1 Corinthians 9:24 Commentary

1 CORINTHIANS - PROBLEMS OF A LOCAL CHURCH
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1 Corinthians 9 Verse by Verse Comments

- 1 Corinthians 9:1 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:2 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:3 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:4 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:5 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:6 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:7 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:8 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:9 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:10 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:11 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:12 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:13 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:14 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:15 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:16 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:17 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:18 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:19 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:20 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:21 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:22 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:23 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:24 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:25 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:26 Commentary
- 1 Corinthians 9:27 Commentary

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: Ouk oidate (2PRAI) hoti oi en stadio trechontes (PAPMPN) pantes men trechousin, (3PPAI) eis de lambanei (3SPAI) to brabeion? Houtos **trechete** (2PPAM) hina katalabete. (2PAAS)

Amplified: Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

Barclay: Are you not aware that those who run in the stadium all run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may win the prize. (Westminster John Knox Press)

ESV: Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

KJV: Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

Lenski: Do you not know that those who run in the stadium all run, yet only one receives the prize? So run that you may attain.

NET: Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to

win. (NET Bible)

NIV: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. (NIV - IBS)

NLT: Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: Do you remember how, on a racing-track, every competitor runs, but only one wins the prize? Well, you ought to run with your minds fixed on winning the prize! (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: Do you not know that those who are running in a race are indeed all running, but one receives the victor's award? Be running in such a manner as the one who won the race, in order that you may obtain the victor's award.

Young's Literal: Have ye not known that those running in a race -- all indeed run, but one doth receive the prize? so run ye, that ye may obtain;

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win

- **Those who run**: Ho 12:10
- **Run**: Ps 19:5 Ec 9:11 Jer 12:5
- 1 Corinthians 9 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

NOTE: BE SURE TO CHECK THE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THIS VERSE BY CLICKING HERE



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS
LIKE AN OLYMPIC RACE

In the preceding context, Paul discussed how he labored to win as many as possible (1Cor 9:19). Paul now gives a strong exhortation for Christian self-discipline and self-denial, using himself as an example and employing athletic figures familiar to the Corinthians at their own Isthmian athletic games, which were hosted by the city of Corinth.

Paul Apple has an intriguing approach to this last great section seeing it as showing "Two motivationS for disciplined Christian living. (1) The value of the eternal prize and (2) the danger of disqualification should motivate disciplined Christian living in the warfare against sin."

Jack Arnold introduces 1 Cor 9:24-27 - In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul has been dealing with the giving up of rights to be effective for Jesus Christ. He has shown that he had the right to be paid money as a gospel minister, but he willingly set that right aside so as not to have the Corinthians connect the giving of money with the preaching of the gospel. He then used his own life as an example of a person who became "all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul give up the right to do all kinds of legitimate practices such as the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, the drinking of wine and the observing of Jewish holidays so as not to offend men in order to win men to Christ or help them grow in Christ. As a mature Christian, Paul set aside his rights to any questionable practice in order to reach as many men, women, boys and girls as he possibly could for Christ. This whole context is about reaching people for Christ, **so in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, the emphasis is upon practicing self-denial for the salvation of others.** Paul's point will be that by giving in all the time to the love of indulgences and luxury, we may find ourselves trapped in a lifestyle spiritually injurious to us which could cause us to be disqualified from the spiritual race.

MacArthur also sees the prize as salvation of souls - In a sense, every Christian runs his own race, enabling each one of us to be a winner in winning souls to Christ. Paul therefore counsels all believers to run in such a way that you may win, by setting aside anything that might hinder the reception of the gospel.

Baker - In 9:24–27, Paul tops off the discussion of the purpose and strategy of his missionary activity by focusing on his goal, noted

in 1 Cor 9:23, to do everything he possibly can to save those who might respond positively to the gospel message

Charles Hodge describes this last section (1 Cor 9:24-27) as "**An exhortation to self-denial and exertion, clothed in figurative language**. As the exhortation is addressed principally to the Gentile converts, the imagery used is derived from the public games with which they were so familiar. These games, the Olympian and Isthmian, the latter celebrated every third summer in the neighbourhood of Corinth, were the occasions for the concourse of the people from all parts of Greece. The contests in them excited the greatest emulation in all classes of the inhabitants. Even the Roman emperors did not refuse to enter the lists. **To be a victor was to be immortalized with such immortality as the breath of man can give.** To Greeks, therefore, no allusions could be more intelligible, or more effective, than those to these institutions, which have nothing to answer to them in modern times.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? - This is a rhetorical question to arrest their attention. Of course they knew (eido/oida - know beyond a shadow of doubt) only one runner could win first place. Every citizen of Corinth would be very familiar with the famous foot races which were held at the **Isthmian Games**, second in prestige only to the Olympic Games. In short this introduction would have secured the reader's attention to pay heed to description of the far more important race, the believer's "spiritual race."

Wayne Barber on **Do you not know** - Why would he ask that question? Well, he's making a comparison. Now that he's got their attention, now that they understand it, now he's going to give the comparison of the Christian life. He's comparing one who runs the race with intensity, having trained, having denying self, looking forward to the prize which is his purpose with the Christian life and how he lives his whole life until the day he sees the Lord Jesus. It's like he takes you into the training camp of the athlete. You can smell the sweat. You can feel the intensity of the athlete. You can feel the sobriety, the seriousness of them.

Hodge on those **who run in a race** is "literally in the stadium or circus in which the games were celebrated, so called because it was a stadium (a little more than two hundred yards) in length....It was not enough to start in this race; it was not enough to persevere almost to the end; it was necessary to outrun all competitors and be first at the goal. But one took the prize.

Kistemaker - Paul uses the word **race** metaphorically to indicate that all believers are participating in a spiritual race. And he is not suggesting that of all the believers who run this race only one wins the prize. Certainly not. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to take their spiritual life seriously and consider it to be a contest in which they must exert themselves to the limit.

What Paul did was use the popular **Isthmian Games** as a metaphorical picture to help the saints at Corinth understand that they were in a far greater, more important race than any of the races of the Greek athletes. The races of the Isthmian Games had only passing, temporal consequences, whereas the race the Corinthian Christians were in had not only temporal, but more importantly, eternal consequences.

John Piper - "What Paul did with the games was to see them in relation to God. Paul was so saturated with Christ and the Gospel that he could not see anything without thinking of how it related to eternity and the great issues of the Christian life...(PIPER PARAPHRASES PAUL) "Now I want you to see all that at another level. I want you to transpose the temporary struggles and triumphs of the Olympic Games onto a different level of reality—the level of spiritual life and eternity and God. When you see the athletes run, see another kind of running. When you see them boxing, see another kind of boxing. When you see them training and denying themselves, see another kind of training and self-denial. When you see them smiling with a gold medal around their neck, see another kind of prize. (**Piper** paraphrases Paul to help us understand his tactic in using the popular games as a picture of a greater reality) ... "*The games are played at this level of reality. They run at this level. They box at this level. They train and practice and deny themselves at this level. They set their sights on gold at this level. Now I want you to see all that at another level. I want you to transpose the temporary struggles and triumphs of the Olympic Games onto a different level of reality—the level of spiritual life and eternity and God. When you see the athletes run, see another kind of running. When you see them boxing, see another kind of boxing. When you see them training and denying themselves, see another kind of training and self-denial. When you see them smiling with a gold medal around their neck, see another kind of prize.*" (Olympic Spirituality, Part 1)

Adam Clarke - It is sufficiently evident that the apostle alludes to the athletic exercises in the games which were celebrated… on the isthmus or narrow neck of land, which joins the Peloponnesus (Click map of Isthmus of Corinth)… to the main land; and were thence termed the Isthmian Games.

> **Know** (1492) (**eido**/**oida** only in perfect tense) means in general to know by perception. **Eido**/**oida** suggests fullness of knowledge, absolute knowledge, a beyond a shadow of doubt knowledge. The perfect tense speaks of an experience in the past in which the readers had received an understanding which persists to present. Paul is saying in essence to his Corinthian readers "You've been to the games and you know that when you go to the foot races, there are a number of athletes running but only one wins the prize."
>
> **Run** (5143)(**trecho** from **dremo** = to run or walk hastily) means literally to move faster than a walk, making rapid linear movement. **Webster** says to run is "to go steadily by springing steps so that both feet leave the

ground for an instant in each step." **Trecho** therefore describes someone in haste (Mt 28:8, Mk 5:6, Jn 20:2, 4, Lk 24:12). Figuratively **trecho** describes rapid propagation of doctrine, spreading without restraint (2Th 3:1). It also pictures one exerting effort, striving hard, spending strength to attain a goal (Ro 9:16-note, Gal 5:7, 2:2, Php 2:16-note, He 12:1-note). In Gal 5:7 **trecho** describes the course of the conduct. Here in 1 Cor 9:24 Paul uses **trecho** to emphasize the **preparation** and **effort** necessary to run spiritually. He is not using running in the sense of defeating an opponent in a race as in the actual Olympics. **BDAG** characterizes the figurative use of **trecho** as "to make an effort to advance spiritually or intellectually."

