

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

Being a Christian is tough. Following Jesus can often feel like participating in a track race. The author uses sport terminology as he writes this chapter. His readers knew the analogy well. The Olympic games were held every four years just like what they are today. The modern games have 339 events in 33 sports. In the ancient time, there were only running, wrestling, boxing and few other competitions. Contestants with the greatest speed, strength and persistence could win. Christian life is like a contest. But we are not competing with other believers and see how many times we read the Bible, how many verses we can recite or how many people we lead to Christ. Those are all noble pursuits. We are fighting against various issues that persuade us to give up on our faith. The readers of Hebrews were dealing with religious persecution. Finding meaning in suffering will motivate them to persevere. God knows that we are weak. We can only finish this race if we rely on Him. The good news is that we are never alone. God is always on our side to strengthen us. Also, He puts us in a faith community to support each other. Only by striving together can we reach the finish-line.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 定睛在終點的冠軍 Look Up to the Champions

The author encourages us to look up to the champions. This passage mentions two groups of champions: all the pioneers of faith listed in the previous chapter and also our Lord Jesus. Let us begin by reading **verse 1 to 3**. The author describes those champions as “**a cloud of witnesses**.” Imagine them as spectators in a stadium cheering for us. They sit there because they had finished their race. They testified to us that God is faithful. The author encourages us to learn two things from those champions. First, we must “**lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely**.” Weight can be something neutral but sin is always harmful to our spiritual life. A runner has to shed extra weight and wear lighter clothes and shoes in order to sprint faster. We also need to reduce some possible weights to run with the Lord. If hanging out with friends on Friday night keeps you from coming to church, then you need to adjust your priority. If you often skip Sunday service because your kids cannot get up in time, then you need to help them go to bed earlier on Saturday. Besides entertainment and family, our career can often add further weight to our spiritual life too. It makes us too busy or too tired for spiritual growth. We need wisdom from God to plan our schedule. Other than weight, sin can be detrimental to our race. Sin leads us to compromise God’s truth. It is when we choose to please the world instead of God. After removing any obstacle that may slow us down, secondly we must “**run with endurance the race that is set before us**.” The Greek word for endurance is often translated as patience in the New Testament. It means withstanding pressure in view of a favorable result. I always say pregnant ladies are the best examples of endurance. My wife gained 50 pounds, which is half of her normal weight, when she carried our first son. She has a friend who went through the same process. She yelled at her husband

when delivering her baby: “It is all because of you that I have to suffer so much! I’ll never do it again.” Know what? Two years later, she happily gave birth to their second child. All future moms will gladly endure the discomfort as they look forward to the joy of a new-born. We need endurance too when we are in the race. We may often have doubts when we face difficulties. We wonder where God is when we are hurting. Other times we may feel lonely. We think that no one else has to encounter the same problems. Sometimes we may lose our direction. We need to look up to the champions. They had finished the race. They show us the right track. Their life stories speak to us: “Do not give up yet! We know how you feel. We experienced even greater hardships before. God will see you through.” They are like some hall-of-famers who used to be athletes. They prevailed over demanding training sessions. Their coaches set some high goals for them. They faced unfair criticism from the press and fans. They overcame frustration from defeats and pain from injuries. They know exactly what a player needs to succeed. Just like those heroes of sports, the heroes of faith can be our inspiration. We can follow their footsteps. Ultimately, all of us imitate after Jesus. He is our greatest champion. The author explains why we should look up to Him. First, Jesus is “**the founder and perfecter of our faith.**” He is the founder of our faith. He died on the cross to accomplish salvation and paved the way for us to go to the Father. Not only is Jesus the starting point of our faith, He is also the finisher. He is now waiting at the goal for us. Our faith will become more mature as we keep trusting Him along the way. Second, we should look up to Jesus because He is our perfect role-model. He, “**for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**” The cross was the most painful and shameful way to torture a criminal at that time. Jesus looked beyond the death and saw the completion of salvation work. That is why He had joy when facing the cross. We will be willing to pay the price when we fix our eyes on the prize. Many people camp for a few days to buy tickets for a concert. A lot of parents live a frugal life to save more money for their kids. Jesus faced death with joy because He loved us. We can also rejoice when we focus on what we will gain in our suffering. God will be glorified because we stand firm for what we believe. Non-believers around us witness a genuine faith. Fellow believers will be encouraged. Our faith will also become more mature. The third reason why we should look up to Jesus is because He is our constant help. Read verse 3: **Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.** Difficulties can slow us down in two ways. First, they make us feel weary by draining our energy. For example, we need to spend extra time to deal with people who treat us unfairly. Second, hardships make us fainthearted. We get discouraged when we do not know when our struggle will end. We may even wonder if life can be easier if we do not know God. We need to think of Jesus often. We need to ponder on why He suffered, and how He reacted to the pain and shame inflicted on Him. Jesus suffered for the sake of righteousness. We may also be falsely accused or mistreated because we admit that we are followers of Jesus. Also, if Jesus could have victory by relying on the Father, so can we. We should come to Jesus for a recharge every time we are weary or fainthearted. It is like getting a drink or snack in the middle of a sport competition. Then we get back to the race.

