

# Speaking to the soul



Running

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. Hebrews 12:1**

Over the years I have played lots of different sports with a great deal of enthusiasm and, truth to tell, not much success. However, I have had a number of friends and acquaintances who have been enormously successful in their chosen sport and they have all deeply impressed me. My main reflection is that they were all incredibly disciplined. Their diets were carefully designed and observed, and they gave a huge amount of time to ensuring that they were constantly practising and improving. They had a determination to give their absolute best. In our verse today the writer pictures Christians as athletes who are running a race infinitely more important than any sport, and makes the obvious point that we need to get rid of anything that slows us down. You clearly wouldn't enter an elite race wearing heavy clothes or lugging a suitcase. And so, he encourages his Christian friends to identify any weights that might slow them down and to get rid of them.

The writer pictures the Old Testament men and women of faith, whom he has described in the previous chapter, in the stadium roaring their encouragement to those who are running the race. This is such an important word for us to hear today as we face the innumerable challenges of living for Christ in the 21st century. The circumstances of our society are, of course, very different from those who have gone before, but we can still draw enormous encouragement from their lives. Like us they were flawed and frail human beings, but they hung in there and we need

to be inspired by their faithful lives despite incredible challenges, opposition and persecution.

The race ahead of us is bound to be demanding and so we will need to give the best of us to ensure that we are not allowing anything to get in the way of running well. This is infinitely more important than any sport.

## **QUESTION**

Consider this carefully: what could you do to enable yourself to run more effectively for God?

## **PRAYER**

Loving Father, help me to listen to the inspiration and encouragement from those who have lived the life of faith in the past. Help me to run well for you today. Amen

*Photograph - St Mark's Parish Church, Newtownards*

