

Worship Material
Who's running with you?
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 17th August

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord, we are not alone in our 'race for life'.
Many have run with you and now it is our turn.
You help us start the race
and you will be there to greet us at the finishing line.
Help us to trust you every step of the way.
Amen.

Read Hebrews 11:29–12:2

Bible notes

This passage continues the theme introduced earlier in chapter 11, reviewing the courage and commitment of the heroes of the Old Testament. There are some surprising inclusions such as the prostitute Rahab of Jericho (Joshua 2) alongside judges and kings.

The writer also recalls the Maccabean period (160 BC) when the Jews suffered terribly under Antiochus Epiphanes, who tried to wipe out their religion. In this narrative of horror, the writer highlights the faith of those who suffered and their amazing endurance and contrasts them with an unworthy world (v.38). The writer sees Christ's life, death and resurrection as a turning point in history, when God's will could be perfectly known. Those who lived before Christ will achieve perfection in God's good time, along with those who know Christ, as we journey together towards God's promised future. This journey is presented in dramatic terms as a race. This image would have been familiar in the New Testament world, where most towns had a stadium and victorious athletes won fame. The opportunity to identify with elite runners would have been appealing to many for whom this ambition was out of reach.

The writer encourages the recipients of the letter to imagine the crowd roaring for them, but doubles down on this by suggesting that these supporters are the same people of faith who have just been listed. They are witnesses to

God's power, victorious runners in their own right and therefore even better able to offer encouragement to those weighed down by sin.

The exploration of this image ends by inviting hearers to imagine the goal of the race – not the emperor's box, but Jesus enthroned in glory. Like the men and women of faith described here, Jesus has also suffered humiliation and pain on the journey towards joy. Now, as God's Son, he brings all this human experience to God's throne and transforms it into inspiration for the race that lies ahead.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, pioneer and perfecter of our faith,
we praise you because: **you run with us.**

Through all the bumps in the road, when the climbs are steep
and when the potholes are many: **you run with us.**

When we are tired, jaded and disillusioned: **you run with us.**

When the finishing line is near and the race is nearly done: **you run with us.**

And so we praise you, because every step of the way: **you run with us.**

Amen

A prayer to conclude

Lord, help us to run with perseverance the race ahead of us.

Help us to encourage each other on the way.

We look to you, Lord Jesus,
the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Amen.