## 2. 注意在沿途的挑戰 Look Out for the Challenges

Not only that we have to look up to the champions of faith, we should also look out for the challenges of faith. In verse 5-6, the author quotes from Proverbs chapter 3 and summarizes those challenges to one source: 5 ... “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” The challenges we face is part of God’s discipline on us. “Discipline” and related words appear eight times from verse 5 to 11 in the Greek text. The Proverbs passage talks about nurturing of a boy. Discipline in general means the use of punishment to correct a child’s misbehavior. We shared some techniques last year when we studied the text. It can be time-out, spanking or removal of privilege depending on the child’s age and the severity of the offense. God uses various means to lead us back when we go astray. The switch of focus here from the previous context is quite obvious. There is no more mentioning of persecution caused by non-believers. The author does not even say anything about suffering for our faith. His emphasis is that God is using hardships as a training program for us. It gives us a different perspective as we consider the difficulties we face in life. God is still in full control of what happens to us. He never abandons us when we suffer. He is able to turn something negative into positive to mature us. Sometimes, we suffer not because we disobey God. Quite the contrary, we face adversity even when we follow God’s instructions. Remember the life of Joseph in Genesis? His circumstances did not get any better when he maintained his integrity. He was falsely accused and locked up in jail. He waited thirteen years before God delivered him. As Joseph looked back, he fully understood God’s plan. Similar things can happen to us. Do not get upset when you suffer for doing the right things. God is training you. Going back to the Hebrews text. Since God disciplines us for our good, we should avoid two negative emotions. First, we should not “regard (it) lightly.” In other words, we should not ignore it. God is teaching us some important lessons. Second, we should not be weary. We should not feel frustrated, as if we are in bad luck. Rather, we should ask God what He wants us to learn from the negative experience. The author then moves on to compare the Heavenly Father with our earthly father. A biological father will discipline his children because he cares about them. Likewise, our spiritual Father will discipline us whenever necessary. By implication, God will not discipline non-believers because they do not have an eternal relationship with Him. But God will judge them for their sins, either in this life or in eternity. Our parents are limited in every way because they are just humans. I told you before that I made a ton of mistakes when bringing up my two boys. Though we are imperfect, we hope that our children can feel the love and care from us. We expect our children to show us respect and submission. How much more should we assume the same attitudes toward our Heavenly Father who is all-wise and impartial? We should submit to Him but not surrender to our problems. In **verse 10-11**, the author goes on to tell us how we can grow when God disciplines us. The two areas that God wants us to grow are holiness and righteousness. In essence, God expects us to be more like Jesus. We should do what God considers as good and upright; do things that are beneficial to others; things that have lasting value and things that can ultimately glorify Him. It will defeat God’s purpose if we harbor bitterness inside, blaming God for not protecting us, or we find an easy way out by denying Him. We lose faith instead of growing in faith if we do any of that. We need patience before we can bear fruit of righteousness. It takes time for us to change our behaviors and build godly habits. Then we need persistence to let good habits become part of

