

# THOUGHTS

By Douglas W. Schroeder

**SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY**

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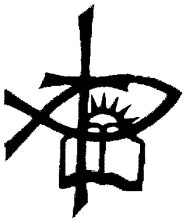
**2018**

Thoughts  
Box 77  
Greendale  
WI  
53129

**RUNNING THE RACE OF FAITH** - The games held in the ancient world were an obvious point of comparison for early Christian writers. Just as those who competed in the games did so for a crown, so also Christians compete to win a different crown, a crown of eternal life (see I Corinthians 9:24-27). Spectators jammed huge stone seated venues of enormous length given the name “circus”. The largest Roman venue, called the Circus Maximus, could accommodate chariot races.

Foot races were a common even at the games, and the author of the book of Hebrews likened the crowds to the departed saints (mentioned in Hebrews 11) looking on as we “run the race marked out for us (Hebrews 12:1-3).” Some other points of spiritual interest from these three verses in Hebrews:

- The “cloud of witnesses” are none other than believers in God throughout the ages. Chapter 11 teaches us not only of their exemplary faith, but that God had differing “courses” of life for each. Some experienced glorious success, while others crushing defeat, or even death. Whether Paul meant to suggest that the departed saints can see us is debatable.
- Everyone has “besetting sins” that easily entangle us and prevent us from running freely, strongly in faith (12:1). We must actively, purposefully, dispense with such sins, or they will cause us to stumble – and even may prevent us from “winning” the race by pulling us off course, away from Christ, if we never free ourselves from them!
- Perseverance is part of the Christian experience, and the admonition to persevere rebukes Western success theology, where the focus is not on what is endured for Christ and the Kingdom, but how faith can enhance life.
- ” Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...” A critical comment, as in our sin we have a corrupted perspective that falls earthward. We tend to focus on the present, the physical, the immediate, the fleshly things. We are admonished to lift up our eyes, tear them away from the things that distract us, and also cause us anxiety, grief, and fear, and fix our gaze on Christ. We are told, “Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above...think about things above, not on earthly things, (see Colossians 3:1-4),” and, “...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things (Philippians 4:8).”
- Christ scorned the cross; he defeated the sin which he bore. To the Christian the cross is now a symbol not of shame, but of the glory of Jesus.



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- Regarding Jesus' glory following his suffering and resurrection, the author of Hebrews says of him, "...and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (v.2)." Thrones in ancient times were benches, not chairs. The king could invite someone up to sit with him. Jesus properly occupies the spot beside the Father. This is a statement of His rightfully being called Lord of Lords.
- "Consider" When life is easy, in our sin we are tempted to give little consideration to the suffering of Jesus and the path laid out for him by the Father. When we suffer more, then we find ourselves considering it more closely.
- ... who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not lose heart (v.3)." We should expect opposition if we are overt about Jesus. It should not stop us. We have a race to finish.

**CALL THEM WHAT THEY ARE – TERRORISTS!** The vileness of groups which attack the innocent continues; this morning I saw a report on a suicide bomber and gunmen attacking the provincial office of Save the Children in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. The article called the attackers insurgents, which means "rebel or revolutionary". Note the purposeful avoidance of connecting the killers to religious motives, such as calling them Jihadists, as the attackers call themselves.

Islam claims to be "a religion of peace," but also advocates violence and retaliation. Recently, a Muslim apologist and I chatted. It was an amicable discussion. However, the apologist suggested that my objection about surahs in the Quran regarding jihad were, "taken out of context". No, they are not, and neither are the verses taken out of context which call Jews or Christians pigs. It is the attitude that the philosophical, religious enemies of a person can be treated as swine to be slaughtered that drives such animosity (or worse, cool inhumanity and barbarism in the name of Allah).

**MISPLACED PRIORITIES** – The headline reads, "Americans Are Spending More on Fitness Than College Tuition, Study Says" (see it at Foxnews.com). I have seen instances where fathers of children have fancy cell phones, but no insurance policy for their family! Contemporary culture does not train one in acting prudently, with wisdom; the Word of God will consistently guide you to act in a sensible, godly fashion. All actions we engage in have consequences, whether seen currently or not. Deferment of responsibility will likely result in future loss, while acceptance of current responsibility will result in future positive possibilities and blessings!

**LET'S GO TO ISRAEL TOGETHER!** – You do not need to have a roommate to join us on the trip to Israel; the cost of a single room is not much more. To see details or forward them to a friend, go to [eo.travelwithus.com](http://eo.travelwithus.com) and click on "Know Your Tour Information?" tab; enter the following: Tour CJ18; Date 100918; Code S; ID 57844 I hope you can join us; It will be fantastic!

Blessings!  
Douglas W. Schroeder