

Running Demands Reducing

By Earl Radmacher

Speaker 1:

It is the most invited back, at least to the Torrey Conference, but also to chapels and other special days, our keynote speaker for this week, Dr. Earl Radmacher. Before I present him to open in the Word of God, I think it would be nice for us to be able to recognize his lovely and only wife, Ruth, and let's welcome her to Biola as well. The President of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon. When asked about his sometimes controversial views on the nature and state of the church, Dr. Radmacher replied, quote, There is nothing Christ hit harder than in trusted tradition. I want to be a slave of the Word of God, carefully discerning what is contained therein and rejecting that which is not. My goal, he continues, is to enable people to distinguish between the changelessness of God and His Word and the changing times in which we live through careful exposition of the Scriptures. I believe we have such a man to open the Word of God and teach us this morning. Let's welcome Dr. Earl Radmacher.

Earl Radmacher:

Thank you, Ron. Thank you very much. And I want to express my appreciation to you, Dr. Cook, and to all of your colleagues for allowing me to be back again and enjoy this tremendous congregation here at Biola. I was speaking in chapel yesterday at Philadelphia College of the Bible in the Eastern part of the United States, and I spoke to a number of the students there concerning this very, very significant university here in Southern California. It's hard for some people in the east to know that there is anything good in Southern California, but I assured them of its greatness. In fact, I very openly say when I am asked about Christian universities, I will

name about three of them that I am interested in. But I will say that the number one choice that I would have in America would be Biola University.

And I am delighted to have gotten to the place where I could actually afford, with the help of the school, to have one of my family here. That is good as well. I had four trotting off to college a couple of years ago, and I was thinking either about food stamps or the lottery either one. But I am grateful for help here and that I can have a son who is blessed by just getting to know many of you here. Now we've shortened. I understand the Torrey Conference not in time allotment, but in the time that you get the amount of input that you normally have. So we are anticipating that you are sharper than students used to be and that you can really take it in faster and apply it better. And so we are really going to have at it during these three days, and we need to do some rather magnificent, if not miraculous, things in God's army in America today because we are suffering from what I would call the greatest problem that we have had.

And that is the tragedy of protracted infancy. We have in our country the largest spiritual nursery that we have ever had in our history. And consequently, the Church of Jesus Christ is not really making very much difference in our country. And we are having statements made like the President of the Christian Legal Society said to me, Earl, no longer does the church, does the world rather need to lie about the church, all they have to do now is tell the truth. We've got a problem that we've got to correct. We must move people out of the nursery onto the front lines. We must grab a hold of what Paul said to young Timothy. You must become a good soldier who does not get entangled in the affairs of this life. You must become an athlete, Timothy, who keeps the training rules.

We need soldiers. The United States says we need a few good marines. We need some ranger training. We need some green berets. We need people who know how to move on to maturity in Jesus Christ. We cannot afford the luxury of sitting in a foxhole spiritually with somebody who doesn't know the difference between a lollipop and a bazooka. We really have to get people that are moving on to maturity in Jesus Christ. And therefore, I put a lot of hope into what could happen in a place like this. In fact, I put a lot of hope in what God miraculously may do in even a three day conference, as we are impacted by the Word of God. And I am praying that God will allow me to be a part of that and to somehow, through His word, stimulate you to rise to the significant challenge that we face in this country and therefore around the world.

There is a passage of Scripture that I think fits in very neatly with the theme that is behind me. Turn to Hebrews the 11th chapter. The first three verses I want to focus on during the couple of opportunities I have in the plenary session here, and I look at the theme. It says, Praise for the past and promise for the future. Hebrews 11 is such a verse because it follows right up on praise for the past. Let me read just a part of that tremendous chapter listing the heroes of the faith, beginning with verse 32. And what more shall I say for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel, and the prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and

scourgings. Yes. And of chains and imprisonments. They were stoned. By the way, you have to acculturate that term. That meant something different then than today. They were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the Earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

And after the writer has listed this tremendous hall of heroes of the faith, he then gives an admonition as to how we too, can move in to that hall. And I believe that in these next verses you have as good a commentary as you will find any place in Scripture on the kind of statement that the Apostle Paul made in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. You remember those words in which he admonished the Corinthians to run, to win. And to accomplish that himself, he said, I beat my body and make it my slave. I noticed Dr. Cook had a rendering there in his translation that needs a little help because it says I buffet my body, and that's a dangerous word because it can be pronounced two ways buffet and buffed. And therefore I prefer beat. I beat my body. You can't mistake that, can you? I beat my body and make it my slave. I discipline my body.