our character. When that happens, obedience to God will come naturally. Using child development as an analogy. Children tend to be self-centered. Thanks to Adam, we are all born that way! Parents have to teach their kids good manners repeatedly through constant reminder and correction. They should share their resources and they should be mindful of others' feelings. It will be a success when children choose to do the right things when their parents are not watching and even when others violate the rules. Christians have to follow the same training process. We attain spiritual maturity when we embrace God's truth and do accordingly even when we suffer loss for doing so. The author returns to his sport metaphor as he gives his final reminder in [verse 12-13](#). It describes a contestant so tired that he is not able to raise his arms nor to straighten his legs. But the race is not finished yet. Therefore, he must endure the discomfort in order to complete the course. In verse 13, the author has the whole faith community in mind. "Make straight path" can be understood as walking on the right way. If some members of a church set up a good example of obedience to God, then others will imitate after them. The "lame" may be those who are weaker in their faith. When they see others standing firm in the midst of hardships, they will be motivated to persevere in their difficulties. Even though each of us is responsible for our personal relationship with God, our positive examples can encourage each other to grow together in our faith.

## 結論 CONCLUSION

Finding meaning in suffering will motivate us to persevere. We should not passively yield to hardship as if we have no choice. We should eagerly submit to God, knowing that He has a perfect plan for us. A big temptation to give up on our faith may not be the magnitude of the problem. It is not the lack of result. It may not be the lack of reward. But it can be the lack of reason. It is the feeling of "Why bother?" It is not worth it. One celebrity had a similar experience. Tom Landry was a legendary coach for the Dallas Cowboys. That was the only team Landry ever led in his career from 1960 to 1988. The team won two Super Bowl champions during that span. One of the most well-known quotes from Landry is: "The job of a football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be." That matches perfectly with our discussion about God's discipline. God allows us to suffer for our good. Landry grew up in a Christian home and he attended church since a kid. But it was not until he was 35 before he was saved. At that time he had some initial success as a coach. But he felt that the happiness did not last long. He even thought of quitting. A good friend invited Landry to a Bible study. He then realized that he never had a personal relationship with Jesus. Since he accepted Jesus, his life purpose was shifted. After Landry joined the Cowboys, he determined to make God the top priority of his life above sport. We have to have the same mentality no matter what God calls us to do. There will be hardship. But Jesus and other champions are waiting and cheering for us. Let us run together with perseverance until we reach the finish-line.

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

做基督徒不容易。跟隨耶穌常常感覺像是參加運動比賽。作者寫這一章時使用了一些和體育有關的用詞。他的讀者很清楚那些類比。當時的奧運會就像現在一樣，每四年舉行一次。現代的運動會有 33 個運動的 339 個項目。古代的奧運會只有跑步、摔跤、拳擊等項目。在速度、體力和耐力各方面優勝的選手將會獲勝。基督徒的生命歷程就像一場比賽。但我們不是與其他信徒競爭，看我們讀了多少遍聖經，能背誦多少節經文，或者帶領多少人信耶穌，雖然這些都是好的屬靈追求。我們乃是與各種使我們放棄信仰的因素在鬥爭。希伯來書的讀者面對的是宗教迫害。在苦難中找到意義會激勵他們堅持下去。神知道我們是軟弱的。唯有倚靠祂，我們才能完成這場比賽。好消息是我們永遠不會孤單。神總是站在我們這一邊幫助我們。此外，祂把我們放在一個信仰群體中，使我們互相支持。只有齊心協力，我們才能到達終點。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 定睛在終點的冠軍 Look Up to the Champions

