

## Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit Legacy – What are You Leaving Behind

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### Life Questions:

What will people say about you when you aren't around? After you die? What things in your life do you want others to remember you by?

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It is five minutes to start, the team stands in the tunnel waiting for their cue to enter the stadium to the thousands of fans that have come to see the game. Each person is wearing their respective colors, their dressed for the battle ahead. They can hear the crowds screaming in anticipation. In just a moment, they will take the field, the place will explode as the team runs out onto the field. There will be thousands of people on their feet. Screaming at the top of their lungs, each fan will make a noise the joins the cacophony of sound in the stadium to almost deafening levels. Each player draws strength from those standing with them. Sounds like a modern day college football game, but you would see the exact scene two thousand years ago as the gladiators waited to enter the arena.

In the times of Jesus, there were large arenas that were the places where warriors congregated to put on a battle, many times to the death. Their strength was drawn from those that had preceded them. On the walls of the tunnel leading out to the arena, there would be markings. Each marking was of a former gladiator that had entered that same tunnel. Sometimes just moments before the markings still fresh on the wall. While others, they were made by men long since dust in their graves. But each one would make a mark, a reminder to those coming behind them, that this road was already taken. Those standing and waiting were not alone. Others had been there, experienced the fear and dealt with it. The ones before were just as aware of this being their last moments on earth. They understood it and wanted those that followed to not be afraid, but to know that they were not alone. Leaving their mark was their legacy, sometimes the single reminder that someone else had gone this way.

What will your legacy be? Will it be a single mark inside a dark tunnel leading onto a place filled with fear? Or will you leave a legacy that goes beyond?

### **Heb 12:1-2**

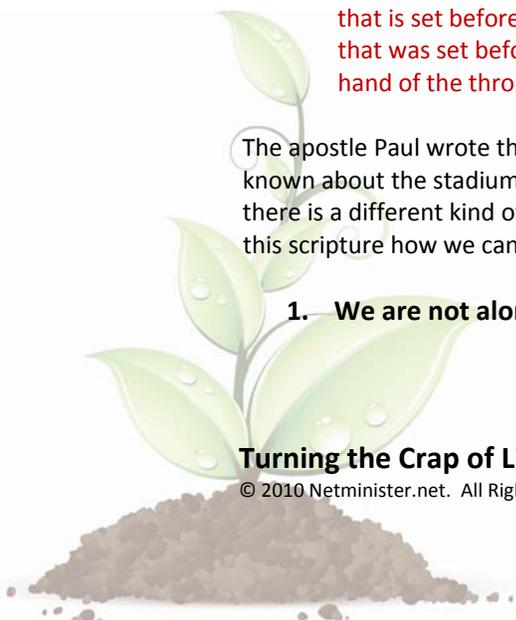
Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NKJV

The apostle Paul wrote these words as a reminder to early Christians as well as us. They would have known about the stadium, the roaring crowds cheering for the combatants. But Paul is telling us that there is a different kind of crowd that is cheering for a different reason altogether. He tells us through this scripture how we can leave an everlasting legacy:

### **1. We are not alone**

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Have you ever been in a situation that you cannot imagine how you got into it much less how you will ever get out of it? Maybe you have done or said something that is so bad that you cannot imagine healing that relationship. Maybe you have made a mistake that is so unforeseen that you cannot see a way out of it. Something you have done has lead to an unexpected pregnancy, or someone getting hurt or someone dying. You cannot imagine how you can fix it how you can get things back together. What are you going to do? You need to realize that you are not alone.

Paul points out that there is a cloud of witnesses, the words in their original language meant a number so great that it cannot be counted. Those, even in this the early days of Christianity, witnesses had gone that way before, there were those that had made the same mistakes but were lifted up by Christ to achieve greater things. Those that had gone before knew the costs, but were leaving their legacy as a way to encourage those that followed. The greatest example of been there done that is Jesus himself, we find :

**Heb 4:15-16**

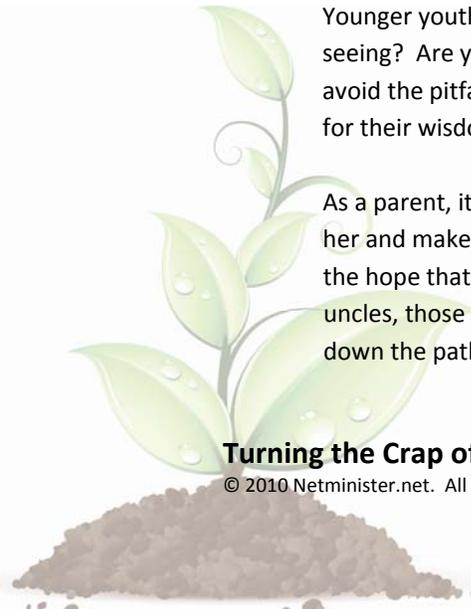
*15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

*NKJV*

Paul tells us that even Jesus Himself was tempted. He had sympathy for us not just because He loves us and gave His life for us, but because He too was tempted. He suffered because He knows our weaknesses, He knows our failings and He knows how tough it is, even today! In everything Christ was tempted. The word tempted comes to us from the original language which meant to test, endeavor, scrutinize, entice or discipline. He suffered it all. And not just Jesus but those that follow Him even today, each of us has been tempted, some have fallen, but we need to know that we are never alone. We are never at the mercy of the situation but always at the mercy of Jesus to help us out of any situation.