Here's the ranger training. I discipline my body and make it my slave, lest that by any means, after I, the veteran missionary, the writer of Holy Scripture, the experienced church planter, this man of God in his middle fifties, should be disqualified from the incorruptible crown at the end of the race. Paul said, I want to run, to win and to do that, I discipline my body because I know that my body can be a wicked master or a tremendously profitable servant. And I want to be sure

that it is the latter. I believe that what you have in Hebrews 12:1-3 is as good an exposition as you will find any place of the beating of the body or the disciplining of the body that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. And I want to look at just a piece of that in these moments, just the first verse. But I'll read the first three. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud, a host of witnesses, testifiers not watchers by the way, these are not watching what we are doing. I've heard that exposed again and again.

I hope they've got something better to do in heaven than watch us. But that is not the point here. The word here is used repeatedly for good report testimony. He says, we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, testifiers those who say to us that the resources in Jesus Christ are absolutely sufficient. God has provided all that I need to do what I need to do. Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and let us lay aside the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Looking away from everything else that I must be aware of unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him, take careful note of Him, calculate Him, who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

In the 11th chapter, you have have all of the reason for praise for the past. In the 12th chapter, you have all of the possibility of promise for the future if we will take heed to the careful instruction he gives, and he does it in a most succinct way. And consequently I want to be careful with the grammar in the text. In as much as we're in an academic environment may I dare to be

academic for a moment. There is one verb in verse one, not several, as it might appear in your translation. The only verb in the text is Let us run, and that which may appear to be verbal, preceding that is modifying that verb, and it is giving you the preparatory detail for being able to run, and thus it could be rendered most understandably this way, having laid aside every weight and repeat it, having laid aside the sin, let us run.

And thus I would gather from the text that he is saying, if I am going to run the kind of race that is spelled out in the last phrase of that first verse, then there is the necessity of some reducing. Running demands, reducing. And it demands reducing in two ways. I want to expand those for you and seek to illustrate them. The first thing that the strategist says is that I need to reduce by stripping off all the weights. The picture here in ancient times was very clear and many of you are familiar with it. Let me rehearse it just a bit. You will remember that the Olympic Games go back to 722 BC. They were something that was quite familiar at the time that Paul was writing, and you may also be aware that the benefactors who paid the bill for putting the contestants into the race paid the bill also for freeing them from any other need for work in order that they may give themselves for ten months prior to the race, to the excruciating discipline of the body.

And thus they practiced day in and day out, whether it was convenient or inconvenient, whether it was hot or cold, whether it was a particularly good situation or not, they, day after day, put themselves through the paces, and they did this very often with weights. I picked an article out of the LA Times some time ago in which the writer was saying the coming thing for weight reduction now is to wear weights. And this was something she said that was quite new. Actually, she's a few thousand years old in suggesting it, because that is precisely what they did then. They

would wear weights, brass bracelets around their wrists. They would wear the same kind of heavy brass rings around their ankles. They would wear a heavy brass girdle, and on occasion they would even wear a long flowing robe so that when they would run, it would catch the wind and billow it out and build opposition and make it tougher to move ahead.

And that kind of opposition developed endurance. We even have a passage of Scripture that tells us that, doesn't it? Tribulation works patience or endurance, and God gives us enough of that to build the kind of endurance we need. So they ran with weights on. But when it came time for the event, they stripped off all of the weights. In fact, they stripped everything off. We are here in a gymnasium, gymnasium from *gymnas*, which means naked, and that is the way they ran. My Southern friend of mine corrected me the other day. He said that's naked, not naked. But whatever you prefer. The fact of the matter is they ran without encumbrance. They got rid of anything that would hold them back. Now the writer chooses to use that very vivid picture to speak to the spiritual situation.