Race (4712) (**stadia** from **histemi** = to stand) had two basic meanings **(1)** a measure of distance of about 192 meters, stade, one-eighth mile = with allowance for variations according to locale, 600 Greek (625 Roman; circa 607 English) feet = 192 meters. It was used as a measure of distance in Mt 14:24; Lk 24:13 Jn 6:19; Jn 11:18; Rev 14:20; Rev 21:16. **(2)** an area for public spectacles, arena, stadium on or in which foot-races and other public athletic contests were held and used with this meaning only in 1 Cor 9:24. It was generally a long parallelogram about 200 yards long and 30 yards wide and was surrounded by tiers of seating for the spectators.

Stadia - 7v in the NT - distance(1), miles(5), race(1). Matt. 14:24; Lk. 24:13; Jn. 6:19; Jn. 11:18; 1 Co. 9:24; Rev. 14:20; Rev. 21:16

Vincent has a lengthy comment on **stadia** noting that it is derived "From **histemi** = to place or establish. Hence a stated distance; a standard of length. In all other New Testament passages it is used of a measure of length, and is rendered *furlong*, representing 606¾ English feet (1/8th of a Roman mile). From the fact that the race-courses were usually of exactly this length, the word was applied to the **race-course** (or "stadium" - the best known race-course at Olympia was a exactly a stade long) itself. The position chosen for the stadium was usually on the side of a hill, which would furnish a natural slope for seats; a corresponding elevation on the opposite side being formed by a mound of earth, and the seats being supported upon arches. The stadium was oblong in shape, and semicircular at one end; though, after the Roman conquest of Greece, both ends were often made semicircular. A straight wall shut in the area at one end, and here were the entrances and the starting-place for the runners. At the other end was the goal, which, like the starting-point, was marked by a square pillar. Half-way between these was a third pillar. On the first pillar was inscribed excel; on the second, hasten; on the third, turn, since the racers turned round the column to go back to the starting-point. (See the description of the stadium at Ephesus in Wood's "Discoveries at Ephesus") The isthmus of Corinth was the scene of the Isthmian games, one of the four great national festivals of the Greeks. The celebration was a season of great rejoicing and feasting. The contests included horse, foot, and chariot-racing; wrestling, boxing, musical and poetical trials, and later, fights of animals. The victor's prize was a garland of pine leaves, and his victory was generally celebrated in triumphal odes called epinikia, of which specimens remain among the poems of Pindar (See a fine description of the Olympic games, on which the others were modeled, in J. Addington Symonds' "Studies of the Greek Poets," Volume I. Chapter 11). At the period of Paul's epistles the games were still celebrated, and the apostle himself may very probably have been present. At the same time, he would have been familiar with similar scenes in Tarsus, in all the great cities of Asia Minor, especially Ephesus, and even in Jerusalem.

Receives (2638) **katalambano** from **katá** = adds intensity + **lambáno** = take) means to take eagerly, grasp with force, lay hold of, seize with hostile intent (Mk 9:18). **Katalambano** in some contexts meant to make something one's own, to obtain (the prize = win - 1Co 9:24), to attain (Php 3:12, 13, Ro 9:30). In a similar use in the papyri, **katalambano** is used in the papyri of colonists appropriating land. **Katalambano** in 1 Cor 9:24 refers to seizing or taking possession of the prize and holding on to it. 14 uses in the NT - Mk. 9:18; Jn. 1:5; Jn. 8:3; Jn. 8:4; Jn. 12:35; Acts 4:13; Acts 10:34; Acts 25:25; Rom. 9:30; 1 Co. 9:24; Eph. 3:18; Phil. 3:12; Phil. 3:13; 1 Th 5:4.

Run in such a way that you may win - Amplified = "So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours" Paul amplifies the race metaphor, because in the Christian race, all can run and all can win! **Run** is a command in the present imperative (Continually run) and it calls for all Christian runners to depend on the Holy Spirit in order to obey this command. This is not let go, let God, but let God and "let's go," so to speak. It is God's sovereign provision and our individual responsibility. It is what Jerry Bridges called the "Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible" (100/100). "This is not an apostolic suggestion or a divine option. Instead, Paul issues a command, "Run! Don't walk. Don't stop. Don't sit down. Run because you can win the prize!" After all, the point of entering the race is to win the prize." (Krell)

Hodge on **in such a way hat you may win** - The greatest self-denial in preparation, and the greatest effort in the contest, were necessary to success. In the Christian race there are many victors; but the point of the exhortation is, that all should run as the one

victor ran in the Grecian games.

Barber on **such a way** - the apostle Paul, getting them into the feel of this athletic event, says, “Run in such a way that you may win.” Here’s the comparison. The word for “such a way” is ***houtos***, which means **in like manner.** There’s your comparative word right there. In other words, as you understand how these men train, how these men deny themselves, how these men made choices, how these men had a purpose that drove them, how they were single-minded, how they marched to the beat of a different drum, you live your Christian life exactly the way they lived theirs. That’s what he’s saying. Don’t ever think about the fact that you have any R & R. It’s every day, every moment, every breath that you live the Christian life with purpose in mind, with integrity in mind, and the discipline of denying yourself.

Paul tells us to train and compete as athletes who really want to win. Without effort, nothing can be won in a sporting event. How does one train in this way? One way is by setting aside anything that might hinder one from running well. The writer of Hebrews said it this way

> Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also**lay aside every encumbrance** and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:1-2) .

One thinks of **Jonathan Edwards**, felt by many to be America's greatest theologian, who once wrote 70 resolutions to stir himself up so that he might not grow weary and lose heart in his once in a lifetime race. One of his resolutions that speaks particularly to running with earnestness of purpose is "**Resolved: to live with all my might while I do live**."

As Solomon said centuries earlier “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

Matthew Henry - There is the greatest encouragement, therefore, to persevere with all our strength, in this **race**. Those who ran in these games were kept to a spare diet (cp Jn 6:27). They used themselves to hardships (2Ti 2:3,4+). They practised the exercises (1Ti 4:7, 8+). And those who pursue the interests of their souls, must combat hard with fleshly lusts (1Pe 2:11+). The body must not be suffered to rule. The apostle presses this advice on the Corinthians. He sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly desires, pampering the body, and its lusts and appetites (1Co 9:25). Holy fear of himself (his own evil flesh) was needed to keep an apostle faithful: **how much more is it needful for our preservation**! Let us learn from hence, humility and caution, and to watch against dangers which surround us while in the body (… that we might enabled by His Spirit to run this one time race with endurance and passionate purpose.)

> **New Manners and Customs** on **Running** - **Running** was one of the most popular of the Olympic games. The place prepared for the race was called the **stadium** because its length equaled a **stadion**, or six hundred Greek feet. The stadium was an oblong area, with a straight wall across one end, where the entrances were, the other end being round and entirely closed. Tiers of seats were on either side for the spectators… The starting place was at the entrance end and was marked by a square pillar. At the opposite end was the goal, where the judge sat and held the prize. The eyes of the competitors remained fixed on him: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2-note). The goal, as well as the starting point, was marked by a square pillar, and a third was placed midway between the two… The competitors, through severe training, had no superfluous flesh, and ran unclothed. Flesh and clothing were laid aside as a “weight” that might hinder them in the race. (Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. The New Manners and Customs of the Bible: Page 545)

Only one life
Twill soon be past
Only what's done
For (in) Christ will last!

"Faith will make us walk, but assurance will make us run."
--Thomas Watson

The **metaphor of a runner** is frequent in Paul's writings but sometimes is not obvious. For example, the phrase “**fought the good fight**” (2Ti 4:7-note). **J S Howson** explains that "We must be careful here to give the right meaning to the word "**fight**." This term has nothing to do with war. It denotes an **athletic contest.** And the particular kind of athletic contest, which he specifies in his customary way, is the **foot-race**. But now he is writing near the close of life. The race is nearly run, the struggle is all but over, he is weary, as it were, and panting with the effort, but he is successful, the crown is in sight, and the judge, the "**righteous**" Judge (2Ti 4:1-note), Who cannot make a mistake, is there, ready to place that bright wreath upon his head. (The Metaphors of St Paul - page 140)

John Piper makes the poignantly powerful statement that "Eternal Life Hangs on the Way We Run - In other words life is not a game with no lasting consequences. The way we live our lives has eternal consequences. Life is a proving ground where we prove who we are, whom we trust, and what we cherish. Eternal life, the upward call, the crown of righteousness—all these hang on what our life says about who we are, whom we trust, and what we love. Make no mistake here! Life is not a place for proving to God or anybody your strength. Life is a place for proving whose strength you trust—man's or God's. Life is not a place for proving the power of your intelligence to know truth. It's a place for proving the power of God's grace to show truth (Matthew 16:17). Life is not a field for demonstrating the force of our will to make good choices. It's a field for showing how the beauty of Christ takes us captive and constrains us to choose and run for his glory. The race of life has eternal consequences not because we are saved by works, but because Christ has saved us from dead works to serve the living and true God with Olympic passion (Hebrews 9:14). The race of life has eternal consequences not because grace is nullified by the way we run, but because grace is verified by the way we run. "By the grace of God I am what I am and his grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored [I ran, I fought] more exceedingly than all, yet it was not I but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul's running did not nullify the purpose of grace; it verified the power of grace. Eternal life hangs on the way we run and the way we fight not because salvation is based on the merit of works, but because faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Life is a proving ground for whether faith is alive or dead—a proving ground for whom we trust. (1Corinthians 9:23-27 Olympic Spirituality 2- How Then Shall We Run?)