作者鼓勵我們定睛在終點的冠軍。這段經文提到了兩組冠軍：包括上一章列出的信心先鋒，還有我們的主耶穌。讓我們先讀第 1 至第 3 節。作者描述這些冠軍為「許多的見證人，如同雲彩圍著我們」。我們可以把他們想像為運動場裡為我們歡呼的觀眾。他們有權利坐在那裡，因為他們已經完成了比賽。他們向我們見證神是信實的。作者鼓勵我們學習這些冠軍的兩件事情。首先，我們必須「就當放下各樣的重擔，脫去容易纏累我們的罪」。重擔可能是一些中性的東西，但罪總是對我們的屬靈生命有害的。為了跑得更快，選手必須減掉額外的重量並穿上輕便的衣服和鞋子。我們也需要減輕一些重量來與主同行。如果週五晚上和朋友出去玩讓你不能來聚會，那麼你需要調整你的優先次序。如果你經常因為孩子週日起不來而無法參加聚會，那麼你需要幫助他們在周六晚上早點睡覺。除了娛樂和家庭，我們的事業也可能會成為我們的靈命的重擔。工作會使我們太忙或太累而妨礙靈命成長。求神賜智慧幫助我們安排我們的時間表。除了重擔，罪也會對我們造成傷害。罪使我們妥協真理，使我們選擇世界的價值觀而不順從神。當我們除去可能使我們慢下來的障礙之後，第二，我們必須「存心忍耐，奔那擺在我們前頭的路程」。忍耐在希臘文的意思是為了美好的結果而承受壓力。我常常說孕婦是忍耐的最好例子。我的太太在懷我們老

大時重了 50 磅，是她平常體重的一半。她有一個朋友經歷了同樣的過程。她在生孩子的時候罵她的丈夫：「都是因為你，我才受了這麼多苦！我再也不會這樣做了。」結果兩年後，她高高興興地生下了他們的第二個孩子。任何未來的母親都會很樂意忍受一切的不舒服，因為他們期待著新生嬰兒的喜樂。我們在人生旅程中也需要忍耐。當我們面臨困難時，我們會產生懷疑。當我們受傷時，覺得神沒有在我們身旁。有些時候，我們可能會感到孤單。我們以為沒有人會遇到同樣的問題。有時我們可能會迷失方向。我們需要定睛在那些冠軍。他們已經完成了比賽。他們指示我們正確的方向。他們的經歷告訴我們：「不要放棄！我們知道你的感受。我們以前經歷過更大的困難。神會與你同在的。」他們就像一些曾經是運動員的名人榜成員。他們克服了嚴格的訓練。他們的教練設定了一些很高的目標。他們面對來自媒體和粉絲不公平的批評。他們勝過了失敗帶來的挫敗感和受傷的痛苦。他們知道運動員如何才能成功。就像那些體育英雄一樣，信心的英雄可以成為我們的激勵。我們可以跟隨他們的腳步。最終，所有人都是效法耶穌。祂是我們最偉大的冠軍。作者解釋為什麼我們要仰望耶穌。首先，耶穌是「**為我們信心創始成終**」。祂是我們信心的創始人。祂死在十字架上完成救贖，並鋪平了通往天父的道路。耶穌不僅是我們信心的起點，祂也為我們的信心作終結。祂正在終點等待我們。如果我們一直信靠祂，我們的信心會變得更加成熟。其次，我們應該仰望耶穌，因為祂是我們的完美榜樣。「**他因那擺在前面的喜樂，就輕看羞辱，忍受了十字架的苦難，便坐在神寶座的右邊。**」十字架是當時折磨罪犯最痛苦、最羞恥的方式。耶穌的視野超越了死亡，看到了救贖工作的完成。因此祂面對十字架時有喜樂。當我們注視著獎賞時，我們便願意付出代價。許多人露營幾天來買音樂會的門票。許多父母過著節儉的生活，以節省更多的錢留給孩子。耶穌以喜樂面對死亡，因為祂愛我們。當我們注目在苦難之後的結果時，我們也會感到喜樂。神會得到榮耀，因為我們堅持我們的信仰。我們周圍的非信徒見證了真實的信仰。我們的忍耐會鼓勵其他信徒。我們的信心也會變得更加成熟。我們應該仰望耶穌的第三個原因是因為祂是我們持續的幫助。第 3 節說：**那忍受罪人這樣頂撞的，你們要思想，免得疲倦灰心。**困難可以通過兩種方式減慢我們的速度。首先，它們會消耗我們的精力，使我們感到疲倦。例如，我們需要花費額外的時間來與敵對的人打交道。第二、困難使我們沮喪。當我們不知道掙扎何時會結束時，我們會感到灰心。我們甚至會懷疑，如果我們不認識神，生活是否會更輕鬆。我們需要經常想到耶穌。我們需要思考祂為何受苦，以及祂對苦難的回應。耶穌是為義受苦。我們也可能會因為承認自己是耶穌的跟隨者而受到誣告或苦待。此外，如果耶穌可以依靠天父而得勝，我們也可以。每當我們疲倦或膽怯時，我們都應該來到耶穌面前來充電。這就像在體育比賽中喝飲料或吃點心補充體力，然後我們便回到比賽中。

