

MARK & FRIENDS PROGRAM RESOURCES

A Runner's Will

Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus, Returning to the Lord, and
Finishing the Race

Dennis Venturini

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Program Summary

In this Mark & Friends conversation, host Donna Leland welcomes central Illinois Christian musician Dennis Venturini to discuss songs from his double album, *A Runner's Will*. Dennis explains the biblical foundations behind "The Sacrifice Lamb" and the title song, drawing from Isaiah 53, John 1, and Hebrews 12. He also shares candidly about wandering from the Lord, the mercy that brought him back, and his burden to encourage prodigals and those who love them. The program calls every listener to lay aside what hinders, fix their eyes on Jesus, receive God's gift of repentance, and keep running the race with perseverance.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus is the promised Sacrifice Lamb foretold in Isaiah 53 and identified in John 1 as the One who takes away the sin of the world.
- Every believer has a God-given race to run, and Hebrews 12 calls us to lay aside every weight and the sin that entangles us.
- Perseverance is not pretending we never fall; it is getting back up, returning to the course, and continuing to follow Jesus.
- Jesus endured the cross by looking beyond the suffering to the joy set before Him, giving believers the pattern for enduring hardship.
- A Christian who wanders from the Lord may appear outwardly free while inwardly becoming restless, spiritually dry, and increasingly bound.
- Repentance is a gift of God's mercy. No prodigal is beyond the Lord's ability to restore, cleanse, and put back on the right path.
- Parents, friends, and churches should pray for prodigals and lovingly encourage them to return to the Lord rather than giving up on them.
- Dennis's album reflects a lifelong theme: keep pressing on, fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep your eyes on Jesus.
- The proceeds from Dennis's music support Voice of the Martyrs and the persecuted church.

Scripture References

- Isaiah 53:4-7
- John 1:29
- Acts 8:26-35
- Revelation 5:6-12
- Hebrews 12:1-3
- Proverbs 24:16
- Philippians 3:12-14
- 2 Timothy 4:7-8
- Proverbs 14:14
- 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Quote of the Day

“Every Christian, born again and called by the Lord, has a race to run. Lay aside the weight and the sin, fix your eyes on Jesus, and keep running.”

Broadcast Notes

Donna Leland begins by introducing Dennis Venturini and his double album, *A Runner's Will*. The first featured song, "The Sacrifice Lamb," is rooted in Isaiah 53 and the Bible's unfolding picture of Jesus as the Lamb of God, from John's Gospel through Revelation. Dennis then explains that the title song began with one verse and chorus in 1982 and remained unfinished for decades until the album project compelled him to complete it. Hebrews 12:1-3 provides the song's central image: believers are runners who cast off every hindrance, keep their eyes on Jesus, and persevere to the finish. Dennis also speaks openly about several seasons of wandering from the Lord, including a ten-year period that brought spiritual decline and bondage. Through his mother's final illness, health concerns, and the Lord's mercy, he was brought to repentance and restoration. His testimony now fuels a special burden for prodigals and for those praying for them. The conversation closes with gratitude for the musicians and recording professionals who helped complete the album and with Dennis's commitment to support ministries serving persecuted Christians.

Practical Applications

- Read Hebrews 12:1-3 slowly and identify one weight and one sin that are hindering your present walk with Jesus.
- Write down the race God has placed before you in this season. Ask what faithfulness looks like today rather than trying to run someone else's course.
- When you fall, refuse both denial and despair. Confess the sin, receive God's mercy, get back on the path, and take the next obedient step.
- Choose one prodigal by name and pray regularly for repentance, protection, and a renewed desire for fellowship with Jesus.
- Reach out to someone who has drifted from the Lord with humility and compassion, making it clear that restoration is possible.
- Use Jesus' endurance in Hebrews 12 as your pattern when hardship tempts you to quit: look beyond the present pain to God's promised joy and purpose.
- Review the influences, habits, or addictions that once pulled you away from God and strengthen practical boundaries against returning to them.
- Pray for persecuted believers and learn about trustworthy ministries serving them around the world.
- Encourage a Christian musician, artist, or writer who is faithfully using creative gifts to proclaim biblical truth.

Today's Challenge

This week, name one thing that has slowed your spiritual race or pulled your eyes away from Jesus. Bring it honestly to the Lord, take one concrete step of repentance or obedience, and ask a trusted believer to pray with you. Then encourage one prodigal - or one person praying for a prodigal - with the assurance that God's mercy still calls people home.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Jesus, the Lamb of God who carried our sin and opened the way of salvation. Thank You that when we stumble or wander, Your mercy still calls us home. Help us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us. Fix our eyes on Jesus and give us endurance to run the race You have marked out for us. Strengthen every prodigal who is turning back, and comfort the parents, families, and friends who continue to pray. Guard us from returning to old bondages, renew our love for You, and help us finish our course faithfully. Remember persecuted believers around the world and use our lives, gifts, and resources to strengthen Your church. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Dennis Venturini

Christian Singer, Songwriter, and Testimony Guest

Dennis Venturini is a central Illinois Christian singer, songwriter, and recording artist. In this Mark & Friends conversation with host Donna Leland, he discusses his double album *A Runner's Will*, the Scripture behind several songs, and his personal testimony of wandering from the Lord and being restored through God's mercy. Dennis has a particular burden to encourage prodigals and those who pray for them. He also directs proceeds from his music toward Voice of the Martyrs in support of persecuted Christians.

