

DAY 16 SATURDAY

HEBREWS 6:4-12 FINISHING THE RACE

⁴ *It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age,⁶ if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*

⁷ *Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God.⁸ But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.*

⁹ *Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation.¹⁰ God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.¹¹ We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.¹² We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

Readers take warning! A good start and official membership in the Church are not enough. In a race your start is only as important as the race is short. You cannot win the 100 dash without an excellent start. In contrast, the start in the 2 mile is only important because it is the only way you can participate in the race. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. It is how you finish that matters, not how good a start you had. In a job interview your professional affiliation is important, but you will not get the job if you no longer have the skills and knowledge that were indicated by your licensure. With the Christian life you may have been properly and appropriately baptized into the Church, but if you live your life with no regard for the vows you made, is your membership anything other than a meaningless credential? In both cases, ultimate success depends upon your follow through.

Judas Iscariot started well and was a charter member of THE DISCIPLES. Yet for reasons we can only imagine, Judas became the tool of Satan and the enemy of God. If we are honest we will acknowledge that all of us have everything it takes to play Judas to some degree. After all, even the rest of the Disciple denied Jesus when the chips were down. Yet, while Judas dropped out of his race there, the rest repented and went on to live sacrificial lives for Jesus. Where Judas planned and plotted, the rest succumbed to their survival instincts. Few of us will face the physical threat of the Disciples. Our turning away is more of the calculated variety. Therefore, we need to remain vigilant and open to correction in order to steer clear of disgracing our Lord. Whether we see our Christian life as a race or a job interview, we need to listen to the coaching of the Holy Spirit so that we might take the start and the credentials we have been given and use them to help us make a strong finish.

Keep me, O God, ever mindful of my need to pay daily attention to my relationship with you. Break down the barriers of pride and self-sufficiency that prevent me from being convicted of my sinfulness and

attending to the prescription for correction found in your word. Grow my faith so that I might stand firm in the time of trial. Amen.