## 2. 注意在沿途的挑戰 Look Out for the Challenges

我們不僅要定睛在終點的冠軍上，我們還應該注意信心的挑戰。在第 5-6 節中，作者引用了箴言第 3 章並將這些挑戰總結到一個來源：5「…我兒，你不可輕看主的管教，被他責備的時候也不可灰心；6 因為主所愛的，他必管教，又鞭打凡所收納的兒子。」有時候，信心的挑戰可能是神的管教。「管教」和相關的用詞在希臘原文的第 5 至 11 節出現了八次。箴言的經文談到養育一個男孩。管教一般是指使用懲罰來糾正孩子的行為。去年學習箴言時，我們分享了一些技巧。根據孩子的年齡和錯誤的嚴重程度，父母可以要小孩罰坐、打他們屁股或拿走某些特權。當我們偏行已路時，神也會用各種方式把我們帶回正途。作者在這裡明顯地改變了話題。他沒有再提到從非信徒而來的迫害，他甚至沒有提到我們為信仰受苦。他的重點是神使用苦難作為訓練我們的工具。這幫助我們從不同的角度思考生活中的困難。神仍然完全掌握發生在我們身上的事情。當我們受苦時，祂沒有撇棄我們。祂能夠使負面的東西變成正面，使我們更加成熟。有時，我們受苦不是因為我們沒有順服神。恰恰相反，有時候當我們遵循神的指示，我們也會面臨逆境。還記得《創世紀》中約瑟的生平嗎？當他保持正直時，他的情況並沒有好轉。他被誣告並被關進監獄。他等了 13 年，神才拯救他。約瑟回首過去時便完全明白神的計劃。類似的情況也可能發生在我們身上。當你因為做正確的事情而受苦時，不要難過。神正在訓練你。回到希伯來書。既然神的管教是為我們的好處，我們應該避免兩種負面情緒。首先，我們不應該輕看。神正要我們學習一些重要的功課。第二，我們不應該灰心。我們不應該感到沮喪，彷彿運氣不好。我們應該求問神祂希望我們學到什麼。接下來，作者比較天父與我們地上的父親。親生的父親會管教他的孩子，因為他關心他們。同樣，我們屬靈的父親也會在必要時管教我們。這裡暗示神不會管教非信徒，因為他們和祂沒有永恆的關係。但神會審判他們的罪，不是在今生便是在永恆。我們的父母在各方面都不完全，因為他們只是人。我之前告訴過你們，我在養育兩個兒子時犯了很多錯誤。我們雖然不完美，但我們希望小孩能感受到我們的愛和關懷。我們希望小孩尊重並服從父母。我們豈不是應該以同樣的態度對待我們滿有智慧和公正的天父嗎？我們應該順服祂，而不是降服於我們面前的問題。在第 10-11 節中，作者繼續告訴我們，當神管教我們時，祂希望我們學到什麼。神希望我們在兩方面成長：聖潔和公義。基本上，神希望我們更像耶穌。我們應該做神看為美善和正直的事；做一些對他人有益的事情；一些具有持久價值的事情和最終可以榮耀神的事情。如果我們內心懷著怨恨，認為神沒有保護我們，或者我們為了個人利益否認神，我們便無法達到神的目的了。如果我們這樣做，我們便會失去信心，而不是在信心中成長。我們需要忍耐才能結出公義的果子。我們需要時間來改變我們的行為並建立敬虔的習慣。然後我們需要堅持，讓好習慣成為我們品格的一部份。如