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Proofread Broadcast Transcript

Mark & Friends Welcome Song

We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.

Welcome to Mark and Friends. I'm your host Donna Leland.

And it's again a blessing to talk with Dennis Venturini. Dennis is a local artist to the central Illinois area. And he has come out with his CD, A Runner's Will.

And it's a double set. And we've enjoyed him from the past. You can always go back to our archives and listen to our first program with Dennis.

But now we're going to cover some more of his songs. And I know you're going to enjoy it. Thanks so much, Dennis, for being with us on Mark and Friends.

Great to be back, Donna. Let's jump right in with our first song that we're going to find out about. The Sacrifice Lamb.

And, you know, I remember when I got saved back in the 80s, that the group who sang that originally was around, and they were kind of one of the pioneers of more of contemporary Christian music. Yeah. The Sacrifice Lamb was written by Joel Chernoff from the group Lamb.

They were messianic Jews. I wanted to put this on the album. I love the song.

It preaches a gospel. It's right out of Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53.

And keep in mind, this is in the Old Testament. It's one of the greatest chapters about the Messiah. So it says in Isaiah 53, 6, You know, that actually is then reiterated in the book of Acts, whenever Philip was instructed by the Spirit to go and speak to the Ethiopian eunuch.

He was working through that passage. And he asked Philip, who is this talking about? Right. Right.

Yeah, it's a good, it's a good point. And also in John, the Gospel of John 1 in verse 29, talking about John and his disciples, it says, The next day, John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. That's John the Baptist.

And then later on, his disciples pretty much dropped John. They're like, OK, we're going with the Lord and stayed with him for a couple of days. So that's a great passage there that refers to the Lamb of God in the New Testament.

And the theme of the Lamb continues all the way through the book of Revelation. He looked like he was a lamb from the slaughter. Right.

And that's a great passage to a lamb that looked like he'd been slain. Who is alive. I. The sacrifice.

He. He. No salvation.

No. The prophets of all. Speak much of Messiah.

His death is foretold. Purpose is clear. Isaiah did say it was for an atonement to give us a way.

It's not. The sacrifice. The lamb has been slain.

His blood on the altar. To wipe away. To bring hope.

We. Salvation. God's own.

Jesus. I. So brothers of mine. To yourself.

He is. We. By.

The sacrifice. The lamb. Has been slain.

His blood on the altar. Stay. Bring hope.

So. By. The sacrifice.

He. Has been slain. Yes.

You. Well, Dennis, this next song is actually the title cut off your CD, A Runner's Will. Tell us how you got the inspiration for this one.

Well, it's kind of funny. I started writing it in 1982 and I recorded one verse and one chorus. It's all I had, still got it on a cassette, never could finish it.

I don't know why, but when we were making the album, you know, when you're making an album and you, and you know, you're, you're kind of forced to, it's a good thing, it's forced to finish things. I knew I wanted to finish it. And, uh, during the process, I came up with more verses and better verses and even a bridge and a friend of mine, Levi Vincent, whom a lot of people know here.

He's a musician that we used to play together. He come over one day and, uh, I was just stuck on the chorus. Of course, in about, uh, two, two meetings together with, with him, he helped me switch around chorus chords and it fit really well.

And so I ended up finishing it. The inspiration to that song is out of Hebrews 12, one and two. Um, you can tell by the lyrics, a lot of lyrics are right out, out of, um, scripture.

He falls seven times right out of Proverbs. Uh, he lays aside his, the weight and the sin and runs his race all the end. Hebrews 12, one says we're in a race and Paul spoke about that race.

So every Christian born again and saved and called by the Lord, they have a race to run. They have a course. And so it's different for, for everyone has their own race to run.

So, uh, that was the inspiration for it. A just man falls seven times, given up is not what's on us. Can't keep a good man to stay on the ground and jump up and get back into the game, the storms and the wind howls of his strength is gone.

He still wears well, a runner's will. Lays aside every weight and the sin and runs his race all the way to the end. Though he may stray, he will get back on the track, forgets about the past, never looking back, following Jesus, running close behind, hoping one day to cross that finish line.

Perseveres like the saints of old, running for the crown. Going for the gold, a runner's will, a runner's will. He won't quit, fights the good fight, he will finish his course, running in the light, he is a child of the day, not a child of the night, he

doesn't run on the ground, this race to win, the race he runs is run from within, overcoming the flesh and the pride, and all the evil in the world on the outside.