Knowing that we are not alone means that we should try to find ways to leave a lasting positive legacy even in our failures. Look for those that you can help, even when you need help. Seek out those that can help you find the right solutions then pass those along to those coming up. Younger youth look up to you. Children look up to those older than themselves. What are they seeing? Are you giving them the legacy that they can follow? Are you showing them how to avoid the pitfalls of your life so far? And are you looking at those that have gone on before you for their wisdom in not making the same mistakes?

As a parent, it is difficult to convey everything I want to my daughter. I so want to sit down with her and make a list showing her all the places I have made mistakes, all the places I have failed in the hope that she avoids the places where I have fallen. Your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, those older than you have a message: don't make the same mistakes I made. Don't go down the paths that messed up my life. Change your place! Some things she listens to, some



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she doesn't, but it is my prayer that she not makes the same mistakes. Seek out those that have gone that way, they are cheering for you, even if you cannot tell.

Like the crowd around us they are cheering for us, maybe not all of them. Maybe you have seen where your parents don't seem to care about you, don't seem to have your best interests at heart. There isn't a way for you to fix that other than to seek out those that do have your interests at heart. Find those people, search for that crowd. Or like the opposition at a big football game learn to channel that booing into something positive. But remember you aren't alone.

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**Life Questions:**

Are you feeling alone as you deal with the challenges of life? Do you feel like you are the only one that is hurting?

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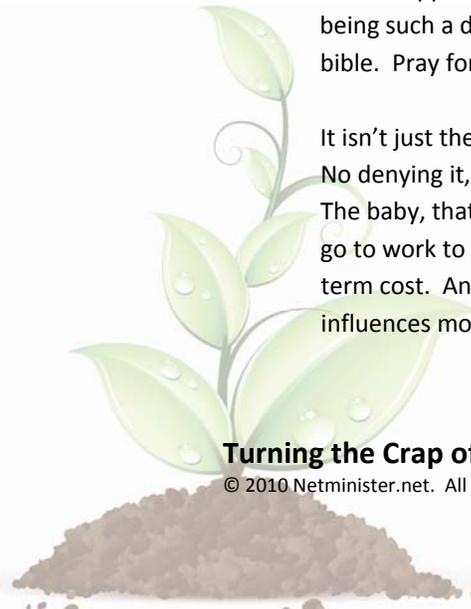
**2. Remove What Weighs You Down – Drop The Block**

If you were going to run a race, and I asked you to carry this cement block for me during the race. Even if you are the best runner around, chances are you aren't going to be able to win the race carrying the block. Why? Because only an idiot carries a cement block when he or she is running a race! Maybe you train with it, but when it comes time to actually compete you drop the block.

Paul goes on to tell us that we should lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us. Is there something that you are struggling with? I mean really struggling with? Something like porn, sex, drugs, alcohol? Is there something that no matter how hard to try you cannot get past it?

Drop the block! The weight means something that hinders you, a burden in your life. It could be family or friend that is never positive. Never every positive. STOP LISTENING TO THEM!!! They are the opposition crowd, whether they know it or not! They don't even realize that they are being such a downer. Don't let them hinder you. If you are going to church, listen and read your bible. Pray for the people that bring you down and drop the Block!

It isn't just the weight that hinders us, it is the desire to go pick it back up the block. Sin is nice. No denying it, even Paul tells us that sin is pleasure for a season. But just a season. Sex is great! The baby, that is a little tougher. Getting up every morning at 1, 3 and 5 am only to then have to go to work to pay for the baby's needs that gets old really fast. That pleasure ends up with a long term cost. And if you aren't ready to pay it, you should reconsider sex. Don't let the bad influences move to you to something you know you shouldn't do. After all, where are your



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friends when you need a babysitter? They are out having a good time making fun of you for not being able to come. Some friends they prove to be.

When you deal with sin, you will have a tendency to go back to it.

**Matt 12:43-45**

*"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.44 Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order.45 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." NKJV*

That by the way is Jesus talking. When you overcome a problem, you need to know it is coming back. A friend of mine use to say that he was an alcoholic even though he hadn't picked up a drink in years. The reason: he had the ability to go back so easily. And he knew, HE KNEW, that if he did, he would lose his family, his friends and his job – essentially everything all because of one thing.