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would have been familiar with similar scenes in Tarsus, in all the great cities of Asia Minor, especially Ephesus, and even in Jerusalem.

Metaphors and allusions founded upon such spectacles abound in Paul's writings. Racers, 1Co 9:24; boxers, 1Co 9:26, 27; gladiators fighting with beasts, 1Co 15:32; the judge awarding the prize, 2Ti 4:8-note); the goal and the prize, 1Co 9:24; Php 3:14-note; the chaplet, 1Co 9:25; 2Ti 2:5-note); 2Ti 4:8; the training for the contest, 1Ti 4:7, 8; the rules governing it, 2Ti 2:5; the chariot-race, Php 3:14-note. These images never occur in the gospels. See on of life, Rev 2:10-note).

ONE PRIZE
WINNER

Only one receives the prize - Here Paul draws a distinction with his analogy with the Olympic runners - they were competing against each other because there was only one "first place." Christian "runners" are in the same race but are not in competition with one another for one prize. Unfortunately denominations and individuals sometimes act as like this were true! The "prize" is within the reach of every Christian runner. We each have our own "lane" in which to run (see note) and do not need to compare ourselves with other "runners" (see illustration).

Krell - In this context, Paul is referring to his sacrifice for the gospel to see some saved.

Bruce Goettsche on the prize, the imperishable wreath - **What is this crown we seek?** In the Bible we are told that there will rewards given to those who are faithful. I don't know what these rewards will be, but one of those rewards will surely be the reward of knowing that you were used by God to bring someone else to faith in Christ. Imagine how wonderful it would be to walk around Heaven and see those who are in Heaven because you were faithful in sharing the truth with them. Personally, I can't imagine a greater reward....Our ultimate blessing and reward would be to hear the Lord say to us, "**Well done**!" A child playing ball will often search the stands to see his/her parents. Why? They desire the approval of the people who are most significant to them. When someone we love says, "Good job!" or "I'm proud of you" it is a very significant moment. How much more significant it will be to stand before our precious Redeemer and Lord and hear Him say, "You served me well"? That will be a reward surpassing any trinket the world could afford.

Goettsche's comment reminds me of Paul's words in 1 Thes 2:19-20 describing our **crown**....

> For **who** is our hope or joy or **crown** of exultation? Is it not even **you**, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.
>
> Comment - So in this passage Paul identifies the believers he led to the Lord as his **crown**!
>
> **THOUGHT** - Do you really believe there is a prize worth winning? If you do then 1 Cor 9:24-27 is Paul's "secret message" instructing us how we can **run to win**! Too many believers either don't understand the Biblical truth about "the prize" or they have grown indifferent to this incredible truth, which is a divine promise from the "non-lying God" to all who determine to discipline themselves in this present passing life enabled to do so by the indwelling Spirit and continually having the eyes of their heart fixed on the prize in the life to come! (see 1Ti 4:7+ 1Ti 4:8, 9, 10+)

A W Tozer w- Nothing spiritual can be gained in competition…When two men step into a prize ring they know that only one can win, and whoever wins can do so only by forcing the other to lose. When five men line up on the track for a race they know that only one can come in first. Four men must lose that one may win. It is not so in the kingdom of God. Christians do not run against each other. All can win the race. Paul likens a Christian to a fighter, but the Christian's fight is not with other Christians. Each one can win and no one need lose. The man of faith fights against the devil, the flesh and the world. He wins as they lose; but he never wins anything truly spiritual in competition with a fellow believer. In the nature of things he cannot. To think so is to entertain an absurdity. (The Tozer Topical Reader 1:112)

> **Prize** (1017) (**brabeion** - kindred verb **brabeuo** = to be an umpire, Col 3:15) is used only here in the NT. The crown is not salvation, which is God's gift to those who trust in Christ; it is, rather, the future reward of one who is a Christian and seeks to honor Christ in his life. The reward will be received at the Judgment Seat of Christ (See 2Co 5:10-note, Ro 14:10, 11, 12-note 1Co 3:11, 12, 13, 14, 15). The only other use of this word in the NT is by Paul in Philippians 3:14 "I press on toward the goal for the prize (brabeion) of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So what does faithful running look like? Who are those who run in such a way that they may win?Krell offers these thoughts...

- Christians who finish their lives still growing, still serving
- Senior saints that persist in daily prayer until the Lord calls them home
- Husbands and wives who stay faithful to each other "until death do us part"
- Young people who preserve their virginity until marriage, in spite of crushing peer pressure
- Pastors who stay passionate about ministry until their last breath
- Church members who weather the rougher patches and remain joyful, loving, and faithful

Norman Geisler - 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24—Does Paul encourage or discourage running to obtain a spiritual goal?

PROBLEM: In this text, the apostle encourages the believer to "run in such a way that you may obtain it." However, in Romans, Paul informs us that "it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (9:16).

SOLUTION: The first passage is speaking about rewards which do depend on our works (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11ff and 2 Cor. 5:10), while the last passage is speaking about salvation which is by grace and not by works (Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:8–9; Titus 3:5–7).

ILLUSTRATION - On June 28th, 1991 I watched one of the greatest displays of strength and endurance I've ever seen. The location: Las Vegas. The setting: Caesar's Palace. The event: Donovan "Razor" Ruddock vs. "Iron" Mike Tyson in a scheduled twelve round championship bout. This was a much-anticipated fight because it was the rematch that followed their highly controversial bout. In their previous brawl, the referee stopped the fight because Tyson was pummeling Ruddock. Well, in the rematch Ruddock was out to prove that he deserved another chance. Ruddock and Tyson were pretty evenly matched in the first three rounds, but in the fourth round Ruddock suffered a broken jaw. Most people expected him to favor his jaw and fight soft, but not Ruddock. He came out fighting round after round after round against, at that time, the world's greatest fighter and most devastating puncher. He fought eight more rounds after the broken jaw and actually finished the fight stronger than he began! The fight went the scheduled twelve rounds and Tyson won by the judges' decision. Although Tyson won this fight, I believe the real winner was "Razor" Ruddock. Why? Because he endured to the final bell and finished well. He overcame many obstacles and saved his best fighting for the final rounds. I want to encourage you to be a Razor Ruddock. This will require enduring to the end and finishing well. (Keith Krell)

Athletic training and competition is one of the most frequent biblical analogies for Christian living (1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 3:13-14; 1 Tim 4:7-8; 2 Tim 2:5; Heb 12:1-2).

BACKGROUND ON ANCIENT GREEK GAMES

Jerry M. Hullinger

This description of the serious nature of athletics in ancient Greece helps us understand Paul's charge for believers to run their spiritual race with similar gravity…

> Athletics in the Greco-Roman world were approached with **great vigor and passion.** (Ed: Think of your own manner of "spiritual running" - would you describe it as one with great vigor and passion?) This fact helps explain why Paul applied this imagery to the Christian life. In sporting events the goal of the athletes was not merely to take part but to win. To lose, in many cases, was a disgrace.
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> Pindar, a Greek poet of the fifth century B.C., noted that "the athlete delights in the toil and the cost."
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> And Philo wrote, "I know wrestlers and pankratiasts often persevere out of love for honor and zeal for victory to the point of death, when their bodies are giving up and they keep drawing breath and struggling on spirit alone, a spirit which they have accustomed to reject fear scornfully… Among these competitors, death for the sake of an olive or celery crown is glorious."
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> The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (ca. A.D. 55-135) noted the same common belief. "In the Olympic Games you cannot just be beaten and then depart, but first of all, you will be disgraced not only before the people of Athens or Sparta or Nikopolis but before the whole world. In the second place, if you withdraw without sufficient reason you will be whipped. And this whipping comes after your training which involves thirst and broiling heat and swallowing handfuls of sand."
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> The word Paul used to depict this spirit is agonizomai (1Co 9:25), which referred to an athletic contest ("engaging in a contest") or to any struggle.

In classical Greek the noun **agon** was used in a number of ways: (a) a gathering, (b) a gathering place of the gods on Mount Olympus, (c) the “gathering” of ships in a harbor, and (d) a fight. In the Apocrypha **agon** occurred primarily in this fourth sense.

Paul’s use of the word with athletic overtones could refer to an “expression of the contestants’ manly discipline.” Stauffer described the force of this word in this way: “First is the thought of the goal which can be reached only with the full expenditure of all our energies… a passionate struggle, a constantly renewed concentration of forces on the attainment of the goal… The struggle for the reward [demands] not only full exertion but also rigid denial. The final assault is so exacting that all forces must be reserved, assembled, and deployed in it. The final goal is so high and glorious that all provisional ends must fade before it… If a man is not ready to set aside his egotistic needs and desires and claims and reservations, he is not fit for the arena.” (BSac 161:643 July 2004 p. 344.)

