

Casting off the Chains

*“...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...”*

-- Hebrews 12:1b

On our ‘race’ toward greater intentionality in living lives as authentic and faithful disciples of Christ there are a number of things which must be firmly in place. Some of these, which we have focused on during the month of January, include – living for the sake of bringing glory to God in all that we do; making the most of every opportunity we get and using the time God has given us each day to the full; actively looking for and pursuing opportunities to be of service and help to others; and developing an honest and true self-image, which will enable us to embrace the fact that we belong to each other and are called to create space for others.

But now, finally, we come to that peculiar aspect of life which is so vital to growth in any area – discipline. We cannot improve or grow stronger in anything, whether at home, work or on the playing field, if we do not apply ourselves and exercise discipline. Our Christian life can be no different... if you and I want to grow spiritually and become more intentional about living Christian lives then we will need to be disciplined.

In our reflection on Sunday we pointed out that discipline is not only about doing certain things, but also about not doing certain things, or getting rid of certain things that hinder our growth. As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, “lay aside every weight, and sin...” The intentional Christian life is one that follows in the example of Jesus, who did not allow anything of this world to distract Him from what God had called to do and be. We must learn to identify those things which prevent us from being the type of intentional Christians that we want to be, and know we ought to be, and then have the courage to get rid of those things – to lay them aside.

We all have chains that we must cast off, sins that entangle us and distract us, the questions is, Are we willing to lay these aside for the sake of becoming who we know we should be? As you reflect on this thought, here are some questions that might help that process:

1. What habits, or even material things, do you have that distracts you from being more intentional about your faith?
2. How can we go about laying these aside?
3. Name one thing that you will try to lay aside this week.

Food for thought:

William Barclay once wrote: “No man can reach to greatness if he is burdened down... If we would travel far, we must travel light. There is in life an essential duty of discarding things... habits, pleasures, self-indulgences which hold us back. They have to be shed as the athlete sheds his outer cloak as he goes to the starting-mark. Whatever holds us back must go!”