And although it's fairly easy for me to figure out what the weights were physically, it is not so easy to figure out what the weights are spiritually that the writer is addressing himself too. So I need to do some definition. What is a weight spiritually? Well, one thing I would notice is that it is not something that is sin inherently, for he is going to discuss the sin in the next phrase. Thus, weights are not inherently sinful, nor may weights even become sinful to somebody else. In other words, there may be something that is a weight to me which, if I continue to pursue, it will become sin for me, which in somebody else's life would never become sin. The weight is not something inherently sinful, or even something that may ever become sinful to somebody else.

But to me in my strategy for running effectively, it is a weight. Now let me state that more positively, a weight is anything that hinders your maximum efficiency for Jesus Christ. If it is not a wing, it is a weight. If it does not propel you forward, it does hold you backward. And thus it becomes the duty of the runner to free himself or herself from associations and engagements, which, however, innocent in themselves hinder the freedom of his or her action. A weight. I was speaking for a collegiate briefing conference several years back at Forest home, and I learned in the hours there that the young lady who was waiting on our table was quite a famous person. She was trying to take an RNR and be rather incognito at this conference. But I found out who she was. And so I promptly announced it to the rest of the group so that they could be aware of who she was.

She had just come back from Yugoslavia, where she had taken number one world class water ballet, and she was the best in the world in water ballet. Well, obviously, all of the college students began to prevail upon her to do some of it for us. And 600 college students went out and gathered around a huge swimming pool at Forest home while she went into the water. And in keeping with the music, did her routine through the water that would have made any fish jealous if he had the opportunity of being such shades of Esther Williams, who all of you know nothing about. Only the ancients like Clyde Cook would be able to relate to Esther Williams. But that gal went through routines in that water that were absolutely unbelievable. And after she came out, I said to her, what did you have to do to develop this kind of expertise?

Well, she said, right off swimming 6 hours a day. Now, I suppose swimming is fun for some people, and I suppose it's even fun several hours a day for some people. 6 hours a day. I begin to

question whether it's fun anymore. And 6 hours a day working hard on a single routine to perfect that ceases to be fun. That is sheer pain. 6 hours a day. I said, Well, is there anything else you had to do or stop doing in order to achieve this excellence? And right off, she said, yes, I had to stop snow skiing. Now, I didn't make any connection. I couldn't see what snow skiing had to do with water ballet. If you had the time, do it. And she said, I found that in snow skiing, I developed a muscle on the inside of my thigh that was just enough to throw me off balance in some particular routines in water ballet. And thus she said her coach had informed her if she was going to be number one in water ballet, she couldn't snow ski.

Now, as far as I know, there is nothing essentially sinful about snow skiing unless it is the amount of money you pay to do it. But for her it had to go. For her, it was a weight. For her, it kept her from maximum efficiency in water ballet, and it was either going to be number one in water ballet or pull back in that and do several other things as well. She spoke loudly to me with regard to a familiar statement of Paul. This one thing I do, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I will studiously strategize. I will discipline my body to see to it that I do not lose. I want to win for Christ. Now, if that is my goal, how am I going to discern what a weight is? I've sought to describe it negatively and positively, anything that hinders my maximum efficiency for Christ. How am I going to discover what weights are for me?

If weights are not the same for everybody, different ones are a weight for different people, how do I discern what is a weight for me? How do you strategize in this even during this weekend? Let me give three suggestions that are very simple. Number one, by running or by getting in the

event. If I were to sit in one of these chairs and listen to Darryl Delouse preach and I had my daughter sitting on my lap, I could probably stand it for the hour. I mean, not his preaching. I mean, holding her on my lap. That would not be a problem to me. But if I picked her up and began to walk over to the student center, I would all of a sudden know that I have a weight, even though she's a tiny weight. And if I started to run out there about halfway across the street, you could scoop me up with a shovel. I would know I had a weight.