Like him, we have to know what our block is and how to avoid it once we have dropped it off. And we need to remember that we are prone to picking it back up so easily. Like him, we are addicted to something, it may not be alcohol but we addicted, me you and the person teaching this lesson, sin.

When you drop the block, you have to know someone is going to hand it back to you. Someone, probably well meaning, just wanting you to be a part of the fun is going to hand it right back to you is going to try to give you're your block back. Maybe it is a drink, maybe it is a girl or guy that is literally throwing himself or herself at your feet, someone – somehow is going to offer your block back to you. What will you do?

It isn't just that they offer the block back to you maybe you stumble over it inadvertently. The only way to avoid that is to turn on the light. When you see the block you aren't as likely to fall over it. Turning on the light means reading your bible. Simple and plain. Spending time in God's word shows you how to avoid the block and especially how to drop it and never pick it up again.

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**Life Questions:**

What is the one thing you are having a difficult time overcoming? ( You may not want to share this openly ). Is it porn, sex, drugs, alcohol, depression, bullying, etc? What is the thing or things that act as a block in your life?

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### 3. Finish it!

Do you know who Derek Redmond is? Chances are you probably don't. He is a retired runner from Great Britain. During his career, he held the British record for the 400 meter sprint and won gold medals in several international events. But he isn't remembered for that.

In 1992, he made it to the top of his game, the Olympics in Spain running in the 400 meters. But that isn't what he is known for.

What he is best known for is in that 400 meter race he tore his hamstring barely into the start of the race. With this kind of injury the athlete is taken off the field by a cart and almost immediately given medical attention. The pain alone is quite excruciating. And were the story to stop there, it wouldn't be all that different from the other athletes that hurt themselves each year at sporting events. Doubtful he would have even gotten a mention on the evening news. But Derek has a little different twist to his story.

Instead of allowing himself medical attention he rose up on his legs. Hobbled now he pushed away the trainers and medical personnel and stayed in his lane. Literally crying as he moved, he stayed in the lane until an older gentleman ran up to him. Derek's dad told him he didn't have to this, but he wanted to finish the race. So staying in his lane, with tears rolling down his face, his dad helped him cross the finish line.

Derek didn't win a gold medal that day. He didn't even get to move on to another race, his career for the most part was over. But what he did that day was put a mark on the history of the Olympic Games that you never quit.

The lesson, never quit is given to us again by Paul. The interesting part is that like Derek, we aren't running the race alone. Not because of some silly footprints poster, but because of a simple thing Jesus tells us, I am with you always, even until the end. (Matthew 28:20).

You may be hurt. The race may be lost and your future may be in shambles. Everything you worked for may have just been taken away, but like Derek's father, our Father in heaven, maybe not our earthly father, but our Heavenly Father is in the lane with us. Not just running beside us, but holding us up. Encouraging us. And many times, He is the only thing we can hold onto to finish the race.

No Derek didn't win. But he is known today for that one moment. Heroic with his father. And more known than the guy who did win the race that nobody remembers. Just because you don't win, doesn't mean that you haven't made an impact on someone. Because you didn't finish first doesn't mean that someone didn't get inspired by your actions. When Derek crossed the finish

line, he was greeted with a standing ovation. I would imagine that is what heaven is going to be like. Beaten down by life, failures and pain, all that is remembered is that you finished the race.

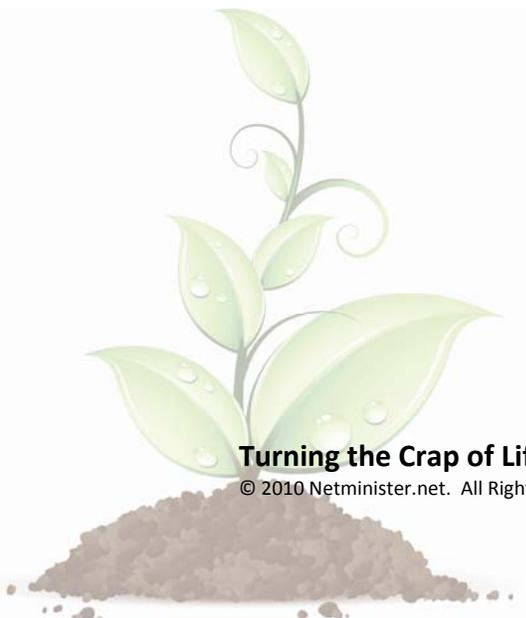
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**Life Questions:**

What race haven't you finished because you have given up? What pain is stopping you from doing what you know you should be doing? What situation has the power to make you want to give up?

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**Final Analysis:** Are you ready to finish the race today? Knowing that you don't do it alone, are you ready to drop the block and run the race? Painfully dealing with the problems of life even so are you ready to finish the race. You are not alone so drop the block and finish the race!



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