He turns not to the left or to the right, looking straight ahead with the end in sight, to finish well is his only goal, relieving unto the saving of the soul. A runner's will, a runner's will, he won't quit, no matter his will, a runner's will, he keeps on running still, running still. Well, let's read that from the book of Hebrews.

It says, therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Something that's always hit me, Dennis, with that is for the joy set before him.

You know, it's exciting to think that we are the joy that drove him to the cross. Right. That's a great point.

He was, he was looking beyond the suffering, keeping his eyes, you know, you've heard that saying, keep your eyes on the prize, that's what the Lord Jesus did, and that's what we all need to do. Keep our eyes on him. That's how we endure and overcome.

And that's, you know, that was the theme of the whole album. Uh, it's all about perseverance. We're talking with Dennis Venturini on Mark and Friends.

You know, Dennis, it's giving you a few minutes here to share your heart. What, what is the Lord teaching you in these days? I have a real burden to speak to the prodigals out there and not only them, but people who are parents of prodigals, or maybe people's parents are prodigals. Who knows? But I know there's a lot of them out there because I left the Lord, got away from the Lord off and on, since, you know, when, when I got saved, when I was in 1980, I got saved, gave my life to the Lord in the early eighties.

I got away from the Lord probably three times. The last time I was in my forties and that lasted 10 long years and it wasn't good. I have a burden to speak to the prodigal.

The world is really no place for a Christian. The most miserable people I think on the earth, and you've heard this from preachers, is, uh, born-again Christians that walk with the Lord and got away from the Lord. Um, they might not look like it, but you know, so I have a burden to speak to them.

You know, they need to get right with the Lord and, and, uh, repentance is a gift. It says in Acts, and I think it says in Timothy that the Lord would grant them repentance is that the Lord would give them repentance. Things are getting worse in the world.

It's time to get right with the Lord. I know personally, I, I was very restless and driven and went back to all the old ways. You know, the, the Bible says in Proverbs about the backslider and heart shall be filled with his own way.

I have a burden to speak to the prodigal. It's time to get right with the Lord, do whatever you have to do, but, uh, get back with the Lord. Cause you know, there's rewards to be won and there's a race to be run.

I'd say the real thing Lord can speak to me about that. That's just one is this race thing, you know, a runner's will, you know, that's the title of the album and it's all about perseverance. It's all about endurance.

I've got saved in 1980. Uh, how many people do you know? I'm speaking to the audience. How many people, how many people do you know when you were young and you walk with the Lord, uh, there were good people.

They, they were, they were on fire for the Lord. They were real servants. How many people, you know, now looking back or still walking with the Lord, still getting on with the Lord, still, still pressing on.

Like Paul says in Philippians, Philippians three. And how many do you know that they got off track? And I say this with love and compassion, humility as one that did get off the for 10 long years and went straight downhill spiritually. Uh, but out there partying with the world, you know, getting high, being staying up all night.

That wasn't good. That's corruption and defilement and debauchery. So, you know, thank God he gave me a, he had mercy and brought me to repentance.

Probably about nine, probably 2016. My mother was dying. She was about nine.

She was, she was 90. And going up there, visiting her in the hospital and just, just tore my heart apart here. I'm, I'm still kind of like in the world, but, but turning back to the Lord.

And, uh, then I started having these, uh, health issues. I just really felt the Lord saying it's time to get right. Time to get back with me.

Time to get right. You know, and the Lord just cleaned me up. I quit all kinds of addictions and I don't regret it.

I'm going on 10 years now, praise the Lord. We need to be praying for our brothers and sisters that got away from the Lord. We need to go there.

We need to be, uh, you know, encouraging them, you know, it's time to get right with the Lord. The Lord, Lord's coming back someday. We're going to die and we're going to stand before the Lord and give him an account for the light that we have.

Well, I'm sure Dennis, there's a lot of people that were behind your effort here to put together the CD. Maybe a young person or an older person is thinking about trying to collect some of their music. Um, who are some of the people that have helped you? Well, one that comes to mind is my buddy, Levi Vincent, Terry Huffman.

He's, and of course, Tom Degelman, my recording engineer at DRC studios here in the South side of Springfield, Illinois. I could never have done this album without him. Well, Dennis, if anyone would like to contact you and find out more about your ministry, uh, how could they do that?

dennisventurinemusic@gmail.com. By the way, I'm giving, giving all my proceeds to the Voice of the Martyrs, uh, ministry in Oklahoma, cause I really support them and I love what they're doing for the persecuted church.

So keep praying for the persecuted church ministries like Voice of the Martyrs, Global Christian Relief, Open Doors and Wycliffe Bible Translator and all those ministries. Thanks so much, Dennis, for joining us here on Mark and Friends. And you too, dear listener, Mark and Friends is a ministry of great news media.

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