You do not discover weights by sitting, studying weights. And there are many people, perhaps in the Church of Jesus Christ who even do a good bit of studying about the weights, who never really discover them for themselves because they don't get in the game. They do not activate that which they know. And the way to discover what is inhibiting my maximum efficiency for Jesus Christ is to get moving for Him in whatever the event is he's probing me about. Secondly, while I run while I run, listen, listen to the coach. In other words, listen to Jesus Christ, whose word you've programmed into your heart, by whom the Holy Spirit now brings it back to your remembrance. David gave that strategy in Psalm 119. Didn't he? Thy word have I treasured in my heart in order that I might not act wrong in order that I may not do the wrong thing in order that I may not sin against you.

I need to program God's truth into my deepest thought processes so that the Spirit of God can then use that to bring back to my remembrance as I'm running to give me the correctives that I need in the process. One of the videotapes that we have on our shelf when we want to watch a good movie is Chariots of Fire. I think we just about worn it out now, and I can still see the coach while the runner is seeking to increase his speed. The coach hollering at him with regard to

how he lifts his leg, how he puts it down in order that he might achieve a little better time. While he is running, the coach is bringing corrective, and he is listening. So as I am in the game, I'm listening to the coach through the word that I've programmed into my heart, that the Spirit of God brings back to my remembrance again.

And then thirdly, I need to be honest to God because I may lose it in that third step through a thing that I have called a rationalizer, an excuser. We've got this rampant in America today. One of the finest little editorials that I've read in Newsweek recently is by Meg Greenfield entitled No Fault Confession. No Fault Confession. People confessing all kinds of things, but don't blame me, blame my environment, blame somebody else. Or Chuck Coulson wrote to the same point in CT in the spate of suing that is going on today. If something bad happens to you, then sue somebody. Sue anybody because somebody else is to blame. Obviously not you. We want to blame others. We want to rationalize. We do not want to own up to fault. We do not want to confess the error and correct it and straighten our way and move on.

I've got to be honest to God and honest to myself and stop excusing the need for corrective so that the writer says to me, if I'm really interested in joining this hall of heroes. If I want to run to win, if I am concerned about moving on to maturity in Christ, if I am interested in being a good soldier who is not entangled with the affairs of this life, then I need to strip off all of the weights and as far as I can see it, I will do that as I get active in the race, as I listen to the coach making his correctives as I'm active and as I am honest to God as I do not rationalize, but I admit the need and make the corrective and am sensitive. Having laid aside every weight.

Secondly, having laid aside the sin which so easily ensnares us. Your translations have differing renderings of that. Some will say that so easily encircles us, easily ensnares us, readily entangles us. There are a host of different renderings of that, and one of the reasons for it is that the only time that the word occurs. There is very little to compare it with. There are a number of words for sin in the Scripture and many that occur very frequently, but this word is unique here, and he says, not only do I need to reduce by stripping off the weights, but I need to reduce by trimming off the sin pounds and that particular sin that the devil is giving you a go around in. Do you remember the words of Jesus to Peter on the night before Peter, on the time before Peter denied Christ, Jesus said to him, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you. Satan is lusting after you. He'd like to sink his fangs into you in order that he may sift you as wheat.

In other words, Peter, the devil as a roaring lion, is walking about seeking whom he may devour. Peter really understood that word, didn't he when he wrote it down later in his epistle. He had experienced that. He would never have thought that he would deny Christ. In fact, prior to that time, he had affirmed to Jesus that I am ready to die for you. I will lay down my life for you. Peter was not ready because he was too ready. He was too ready because he hadn't counted the cost. He hadn't really thought through a strategy to win in this minefield called the world in which the devil does not put signposts by the minds and advertise them to you. Rather he decorates them beautifully, so that you will step on them and be blown to bits so that once again the world can mock the Church of Jesus Christ.

