

Hebrews 12:12-13

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Walking by faith is like enduring physical hardship. It takes discipline.

The word *Therefore* is always a good reminder to reflect on prior passages. It signals that now, after the exhortations or information the author has given, what follows is the way to apply the teaching. Paul writes *Therefore* in light of his prior verses discussing God's discipline in our lives, how it matures us. *Therefore*, to the Hebrew audience, since God disciplines us, we should treat the experience like physical training.

The analogy of our physical bodies being weak ties back into the analogy presented at the beginning of the chapter in verse 1. We are running a race of faith. To run with endurance, we need energy. If we have *the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble*, we need more energy, so we can keep going. One way to gain energy is to think about the finish line. If we are stumbling, we need to find *straight paths*. The two go together. We need to run in straight paths to make the best use of our energy. And straight paths bring healing for injured feet.

The point of a race is to make progress and to ultimately finish, ideally to win a prize for finishing well. To win races, runners learn how to run with good form, making use of their bodies and the space around them by being precise in how they move. Since our lives are like running a race, we need to be strong, running on a straight path, not wandering from it. We need to be deliberate with how we move, precise in how we run. And we need to run all the way to the finish line.

We are not in competition with each other as Christians, as is shown by the call for us to help others who are struggling or slow in their faith. We can help directly, or by showing them how to run, how to live, just like the *cloud of witnesses*, so that we imitate their lives of faith. Ultimately, Christ is the greatest example to imitate; verse 2 says we should fix our eyes on Him, because He endured all suffering perfectly, because of the joy that waited for Him at the finish line. Paul will provide more specific ways to run this race with strength and precision.

Biblical Text:

¹² Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.