此，我們便會很自然地順服神了。以孩童的發展為例。小孩天生都是自我中心的。我們都受亞當的遺傳，生下來就是那樣的！父母必須通過不斷的提醒和糾正幫助孩子培養好的禮貌。他們應該分享自己的東西，並注意別人的感受。如果父母不在場，或是別人不守規矩，但孩子仍然選擇做正確的事情，那麼父母的教導便是成功了。基督徒必須經歷同樣的訓練過程。如果我們知道會蒙受損失，但是仍然按照神的真理去做事，那麼我們的靈命便是成熟的。作者在**第 12-13 節**給我們最後的提醒，他回到了運動的比喻。它描述一個選手太累了，以至於他無法舉起雙手，或是伸直雙腿。但比賽還沒有結束。因此，他必須忍耐到底。在第 13 節中，作者想到整個信仰群體。「把道路修直」可以理解為走在正確的道路上。如果教會的一些成員樹立了順服神的好榜樣，那麼其他人就會效法他們。「瘸子」可能是那些信心軟弱的人。當他們看到別人在困難中站穩時，他們就會有動力堅持下去。儘管我們每個人都要對自己與神的關係負責，但是我們的榜樣能鼓勵別人，使全體在信心中一同成長。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

在苦難中找到意義會激勵我們堅持下去。我們不應該被動地降服於困難，好像我們別無選擇。我們應該積極地順服神，知道祂對我們有一個完美的計劃。放棄信仰的一個試探不是因為問題太嚴重。也不是缺乏結果，缺乏獎賞，但可能是因為缺乏堅持下去的理由。我們自問：「何必呢？」我們覺得好像不值得了。有一位名人有類似的經歷。湯姆蘭特里是達拉斯牛仔美式足球隊的傳奇教練。那是蘭特里從 1960 年到 1988 年職業生涯中唯一領導過的隊伍。在那段時間裡，球隊贏得了兩次超級碗冠軍。蘭特里的名言之一是：「足球教練的工作是使球員做他們不願意做的事，最後成為他們一直想成為的人。」這與神的管教這個課題很吻合。神為了我們的好處讓我們受苦。蘭特里在一個基督徒家庭長大，他從小就去教會。但直到他 35 歲才真正得救。那時，他作為教練取得了一些初步的成功。但他覺得快樂的感覺並沒有持續多久，他甚至想過放棄不做教練了。一位好朋友邀請蘭特里參加聖經學習。然後他才發現自己從來沒有和耶穌建立個人關係。自從他接受耶穌後，他的人生目標就改變了。蘭特里加入牛仔隊之後，他決心把神放在他生命的首位，在體育事業之上。無論神呼召我們做什麼，我們都必須有同樣的心態。耶穌和其他信心的冠軍正在等待我們和為我們打氣。讓我們繼續向前奔跑，直到達到終點。