The writer says, Be careful disciple, be careful. What is the area in your life that the devil is working you over in? Where is that area of sin that he is presenting to you as rather harmless and

even probably not even sin, maybe a generous friend rather than an enemy, and you play with it and you play with it and you play with it. He said, be careful. Be careful. I mentioned to the Talbot wives yesterday that this past week, on two separate occasions, two days I had the heavy responsibility of announcing the fall of an alumnus, a minister doing a fine work, doing a fine work, but got trapped in adultery and is through. He would never have dreamed, never have dreamed that he would fall there. I said to him, when you get it put back together again sometime down the line, will you come back and speak to the student body and give us a little insight as to what the strategy of Satan was whereby you got trapped and fell?

The next day I had to talk to another pastor who is probably going to be through because of a wife who has gotten trapped by alcohol. Pastor's wife, a secret alcoholic that he can no longer cover over. How does it happen? They didn't plan to do that, but they played with a sin that they began to redefine as harmless rather than harmful. If I were to try to picture what the writer is saying here, the readily encircling sin, I would see it as that guard on duty, perhaps on the battlefield of Vietnam to think back, and his fellow soldiers have turned in for the night, and he is on guard duty for the purpose of protecting them. And he stands and he looks out into the Black Forest. He doesn't see a thing. He doesn't hear a thing. He doesn't even hear the crackle of a twig.

And after he has watched for a good period of time, he concludes, there really isn't anybody out there. And he relaxes and turns around, only to get blown away. I begin to discount the enemy. I begin to say he really isn't there. I begin to redefine the sin. And interestingly enough, he doesn't name the sin here, just like he doesn't name the weight, because the sin. The sin will not be the same for everybody. What is the sin for you will probably not be for me. As I talked with my

friend the other day, he told me that just the smell of alcohol brings a chemical reaction in her brain that seems to render her almost helpless. It doesn't do that to me at all. I had one bottle of beer once and I could hardly stomach it. I can't stand the smell of the junk, but you turn me loose in a pastry shop, Whoop and especially chocolate eclairs.

Now, I don't mean phony ones with that fake filling, but I mean real egg custard filling and not that runny icing on top, but thick chocolate icing smothered on top. And I can handle two of those just like that. And when I had to deal with that, which was becoming sin for me, I recognized that my problem was my car, because whenever I went past the Bliss Brothers Bakery on 39th and Division in Portland, if I came within two blocks of that pastry shop, my car automatically turned into that pastry shop, and I had to discipline my car. And I found that if I would go four blocks around that pastry shop, it wouldn't turn in. But today, after several years now, I can drive right down 39th in Division and never be tempted to turn in. You see, it's a furniture store today. The bakery went bankrupt. I don't know whether it was because I stopped buying chocolate eclairs or not, but action had to be taken.

Now listen, my doctor said to me, Radmacher, do you recognize that every pound of fat you have on that obese body of yours is taxing your heart to the max? That same size heart is having to pump through thousands of miles of additional capillaries running through that pound of blubber on you, and it's pumping the same amount of blood and sharing it with the rest of that body, he said. Do you know how serious it is to do that? He said you are committing suicide serially just a little at a time, and you would condemn it as a single act. But you will happily do it a little at a time. Well, I want to suggest to you that if it's a serious thing for me to fail to reduce physically,

it is far more serious to fail to reduce spiritually. My physical failure can only shorten my physical life. My spiritual failure has ramifications eternally and it has ripples which we will never be able to know the full extent of until we stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

I encourage you during these three days, thank God for the heroes of the past and take heart with regard to the promise of the future by what you can do in the present to reduce spiritually. God will bless it. Let's pray. Father in heaven, my heart thrills within me as I just read the account of those who have gone before and those who have stood strong, those who have found that you are altogether sufficient to enable them to run valiantly and oh, God, we need today a Joseph who would not respond to the entreaties of the Pharaoh's wife to sin. O God, we need today a Daniel who has confidence not in the King's meat and drink, but in the diet that you would prepare. God, we need today Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego who will not bow down and worship the idol but who will be so conscious of your character, God, that they will be willing to stand and see your omnipotence worked out in their lives. God.

[audio abruptly ends]