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

(e) The Foot-race. -- The words for "run" and "race" (Greek trecho and dromos) sometimes clearly, and in other cases probably, allude to foot-races at the games. For obvious references compare 1Co 9:24; He 12:1-note; 2Ti 4:7-note; for possible references see Acts 13:25; 20:24; Ro 9:16-note; Gal 2:2; 5:7; Phil 2:16-note; 2Th 3:1. The second of these passages (Heb 12:1-note) alludes to the necessity for the greatest possible reduction of weight, and for steady concentration of effort. All the passages would remind the first readers of the single-course and double-course foot-races of the games.

Addendum: The races took place in an enclosure of about six hundred feet in length called a **stadia**. Three kinds of races were held in these enclosures. “In the stade-race the competitors had to run a single length of the stadium, a distance of 192.28 meters. In the diaulos, which was the middle distance event at the ancient Olympics, they ran twice the length of the stadium, once in each direction, which means that they covered 384.56 meters. In the long-distance event, i.e., the dolichos, they had to run twenty-four lengths of the stadium, a total distance of 4614.72 meters.” Considering the stamina required by the long-distance event, it is probable that this is the running event Paul referred to in his epistles when he likened the Christian life to a race that comprises one’s entire earthly life.

Paul told the Philippians to “press on toward the goal” (Php 3:14-note). The Greek word for goal is skopos, which is most likely a reference to the square pillars located at each end of the track on which the runner could fix his eyes in order to run accurately as well as have something to encourage him.

Gardiner explained that “it is obvious that in a straight two hundred yards race the runner must have some point to fix his eye on if he is to run straight, and a post with a distinguishing mark would have been of great value as a guide.” (BSac 161:643 July 2004 p. 348)

(f) The Goal. -- The goal of the foot-race, a square pillar at the end of the stadium opposite the entrance, which the athlete as far as possible kept in view and the sight of which encouraged him to redouble his exertions, is alluded to once: "I press on toward the goal" (Phil 3:14-note, Greek skopos).

(g) The Herald. -- The name and country of each competitor were announced by a herald and also the name, country and father of a victor. There may be an allusion to this custom in 1Co 9:27: "after that I have been a herald (Revised Version margins, Greek kerusso) to others"; compare also 1Ti 2:7; 2Ti 1:11, where the Greek for "preacher" is kerux, "herald."

Addendum: The first day was occupied with sacrifices to the gods and the taking of oaths by the judges and competitors. The second morning began with the naming of the competitors by the herald, and was followed by chariot races, horse races, and the pentathlon for men. Contests for boys were held on the third day. On the fourth day the men’s games in foot racing, jumping, wrestling, boxing, and pankration were held. The final day of the games was spent in sacrifices and an evening banquet in which the victors were entertained. (BSac 161:643 July 2004 p. 344)

(h) The Prize. - Successful athletes were rewarded at the great games by a wreath consisting in the apostolic age of wild olive (Olympian), parsley (Nemean), laurel (Pythian), or pine (Isthmian). This is referred to in a general way in Php 3:14-note, and in 1Co 9:24: "One receiveth the prize" (Greek in both cases brabeion; compare also Col 3:15: "Let the peace of Christ arbitrate (Revised Version margin) in your hearts," where the

verb is brabeuo). The wreath (stephanos) is directly alluded to in 1Co 9:25: "They (the athletes) do it to receive a corruptible crown"; 2Ti 2:5: "A man … is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully"; and 1Pe 5:4-note): "Ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." There may be allusions also in Phil 4:1; 1Th 2:19; He 2:7,9; Jas 1:12-note; Re 2:10-note; Re 3:11-note). In the palm-bearing multitude of the Apocalypse (Rev 7:9) there is possibly a reference to the carrying of palm-branches by victors at the games. The judges who sat near the goal and who, at Olympia at any rate, had been carefully prepared for their task, may be glanced at in 2Ti 4:8: "The crown … which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day." (The Games)

Paul's use of metaphor of a runner to emphasizes each believer's individual responsibility. Therefore we are **all** (each individual believer) to run like a runner who wants the prize and there is prize for all believers who run faithfully. But there are rules for the race --We are to run the race as God says run it. If someone else "drops out" of the race, that should not affect us because we will each be judged individually. We are not trying to "outrun" other believers (See illustration of the danger of looking around - **Illustration**)

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,

Christ is the Path, and Christ the Prize.

The **Bema Seat of Christ** (2Co 5:10+ Ro 14:10, 11, 12+) is not to be confused with the **judgment at the Great White Throne** (Re 20:11+, Re 20:12+, Re 20:13+e, Re 20:14+, Re 20:15+) which is only for unbelievers. On the other hand the Bema seat is only for believers. At the Bema Seat we will not be judged for sins because our sins have been finally judged and paid for in full at the Cross! Every believer will stand before Christ the Judge and our works will be tested by fire (1Co 3:13, 14+; Rev 1:14+ eyes "like a flame of fire") Works that are burned are those deeds which were initiated by our flesh and which we then ask Him to bless! (cf failure to abide in Christ in Jn 15:5, see also Good Deeds) Works that will not be burned are good deeds which are prompted by and energized by God's Spirit. Christians who fail to keep a "Bema Seat" mentality (not in a bad sense but a good sense - an event you look forward to) are more likely to think lightly of sin in this present life.

THOUGHT - Beloved, we are developing our capacity to enjoy God right now. If we don't enjoy Him in this life, what makes us think we will enjoy Him in the life to come. In some way, the degree of the reward corresponds directly to the way which we run the race. For example, to whom much is given, much is required. Don't look at others as you run. Look to Jesus and He will guide you know in how you are to run. Too often we are trying to work out someone else's salvation instead of our own! We need to run this "once in a lifetime" Christian race as if we were Olympians -- we need to the same heart, the same intensity and the same enthusiasm as a runner who seeks to win an Olympic gold medal.

Awake, our souls! away, our fears!
Let every trembling thought be gone!
Awake, and run the heavenly race,
And put a cheerful courage on.
--Isaac Watts

TWELVE TESTS OF WHETHER YOU ARE RUNNING THE RACE WELL

In order to help us **run in such a way that we may win the prize**, someone has compiled a set of "tests" to help us discern whether an action should be pursued.

1. THE WORLD TEST. Is it worldly? Will it make me worldly to do it (John 15:19, 1John 2:15-17-note)

2. THE QUALITY TEST. Is it good for me physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Ro 12:9b-note)

3. THE TEMPLE TEST. Can I do it when I remember my body is God's temple and must not be marred or misused (1Co 6:19-note)

4. THE GLORY TEST. Will it glorify my Lord, or will it on the other hand possibly bring shame to His name (1Co 6:20-note, 1Co 10:32)

5. THE BLESSING TEST. Can I honestly ask God's blessing on it and be sure I'll not regret doing it (Pr 10:22, Ro 15:29-note)

6. THE REPUTATION TEST. Is it apt to damage my testimony for the Lord (Php 2:15-note)

7. THE CONSIDERATION TEST. Am I being considerate of others and the effect this might have on them (Ro 14:7-note, Ro 14:21-note)

8. THE APPEARANCE TEST. Will it look bad? Does it have the appearance of what is wrong or suspicious (1Th 5:22-note)

9. THE WEIGHT TEST. Could this slacken or sidetrack me in running the Christian race (He 12:1-note, 1Co 9:24)

10. THE COMING OF CHRIST TEST. Would I be ashamed to be found doing this when He comes again (1Jn 2:28+)

11. THE COMPANION TEST. Can I invite Christ to go with me and participate with me in this (Mt 28:20b, Col 3:17-note)

12. THE PEACE TEST. After having prayed about it, do I have perfect peace about doing it (Col. 3:15a-note, Php 4:6-note, Php 4:7-note)

ILLUSTRATION - How much greater is the race believers are called to run! One of the most grueling of all bicycle races is the Tour De France. A contestant in that event, Gilbert Duclos-Lassalle, describes it in a National Geographic article titled, "An Annual Madness.? The race covers about 2000 miles, including some of France's most difficult, mountainous terrain. Eating and drinking is done on the run. And there are extremes of heat and cold. To train for the event, Lassalle rides his bicycle 22,000 miles a year. What kind of prize makes people endure so much hardship and pain! $10,000? $100,000? No. It's just a special winner's jersey. What then motivates the contestants? Lassalle sums it up: "Why, to sweep through the Arc de Triomphe on the last day. To be able to say you finished the Tour de France."

No pain, no gain.
Know pain, great gain.

