Chapter eleven is often called the roll call of Biblical heroes. All those who are listed are supreme examples of demonstrated faith. These examples given in chapter eleven provide a strong motivating impetus to faithfulness. The word "wherefore" cements the two chapters. Paul employs picturesque language. He uses the image of a track meet where the stadium is packed with former athletes who are cheering us on as we run the Christian race. These spectators have already proved or witnessed what faith can do. Now they are witnessing us as we run the race. They gave us great tradition which we must follow. They are cheering us on and rooting for us because they are expecting us to "represent."

Now let me talk a little about "representing." We use this word a lot in our lingo. During the sixties and seventies, the first wave of educational and occupational integration occurred. It was the result of the Civil Rights Movement. Most of us in our sixties and beyond were in situations where we were the only black and in many cases the first black. There was tremendous pressure to perform in excellence. We "represented" our family, our schools, and the entire black race. Yes, we "represented" our whole race. Now the term is used to imply excellence. "Child, the members of the Mass Choir know they represented today!" "You know that's right. True that!"

In essence, Paul is saying the grandstands are full of people who came before us, they are looking down and we must run the Christian race with excellence. When we think about the one hundred fifty-two years of Antioch-Lithonia's existence and the great members who came before us, we should be inspired to continue their spirit of excellence and faithfulness. Yes, we must run the Christian race with excellence and perseverance. Let's see how we can accomplish this task.

### **Exposition**

#### **1. Remove all Impediments.**

(Both Sin And Weights Must Be Removed.)

(Preparation Is Necessary For Maximum Performance.)

(Please Shed Bad Habits, Wrong Associates, and Negative Attitudes.)

## **2. Exhibit Endurance.**

(Endurance Is a Product of Training.)

(There Are Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Endurance.)

(We Must Balance Training with Rest and Diet.)

## **3. Run Your Race. Not the Race of Someone Else.**

(The Race That Is Set Before You.)

(The Coach Decides Your Race.)

## **4. Look to Jesus, Our Coach, Who Is Waiting At the Finish Line.**

(He Will Congratulate Us.)

### **Closing Thoughts**

We must represent. Let me say that again: We must represent. We have a glorious heritage as Christians and we have a golden heritage as members of Antioch-Lithonia Missionary Baptist Church. Now let us move to the platinum era. We are in a fierce race, but make no mistake: Christians are not competing against each other; we are competing against the evil forces that are in the world today. The idea of surpassing other Christians is not implied in this text. We are to motivate each other so each of us can be the best that we can be. Now it's okay to be an auto-competitor and compete against yourself. Then you will try to make every endeavor better than the last one. Jesus wants all of us to win our race so that He can give us a magnificent crown in heaven. Give God Glory! Give God All the Glory.

### **End Note**

There has been much theological speculation about the cloud of witnesses and what they are actually witnessing. Some say a gathering of angels looking down to see how God's people run their races. Some say the saints are witnessing to their own past experiences. I agree with those who say it refers to the saints who have finished their earthly race and are cheering on those who are running now. This does not exclude other members of the heavenly host from looking also. When we connect chapters eleven and twelve, it seems the most logical interpretation. Some have a problem with the word "witness." We know a word can have different meanings according to the context. For example, the word "strike" is negative in baseball, but positive in bowling. So, the word witness can mean someone who testifies in court and will not change their testimony, even upon the threat of death, or it can mean a spectator at an athletic event. When you think about it, the spectators are eye witnesses to the athletic event. I am bringing this up because you may run across these various interpretations when you study these verses in your commentaries.

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