Running The Race
Hebrews 12:1-3

Now there are some of the same things which are essential to being victorious in a race are also key to being victorious in our Christian life.
I want us to look at some of these essentials.

I. Faith is required.
Notice Paul says that we that are in this race are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."
Who are these witnesses? These witnesses are those who have come before us, have run the race, and have completed it! They are examples to us as to how to successfully and victoriously run this race!
We find many of them listed in chapter 11 which is often referred to as "The Hall of Faith." They are examples not onlookers. They have proved by their life that the life of faith is the only life to live. The same God who was their God is our God. The God of yesterday is the God of today and tomorrow.
A. We must have faith to enter the race.
B. We must have faith to endure in the race.
1. There will be hurdles.
2. There will be hindrances.
3. There will be hurts.
C. We must have faith to be effective in the race.

II. Freedom Is required.
We need freedom from:
A. The weights that encumber us - "let us lay aside every weight"
The problem is not in what the weight is, but in what the weight does. It keeps us from running well. A weight is something that is lawful, but yet it is not helpful. All that does not help, hinders!
B. The wickedness that entangles us - "the sin that doth so easily beset us"
Now obviously all sin hurts our running the Christian life, but the use of the definite article (the) seems to indicate a particular sin. If there is one particular sin that hinders the Christian life, it is unbelief, doubting God. Unbelief entangles the Christian feet so that he cannot run. It wraps itself around us so that we trip and stumble every time we try to make progress for the Lord.
Faith enables but unbelief tangles.
C. The witnesses that enthrall us - "run with patience the race that is set before us"
Sometimes we can get so taken up with the witnesses and the race they ran that we lose sight of the race that is before us. We should run the race that is set before us. We cannot run somebody else’s race. We do not choose the course; God chooses the course that each of us is run.
Our race is not against each other. We are not in competition against each other.
Two campers were hiking in the forest when all of a sudden a huge bear jumped out from behind a bush and starting chasing them. Both campers started running for their lives. Suddenly one of them stopped, pulled a pair of running shoes out of his backpack and started putting them on. His partner said, "Those won't help you outrun a bear." He looked at him and said, "I don't have to outrun the bear. I only have to outrun you."
We must be free from trying to outrun each other. We must be free from attempting to run the race that was given to someone else. Run in your own lane; stay in your own lane. We will be rewarded if we run the race God has set for us and not the race He has set for someone else.

III. Focus Is Required.
"Looking unto Jesus"
A. Note the direction of our gaze
We are not to focus on the crowd but on Jesus. The Christian life commenced with a look to Jesus, and it will culminate with a look to Jesus. In the in between time it is to be continued with looking to Jesus. The more we are "looking unto Jesus" the easier will it be to "lay aside every weight."
B. Note the dependence on His grace
He is our example and empowerment.

Conclusion
I want to exhort you to look gratefully backward, joyfully forward, and trustingly upward.