Related Resources: Devotionals and Articles Related

- Pithy, poignant and practical Puritan paper entitled The Heavenly Race by Thomas Watson
- See devotionals at bottom of page related to Hebrews 12:1 and running the race
- Teach Us to Number Our Days
- Discussion of what I like to call "Vertical Vision"
- Redeem the Time
- Discipline Yourself
- Our Body, His Temple
- Are You Entangled?
- Give Me An Undivided Heart
- Backsliding-Quotes, Devotionals, Illustrations
- Backsliding
- Wikipedia - Ancient Olympic Games
- Running in the Ancient Olympics
- See Artist's Rendering of Ancient Olympia
- New Testament Athletic Metaphors
- Easton's Bible Dictionary Games
- Fausset Bible Dictionary Games
- Holman Bible Dictionary Games

- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible Games
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT Games Games (2)
- Smith Bible Dictionary Games
- Vines' Expository Dictionary Games
- Webster Dictionary Games
- Watson's Theological Dictionary Games
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Games
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia Games
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia Pythian Games Isthmian Games Actian Games
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia Nemean Games Isthmian Games Olympic Games
- The Jewish Encyclopedia Games and Sports

Run in such a way that you may win

- 1Co 9:26 Ga 2:2 Gal 5:7 Php 2:16-note Php 3:14-note 2Ti 4:7,8-note Heb 12:1-note Jas 1:12-note Rev 3:11

"Be steadfast, immovable
always abounding in the work of the Lord"
(1Corinthians 15:58-note)

In such a way - Paul says not to sit and soak up sermons, but run to win! Christianity is not a spectator sport! We need to heed the words of the track coach who said "If you have anything left ten yards past the finish line, you didn't give your all." (**Are you as convicted as I am!**)

Just live your life before your Lord,
Rise to that higher, nobler plane--
With single eye His glory seek,
And you shall His approval gain.
--Rae

In such a way includes heeding the exhortations in the following passages…

> Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance (bad things for sure, but even "good things" what "weigh us down" - Ask God to search your heart - Ps 139:23, 24) and the sin which so easily entangles us ("The easily besetting, encompassing or surrounding sin". What is your "besetting sin"? You need to set it aside by the power of the Spirit, Ro 8:13), and let us run with endurance (hupomone [word study]) the race that is set before us (He 12:1-note)
>
> **Comment**: Run is in the present tense which conveys the truth that this is a lifelong struggle/race, one which ultimately can be run successfully **only** in His strength. Many Christians are just "spiritually" jogging, some just walking slowly, and others are sitting or even lying down. Yet the biblical standard for holy living is a **race**, not a morning constitutional. **Race** is the Greek **agon**, from which we get ***agony***. A race is not characterized by indulging and luxury, but is a demanding, sometimes grueling and agonizing task which requires our utmost in self-discipline, determination, and perseverance.
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> Note that each runner has "the race" laid out before him or her. The point of the verb "set before" (prokeimai [word study]) is that of something lying before one. It is like a road that stretches out before one's gaze. In short, dearly beloved of God, our Father has a "lane" set out and prepared for each of his children to run in and a goal for each one to reach. We are not competing with each other. We are competing with ourselves (specifically in regard to our continual battle against the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil**) striving (agonizomai) to run the race. Remember, we are not running the race in order to get into heaven. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that our sins are forgiven and we have the assurance of heaven (Jn 14:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). It is also worth noting that in the Greek and Roman games, the contestants had to be citizens and no slaves or outsiders were permitted to compete. In the Christian race, each runner is a citizen of heaven (Php 3:20-note) and is running to bring glory to the Lord. (Mt 5:16-note)
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> **Spurgeon** comments: In (the Greek) games, those who ran and wrestled wore very little clothing, or often nothing at all. A runner might lose the race through being entangled by his scarf, so he laid aside everything

that might hinder or hamper him. Oh, for that blessed consecration to our heavenly calling, by which everything that would hinder us shall be put aside, that we may give ourselves, disentangled, to the great gospel to race!

BESETTING SINS

John Angell James: Besetting sins are powerful hindrances to Christian progress. In the case of most people, there is some one sin to which, either from their situation, taste, constitution, or other circumstances—they are more powerfully tempted than to others. Satan knows very well what in every case this is, and skillfully adapts his temptations to it. He is an expert angler, and never chooses his bait, or throws his line, at random! Independently, however, of him, the very tendency of the heart is in that direction. That one sin, whatever it is, while indulged, will hold you back! You cannot make progress in holiness, until it is mortified. Even its partial indulgence, though it may be considerably weakened, will hinder you! Study then your situation, circumstances, and constitution. You cannot be ignorant which temptation and sin, you are most liable to succumb to. You must know in what way you have most frequently wounded your conscience, and occasioned to yourself shame and sorrow… Study yourselves! Examine your own heart! You must find out this matter, and it requires no great pains in order to know it. It floats upon the surface of the heart, and does not lie hidden in its depths. There, there, is your danger! As long as that one sin, be it what it may, is indulged, you cannot advance in the Christian life! Other sins are like unnecessary clothing to the racer. Besetting sins are like a ball and chain around his ankle! Direct your attention more fixedly, and your aim more constantly, to the destruction of besetting sins. You know what they are, whether … lusts of the flesh, or lusts of the mind, or bad tempers toward man, or sinful dispositions toward God, or violations of piety. Let us be distinguished by a great mortification of besetting sins, which, more than anything else … distress us, disgrace us, and hindered us in our progress heavenward. No sins require … such severe mortification, such incessant labor, such earnest prayer, such strong faith for their destruction as besetting sins. But all this is necessary, for if they are not destroyed, they will probably destroy us.

Richard Baxter, Puritan writer: It is a most lamentable thing to see how most people spend their time and their energy for trifles, while God is cast aside. He Who is all seems to them as nothing, and that which is nothing seems to them as good as all. It is lamentable indeed, knowing that God has set mankind in such a race… that they should sit down and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, forgetting the prize they should run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see this business as the all-seeing God does, and see what most men and women in the world are interested in and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight imaginable. Oh, how we should marvel at their madness and lament their self-delusion! If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or what was before them in another world, then there would have been some excuse. But it is His sealed word, and they profess to believe it.

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12-note)

Comment: Note the necessity for perseverance. We too can end the Christian race well, even if we began late, started slow, or faltered along the way. The secret is to stay true to Christ to the last moment.

Warren Wiersbe rightly remarked that…

we cannot be good athletes merely by being spectators. If we are merely spectators, the only muscles we will develop are our eye muscles! (Well, maybe our vocal cords, too.) Somebody has defined a football game as an event in which thousands of people who need exercise pay for the privilege of cheering for twenty-two healthy men who need no exercise. Of course, it is much easier to be a spectator than a participant—except when the event is over and they give out the prizes. Then we will wish we had gotten out of the stands and joined the team. It isn't too late to start running. (**Wiersbe, W. W. Be what you are: 12 intriguing pictures of the Christian from the New Testament. Wheaton IL: Tyndale House**)

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.
(**May the Mind of Christ, My Savior**)

Run (5143)(**trecho [word study]** from **dremo** = to run or walk hastily) means literally to move faster than a walk, making rapid

linear movement.

Many believers start out on the right **course**, but with time are diverted from the track God originally set them on. When we are born into God's kingdom our race begins and our course is set and one day when we enter God's presence our race ends. The interval of our brief sojourn on earth is the time we each have to complete our set spiritual **course**. If we stray from our **course** we lose valuable time. The only way to complete our course within the allotted time is to stay on course! Don't be like the Galatians of whom Paul said

> You were running well; who hindered (NIV "cut in on") you from obeying the truth? (Gal 5:7)

Paul is not giving the Corinthians a suggestion but uses the **present imperative** which is a command to "**run**" as your lifestyle, to live your life as if it were a veritable "spiritual marathon!" Paul is saying in essence

"Run! Don't walk. Don't stop. Don't sit down.
Run because it is only way to win!"

> **THOUGHT** - Many Christians are "throwing in the towel" not realizing that they have a future appointment to give an account of how they have run the race at the Bema Seat of Christ. Are you running for the Lord or like Jonah running from the Lord? Remember that the prize is not salvation (which is solely by grace through faith) but is a reward earned for faithful running. The prize is not promised for spiritual wind sprints but for finishing the race with endurance (cp "spiritual marathon").

YOU CAN MISS THE PRIZE!

In a word, while a believer **cannot** miss salvation, he or she **can** miss the prize! Do not be deceived. If you fail to faithfully run the race set out before you, do not be surprised when you fail to receive a commensurate reward from Christ, **the faithful Witness** (Rev 1:5-note, Rev 3:14-note, Rev 19:11-note) and **Righteous Judge** (2Ti 4:1-note, 2Ti 4:8-note).

