

Running the Race Well

Galatians 5:1–15 Sermon Summary

Intro: How are you running?

The new testament often uses athletic metaphors to describe the Christian life, especially running (Heb 12:1). So, how are you running? Are you energized, or beat down?

In our passage today, Paul sees that the Galatians aren't running well (5:7), so he writes to get them back on course and help them find their stride again—and the truths he shares with them apply to us as well.

So, here are **four tactics from Galatians 5 to help you run well:**

#1: Get in the race (5:1–4)

Every race requires an entry fee, but the Galatians are in danger of thinking circumcision is an essential entry requirement. They were acting as if Jesus left a remaining balance on the entry fee bill, and their law-keeping was necessary to clear it. By trying to add to Jesus' payment, they are completely turning their backs on grace. With Jesus, there's no splitting the bill.

Application: Are you in the race at all? Have you accepted the entry fee that Jesus paid on your behalf, or are you still trying to pay your own way?

#2: Find your pace and your fuel (5:5–6)

When we put our hope in what we have done, it's easy to become *exhausted, anxious, or fearful*. But Galatians 5:5–6 offers a more sustainable way. *If the way of Law is a sprint fueled by the flesh, then the way of Grace is a sustainable pace fueled by the Spirit*. The way of grace invites you to look around and let love determine your pace.

In God's economy, we don't need to be self-sufficient. Instead, God wants to use our lack as an opportunity for us to be empowered by him.

#3: Stay focused (5:7–13a)

The Galatians were running well, but the false teachers cut in on their lane and introduced a subtle distortion with major consequences. Remember *not to get sidetracked by false teachers*, and *not to get sidetracked by your own sin*.

Paul warns us here to keep away from two ditches on either side: the ditch of *legalism*, and the ditch of *licentiousness*. Though we can often be tempted to go back and indulge again in old sins (especially in hard seasons of the Christian life), they won't ultimately be satisfying to us, because we've been made new.

#4: Run with the Pack (5:13–15)

Don't be a lone-ranger Christian. You need others, and others need you. When we are freed up from sin and freed from self-righteousness, self-obsession, we can look outward and use our freedom to give ourselves for the good of others.

Genuine love achieves what the Law was aiming at all along. If, by the Spirit, your heart is right and you are seeking the good of others, hundreds of strict rules and precepts become unnecessary.

A final verse of encouragement:

Hebrews 12:1–3 “1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”