John Piper minces no words adding that…

> God has not saved you to sit in the stands. God has not saved you to lie on the track. God has not saved you sit on the edge of the pool with your feet in the water. God has saved you to spend yourself for the glory of His Son (Php 1:20-note).
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> "You are not your own. You were bought with a price. Glorify God in your body" (1Co 6:19-note, 1Co 6:20-note).
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> The point of salvation is to make the glory of God visible in the universe (Mt 5:16-note). That's what this text is about. The running and fighting that glorifies God—that demonstrates He is real and worthy and precious and powerful and pure and loving and holy and satisfying. Running and fighting are all about revealing who Christ is for us and who we are in Him and how precious the prize of eternal life with Him is to us…
>
> **Strive, labor, abound, be zealous, be earnest.**
> **Run like the winner runs**.
> **Be done with half-heartedness**
> **and laziness and lukewarmness**.
>
> Christ has laid hold on you for this very thing. You do not do it in your own strength (Zech 4:6). You strive (Col 1:29-note) and labor (1Co 15:10) and abound (2Co 9:8) and love in the strength that He supplies (Php 4:13-note, Ep 3:16-note, Ep 6:10-note, 2Ti 2:1-note, Ezek 36:27) so that in everything He gets the glory (Ps 115:1-note, 1Pe 4:11-note) I think that's the gist of 1Corinthians 9:24. (Read or listen to the full message - Olympic Spirituality, Part 2)

And lest one misapply texts such as 1Cor 9:24, turning them into "moral self improvement programs" do not be deceived. Yes we are to run, but the running is grace enabled and God glorifying, not self improving. We run, but God works in us…

> by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored (kopiao [word study] = to the point of exhaustion - cp "run in such a way") even more than all of them, yet not I, but (now Paul explains how he was able to labor to the point of exhaustion) the grace of God with me. (1Co 15:10+, cp Ro 9:16-note)

John Saul Howson explains that 1Corinthians 9:24 speaks of

> The earnestness of purpose that is essential to the Christian's career. St Paul appeals to the experience of the

Corinthians. There was nothing with which they were better acquainted than these famous **foot-races**. Their own games near their own city were among the most celebrated in the world. They "**knew**" well that each race was eagerly contested, and that "one" obtained the prize. But at this point we must mark a difference. In that race there was competition; and because there was competition, each runner was in earnest. In the Christian race there is no competition. The prize is within the reach of all.

But then each runner must be as much in earnest as though there were competition and only one prize. And this is what the Apostle expresses. He does not say (as I understand his words) "run so—in such a way—as to obtain,"—but, " run so—as those runners run—in order that ye may obtain." In their case there is rivalry and therefore they are in earnest. In your case there is no rivalry; but their **earnestness of purpose** is an example to you.

And certainly no **pattern of earnestness** can be a more forcible example, than the earnestness that arises from eager competition.

"Run in the Christian race
as the athlete in the footrace runs."

All his nerves and sinews are strung up for the effort he is making. Nothing else is thought of; and as the distance between his feet and the winning-post diminishes, he does not flag, but throws more and more exertion into the movement of his limbs. Whatever strength and elasticity he can summon up, whatever struggling remainder of his short and failing breath he can muster, all may be wanted at the very last moment.

And what a contrast this is to our dull and languid Christianity! We go and take our place in the course as though the prize could be won without any running at all, or as if there were no prize worth running for. We dream and loiter and fold our arms; we turn aside to look at every object of passing interest; or if we did begin with some vigour, all the zest and warmth of the struggle grows feebler and fainter when it ought to become more animated, and, like the Galatians, we care little what hindrances occur to stop our course, and to risk a dishonorable fall.

Earnestness of purpose is what we lack, and there is no picture of earnestness more forcible than that which is drawn from the ardour of competition. (The Metaphors of St Paul - published in 1868 - available online)

May win (2638) **katalambano** from **kata** = intensifies verb + **lambano** = take, grasp, receive) means to take eagerly, to seize, to possess, to attain. In 1 Cor 9:24 **katalambano** is translated as "**win**", which conveys the idea of making it one's own or even to "seize for oneself." I like the way the Amplified Version translates it "that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours."

Paul uses the **aorist tense** for **katalambano** which means something like "that you may actually, truly, surely capture the prize."

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.
-- Monsell

In Philippians in which Paul utilizes the "*race metaphor*" we find this same verb **katalambano** three times "Not that I have already obtained (lambano) it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that **I may lay hold of** (katalambano) that for which also **I was laid hold of** (katalambano) by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as **having laid hold of** (katalambano) it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. (Php 3:12, 13**+**)

Keith Krell writes that "the prize that Paul is speaking of is a reward that may or may not accompany salvation. The Christian's prize is the honor and glory of eternal rewards. It is the joy of hearing Jesus say, "Well done!" (Mt 25:21, 23) This is the amazing grace of God. We receive salvation as a free gift and then the Lord blesses us on top of that with temporal and eternal rewards for faithfully serving Him. What a God! **So what does faithful running look like? Who are those who run in such a way that they may win?**

- Christians who finish their lives still growing, still serving
- Senior saints that persist in daily prayer until the Lord calls them home
- Husbands and wives who stay faithful to each other "until death do us part"
- Young people who preserve their virginity until marriage, in spite of crushing peer pressure
- Pastors who stay passionate about ministry until their last breath
- Church members who weather the rougher patches and remain joyful, loving, and faithful

Today, you may be thinking, “I’m not running well. In fact, I’m barely in the race at all. What should I do?” The answer is: recommit to win God’s race. As long as you are in the race, run to win. Don’t just run to finish, but to win. No one just happens to make a comeback to win. Not when he is far behind. Only by believing it can happen, and with a renewed resolve to win, is a comeback accomplished. If you find yourself far behind in the race, don’t give up. Keep on running. You can still win. Don’t quit.6 Living for God’s approval requires finishing well. (Living for God's Approval)

Related Resources:

- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary Reward
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary Reward
- Spurgeon's Illustration Collection Serving God: the Sure Reward of
- Holman Bible Dictionary Reward
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT Reward Reward (2)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Reward
- What is the purpose of there being rewards in heaven?
- How can we store up treasures in heaven?
- What do I need to do to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant" when I arrive in heaven?
- What did Jesus mean when He said the first will be last and the last will be first?
- What are the five heavenly crowns that believers can receive in Heaven?

Vance Havner wrote that "It was said of the great racehorse Man o' War: "Some horses led him at the first turn, some led him at the backstretch, a few led him at the far turn, but no horse ever led him in the homestretch." Some Christians run nobly at the start of the race, some do well halfway, but blessed is the man who makes a good finish. Paul's batting average was good to the end of the season: "I have finished my course" (2Ti 4:7-note).

My latest sun is sinking fast,
My race is nearly run;
My strongest trials now are past,
My triumph is begun.
(My Latest Sun Is Sinking Fast)

John Walvoord wrote that - In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 the figure is used of an athletic contest, a runner striving for the prize, and we are exhorted so to run that we may obtain. Life is a race. We are to live in such a way that when we stand before Christ we will win the prize. (Walvoord, J. The Return of the Lord)--- It is a solemn fact of Scripture that every Christian will give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12). In view of that, there is not only the motivation of love to serve Christ but also the motivation of being found worthy to the extent that their works honored and glorified God. (Walvoord, J. F. The prophecy knowledge handbook)

RUN TO WIN! - It's as true in life as in running: Only the determined achieve their goals. Olympic medals don't go to overweight businessmen who puff around the track for exercise.

Eric Liddell, in the film "Chariots of Fire," illustrates this principle. Just before the first turn in a 400-meter race, Eric was shoved off balance, and he stumbled on the infield grass. When he looked up, he saw the others pulling away. With a look of intense determination, Eric jumped to his feet, and with his back cocked and his arms flailing he rushed ahead. He was determined not only to catch up with the pack, but to win. And he did!

This was the kind of fervor that the apostle Paul brought to his ministry. In 1 Corinthians 9:24 he said, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." Paul saw himself as an Olympic athlete competing for a gold medal, straining every muscle, nerve, and sinew to get to the finish line. And what's
the prize? Not a temporary reward but "an imperishable crown" (1Co 9:25).

For us as Christians, victory is possible. So let's run as though we want to win! -- Haddon W. Robinson (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

We must fix our eyes on Jesus
If we're going to win the race--
Working hard to godly living,

Trusting in His saving grace.
--Sper

Winners never quit,
and quitters never win.

Be Still, My Soul was reportedly the favorite of **Eric Liddell**, the athlete who became famous in the 1924 Olympics for refusing to run on the Sabbath (see the movie Chariots of Fire). Liddell later became a missionary in China, and was imprisoned during World War II. He is said to have taught this hymn to others in the prison camp (where he eventually died of a brain tumor).

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change, He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Going for the Gold by Robert J. Morgan has 5 well done vignettes describing men who went for the gold and what it cost them.

1. Eric Liddell: Meet with the Coach Each Morning
2. James Connolly: Persevere Through Difficulties
3. Jesse Owens: Nurture the Right Friends
4. Lawrence Lemieux: Rescue the Perishing
5. Felix Carvajal: Finish Well

These stories are excellent illustrations of the truths in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

How Will You Finish the Race - In 1981 Bill Broadhurst entered the Pepsi Challenge 10,000-meter road race in Omaha, Nebraska. Ten years earlier, surgery for a brain aneurysm left him paralyzed on his left side. But on a misty July morning, he stood with 1,200 lithe-looking men and women at the starting line. The gun cracked. The crowd surged ahead. Bill threw his stiff left leg forward and pivoted on it as his right foot hit the ground. His slow plop-plop-plop rhythm seemed to mock him as the pack disappeared into the distance. Sweat rolled down his face, pain pierced his ankle, but he kept going. Six miles, two hours, and twenty-nine minutes later, Bill reached the finish line. A man approached from a small group of bystanders. Bill recognized him from pictures in the newspaper. "Here," the man said. "You've worked harder for this than I have." With those words, Bill Rodgers, the famous marathon runner, put his newly won medal around Broadhurst's neck, proclaiming him a winner.

The sight of Jesus hanging "helpless" on a cross looked like a tragic defeat. But three little words from His lips amounted to a victory shout: "It is finished!" Three days later the truth of His words would be known. The empty tomb confirmed His claim. He had finished His work by defeating death and atoning for sin.

The Christian life is not a race to see who comes in first, but an endurance run to see who finishes faithfully. Remaining faithful to the finish makes us true winners. —D. J. De Haan (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

We are judged by what we finish, not by what we start.

Tour de France (Not a Race on Foot but a Race Nevertheless) - One of the most grueling of all bicycle races is the Tour De France. A contestant in that event, Gilbert Duclos-Lassalle, describes it in a National Geographic article titled, “An Annual Madness.” The race covers about 2000 miles, including some of France’s most difficult, mountainous terrain. Eating and drinking is done on the run. And there are extremes of heat and cold. To train for the event, Lassalle rides his bicycle 22,000 miles a year. What kind of prize makes people endure so much hardship and pain! $10,000? $100,000? No. It’s just a special winner’s jersey. What then motivates the contestants? Lassalle sums it up: “Why, to sweep through the Arc de Triomphe on the last day. To be able to say you finished the Tour de France.”

What a tragedy to see this same motive lead to doping scandals in so many of the top tour riders (cf the Tour 2007 when the yellow jersey leader was actually removed from the race because of suspicious behavior. So beloved, don't bring about a scandal but instead finish well like Paul! Your reward is will far surpass -- in degree and in time -- the satisfaction and transient glory these top athletes receive for finishing a grueling bicycle race in Paris! No you won't sweep through the Arc de Triomphe on the last day, but

you will stand at the bema or Judgment Seat of Christ and be appropriately recompensed for what you have done during your earthly race, whether it is good or "bad" [bad is phaulos which means useless or worthless and does not refer to sin which some falsely teach - see 2Cor 5:10-note) (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

> **THOUGHT - Lance Armstrong** won the Tour de France seven consecutive times, more than any other man, even after surviving cancer. However, Lance Armstrong did not run in such a way as to win the prize with honesty, honor and integrity (2Ti 2:5-note) and so was stripped of all his victories. He went from god-like idol to goat. He lost the prize and was banned for life in addition to being stripped of all results from August 1998 onward, including all seven Tour de France titles! Let us not run like Lance Armstrong, who road to win at any price, but let us run in such a way so as to win the prize far greater than the Tour de France!!!

Don't Look Back! - On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister became the first man in history to run a mile in less than 4 minutes. Within 2 months, John Landy eclipsed the record by 1.4 seconds. On August 7, 1954, the two met together for a historic race. As they moved into the last lap, Landy held the lead. It looked as if he would win, but as he neared the finish he was haunted by the question, "Where is Bannister?" As he turned to look, Bannister took the lead. Landy later told a Time magazine reporter, "If I hadn't looked back, I would have won!" One of the most descriptive pictures of the Christian life in the Bible is of an athlete competing in a race. 1Corinthians 9:24, 25,2 6, 27 tells us that discipline is the key to winning. In Hebrews 12:1-note, He 12:2-note, we are encouraged to lay aside anything that might hinder our spiritual advancement and to stay focused on Christ. And in Php 3:12, 13, the apostle Paul said, "I press on,…forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead." Lord, give us endurance as we run this race of life. Help us not to wallow in past failures, but to be disciplined and to shun sinful ways. May we fix our eyes on the eternal goal set before us and keep looking unto Jesus. - **H G Bosch** (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Running Well - A computer study of five thousand racehorses has revealed a way to predict whether or not a young horse will develop into a good runner. According to an article in USA Today, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology used computers and high-speed cameras to find out how a good horse runs. He discovered that the legs of a fast horse operate much like the spokes of a wheel. Each leg touches down only as the leg before it pushes off, resulting in peak efficiency. Later studies disclosed that a horse's manner of walking changes little after the first few months. Therefore, motion analysis when a horse is young can predict how well it will run when it matures.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah talked about running well in the course of life. He said that the people who run the best are the ones who learn to wait on the Lord. They don't waste energy trying to do things on their own. They make the Lord their strength and hope.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul compares the Christian life to a race. He said that those who run well are characterized by efficiency of effort. For the Christian, this means running with control and self-discipline (1Co 9:24-27). The author of Hebrews said that a good runner gets rid of anything that adds extra weight (He 12:1-note).

To earn an imperishable crown we must wait on the Lord, practice self-control, and lay aside sinful burdens. These are the secrets of running well. —M. R. De Haan II (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

To run the race of life in Christ,
This must become your daily goal:
Confess your sins, trust God for strength,
Use discipline and self-control.
—Sper

Those who wait on the Lord
will run without the weight of sin.

Run!— In the award-winning film Chariots of Fire (See youtube video of 'The Real Chariots of Fire", Listen to the famous Chariots of Fire Theme by Vangelis), one of the characters is legendary British sprinter Harold Abrahams. He is obsessed with winning, but in a preliminary 100-meter dash leading up to the 1924 Olympics, he is soundly beaten by his rival, Eric Liddell. Abrahams' response is deep despair. When his girlfriend, Sybil, tries to encourage him, Harold angrily declares, "I run to win. If I can't win, I won't run!" Sybil responds wisely, "If you don't run, you can't win."

Life is full of reversals, and we as Christians are not excluded from disappointments that make us want to give up. But in the race

that is the Christian life, Paul challenges us to keep running. He told the Corinthians, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it” (1 Cor. 9:24). We are to run faithfully, Paul is saying, spurred on by the knowledge that we run to honor our King and to receive from Him an eternal crown.

If we falter in our running—if we quit serving God or give in to sin because of our difficulties—we risk losing a rich reward we could have received had we run our best.

Sybil was right. “If you don’t run, you can’t win.” -- Bill Crowder (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

While running with patience the race for the King,
With obstacles taking their toll,
We slow down to look up for help from our Lord;
He keeps us aware of our goal. —Branon

Greater than winning any medal
will be hearing the Master say, “Well done!”

Running The Race — **Spiridon Louis** isn’t well known around the world, but he is in Greece. That’s because of what happened in 1896 when the Olympic Games were revived in Athens.

During the competition that year, the Greeks did quite well—winning the most medals of any nation. But the event that became a source of true Greek pride was the first-ever marathon. Seventeen athletes competed in this race of 40 kilometers (24.8 miles), but it was won by Louis—a common laborer. For his efforts, Louis was honored by king and country, and he became a national hero.

The apostle Paul used running a race as a picture of the Christian life. In 1 Corinthians 9:24, he challenged us not just to run but to run to win, saying, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” Not only did Paul teach this but he lived it out. In his final epistle, he said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2Ti 4:7-note). Having finished his race, Paul joyfully anticipated receiving the victory crown from the King of heaven.

Like Paul, run your earthly race to win—and to please your King. — by Bill Crowder (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

As we run in this race—
As our best effort we bring—
We are spurred on by the fact
That we must win for the King.
—Branon

The Christian’s race is not a sprint—it’s a marathon.

Going For The Prize

Everyone who competes for the prize . . . [does] it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. —1 Corinthians 9:25

Every March, the Iditarod Trail Race is held in Alaska. Sled dogs and their drivers, called “mushers,” race across a 1,049-mile route from Anchorage to Nome. The competing teams cover this great distance in anywhere from 8 to 15 days. In 2011, a record time was set by musher John Baker who covered the entire route in 8 days, 19 hours, 46 minutes, and 39 seconds. The teamwork between dogs and driver is remarkable, and those who compete are tenacious in their efforts to win. The first-place winner receives a cash prize and a new pickup truck. But after so much perseverance in extreme weather conditions, the accolades and prizes may seem insignificant and transient.

The excitement of a race was a familiar concept to the apostle Paul, but he used competition to illustrate something eternal. He wrote, “Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Cor. 9:25).

Sometimes we are tempted to place our emphasis on temporal rewards, which perish with the passing of time. The Scriptures,

however, encourage us to focus on something more permanent. We honor God by seeking spiritual impact that will be rewarded in eternity. By Dennis Fisher

Here we labor, here we pray,
Here we wrestle night and day;
There we lay our burdens down,
There we wear the victor's crown.
—Anon.

Run the race with eternity in view.

Related Resources:

- Discussion of what I like to call 'Vertical Vision"
- Redeem the Time

Too Soon To Quit

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and . . . run with endurance the race. —Hebrews 12:1

Chris Couch was only 16 years old when he first qualified to play golf at its highest level on the PGA Tour. He was quickly declared the next golfing prodigy and a surefire success for years to come.

Life, however, turned out to be more of a grind. Chris did not enjoy a sprint to success but endured a marathon that would take 16 years and 3 different stints on "mini-tours." Tempted to quit, Couch persevered and finally, at age 32, became a Tour winner for the first time when he captured the New Orleans Open in a thrilling finish. His persistence had paid off, but it had not been easy.

In his book A Long Obedience in the Same Direction, Bible teacher Eugene Peterson reminds us that the Christian life has much more in common with a marathon than with a 100-meter dash. Peterson says we are called to persevere in "the long run, something that makes life worth living."

With the grace and strength of Christ, we too can "run with endurance" this race of life (Heb. 12:1). And, with our Lord's example to help and encourage us, we can, like the apostle Paul, run to win the prize of "an imperishable crown" (1 Cor. 9:25).

It's always too soon to quit. By Bill Crowder (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe.
—Bathurst

Run the race with eternity in view.

Training for Life

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest . . . I myself should become disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:27 nkjv

I recently met a woman who has pushed her body and mind to the limit. She climbed mountains, faced death, and even broke a Guinness world record. Now she's engaged in a different challenge—that of raising her special-needs child. The courage and faith she employed while ascending the mountains she now pours into motherhood.

In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul speaks of a runner competing in a race. After urging a church enamored with their rights to give consideration to one another (ch. 8), he explains how he sees the challenges of love and self-sacrifice to be like a marathon of endurance (ch. 9). As followers of Jesus, they are to relinquish their rights in obedience to Him.

Obedience leads to endurance which leads to the prize that lasts forever.

As athletes train their bodies that they might win the crown, we too train our bodies and minds for our souls to flourish. As we ask the Holy Spirit to transform us, moment by moment, we leave our old selves behind. Empowered by God, we stop ourselves from uttering that cruel word. We put away our electronic device and remain present with our friends. We don't have to speak the last word in a disagreement.

As we train to run in the Spirit of Christ, how might God want to mold us today?

Lord, let me not demand my rights, but train to win the prize that lasts forever.

Amy Boucher Pye is a writer, editor, and speaker. The author of Finding Myself in Britain: Our Search for Faith, Home, and True Identity, she runs the Woman Alive book club in the UK and enjoys life with her family in their English vicarage.

Training leads to transformation.

INSIGHT Paul's letter to the Corinthian church emphasizes the distinction between wisdom and folly and how in Christ God accomplishes His redemptive plan in unexpected ways (see 1:18–3:23). This letter also contains practical advice and everyday wisdom, as seen in today's passage. Through two different metaphors (a runner and a boxer), Paul reminds the Corinthians that doing anything—especially following Christ—without a goal in mind is the height of foolishness. A runner with no destination will simply tire and quit, and a boxer beating the air never puts his training to practical use. We follow Christ to become like Him and receive the prize. (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Lasting Rewards

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things. —1 Timothy 4:8

Ukrainian gymnast Larisa Latynina held the record of 18 Olympic medals. She won them in the 1956, 1960, and 1964 Olympics. The 48-year-old record was surpassed when Michael Phelps swam for his 19th gold in the 4 x 200-meter freestyle relay in the 2012 London Games. "[Latynina] kind of got lost in history," the publisher of the International Gymnast magazine said. When the Soviet Union broke up, "we had forgotten about her."

Paul, the apostle, reminds us that sometimes hard work is forgotten. Athletes subject their bodies to great discipline as they train to win perishable medals for their effort (1 Cor. 9:25). But it is not just that the medals are perishable. Over time, people's memory of those achievements dim and fade. If athletes can sacrifice so much to achieve rewards on the earth, rewards that will eventually be forgotten, how much more effort should followers of Christ exert to gain an imperishable crown? (1 Tim. 4:8+).

Athletes' sacrifice and determination are rewarded with medals, trophies, and money. But even greater, our Father in heaven rewards the discipline of His children (Luke 19:17).

God will never forget our service done out of love for Him who first loved us.By C. P. Hia Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

I thank You, Lord, for the opportunities to use
the gifts You have given me for Your service today.
Help me to do so in obedience, expecting nothing
more than Your "well done" as reward.

Sacrifice for the kingdom is never without reward.

Brother Donkey

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest . . . I myself should become disqualified. —1 Corinthians 9:27

One of the early church leaders referred to his body as "Brother Donkey." Like that hardy animal with a reputation for being stubborn, his body served him well as long as he placed it under firm discipline.

In today's Scripture reading, the apostle Paul wrote about this matter of self-discipline. Using analogies from athletic competition, he said we must be just as zealous about our spiritual training as athletes are when they compete for a prize. That's a big order when you consider the hard work and personal discipline that a world-class athlete endures to become an Olympic contestant.

Paul said, “I discipline my body” (1 Cor. 9:27). The Greek term for discipline, says the scholar Henry Alford, means “to strike heavily in the face, to render black and blue.” The apostle was speaking figuratively, of course, but his message is clear. If we want to be winners in our spiritual marathon, we must discipline ourselves: reading the Bible, praying, loving self-sacrificially, forgiving freely, and rejecting every sinful thought and inclination.

Lord, help me always to do what is right and to reject sin so that I will never become disqualified in my service for you.By Herbert Vander Lugt (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

If you'd be a winner, Christian,
Over every sin,
You must yield your mind and body
To God's discipline.
—Hess

Victory is the fruit of dedication and discipline.

Your Biography

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7

When D. L. Moody was moving into old age, he was asked to grant permission for his biography. Moody refused, saying, “A man’s life should never be written while he is living. What is important is how a man ends, not how he begins.”

For better or worse, I have failed to follow that dictum. My biography has been published. Yet I agree with Moody that the way our lives end is the crucial test of authentic discipleship. Only if we remain in a steadfast relationship with the Savior can we be confident not merely of entering heaven, but of obtaining the victor’s crown (1 Corinthians 9:25).

Paul was concerned about the possibility of being disapproved by his Lord (v.27). He was a redeemed believer who was serving the Lord, yet he feared that his service might prove to be wood, hay, and straw rather than gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

What will be the Lord’s appraisal of our lives? Will someone evaluating us be able to say honestly that we continued to bear fruit in old age? (Psalm 92:14). Whatever vocation we pursue, with the help of the Holy Spirit we may be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).By Vernon Grounds (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

For the ignorant, old age is as winter; for the learned, it is a harvest. —Jewish proverb

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Grooves Of Grace

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

I discipline my body and bring it into subjection. —1 Corinthians 9:27

A man was traveling in Canada one springtime when frost and melting snow made it nearly impossible to drive farther. He came to a crossroads and saw a sign that said, “Take care which rut you choose. You will be in it for the next 25 miles.” That’s a wise warning for all of us—and not just when we’re driving in rough road conditions.

Whenever we come to a crossroads in life, what choice do we make? In other words, in what direction will we travel and what habits —which ruts of routine—will we establish?

A habit is a pattern of behavior that we follow consistently. We need to decide prayerfully what habits we will practice. Will our habits be mere ruts of routine? Or will they become “grooves of grace”?
Paul referred to his life’s journey as a race. He learned that the only way to stay the course was to “discipline [his] body and bring it into subjection” (1 Corinthians 9:27). That implied establishing a consistent pattern of godly behavior.

Good health habits are important, but spiritual disciplines are far more important. Are we choosing to develop consistent habits of prayer, Bible reading, and kindness?

A habit is just a rut of routine. But good spiritual discipline can transform our ruts into grooves of grace. By Vernon Grounds (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Lord, keep me in Your groove of grace,
The chosen path for me;
Your will I daily will embrace
Until eternity.
—Hess

In the beginning we make our habits; in the end our habits make us.

Running Every Day — The Pikes Peak Ascent is a challenging mountain foot race, covering 13.32 miles while gaining 7,815 feet in altitude. My good friend Don Wallace ran it 20 times. In his final race, he crossed the finish line one week before his 67th birthday! Instead of training just before a race, Don ran 6 miles a day, year round, with rare exceptions, wherever he happened to be. He's done that for most of his adult life and continues to this day.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul uses running as a picture of his own discipline as a Christian in the race of life. He ran with purpose and discipline to win an eternal crown, and he encouraged others to do the same: "Run in such a way that you may obtain [the prize]" (v.24).

The word temperate in verse 25 carries the meaning of self-control practiced by athletes who train to win the prize. As a consistent habit of life, regular discipline is of far greater value to any athlete than last-minute preparation.

Are we approaching "the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1-note) with a hit-or-miss spiritual regimen or with purpose and discipline born from a desire to please God?

The key to going the distance is the discipline of running every day. — David C. McCasland (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.
—Monsell

Running the Christian race
takes dedication and discipline.

The Finish Line — When I was in college, I ran on the cross-country team. In the final event of the season, the state's small colleges competed against each other, with about 75 runners in the event. We ran the 5K course in the rain and mud on a cold November day.

As I neared the finish line, I spied a runner from one of the other schools just a short distance ahead of me. He became my goal. I ran as hard as I could and passed him just as I crossed the finish line. That last dash meant I finished 42nd, which seemed a lot better than 43rd! It meant our team finished one position higher in the final standings than the team represented by the runner I had beaten. The point? I didn't give up—I ran all the way through the finish line.

This is probably what Paul had in mind as he wrote to Archippus, one of his young ministry protégés: "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it" (Col 4:17). When we feel discouraged and want to quit, it's good to remember that the Lord who entrusted us with the privilege of spiritual service will give us the grace and strength to carry out that service. Let us "run with endurance" (He 12:1-note) so that we will receive the "imperishable crown" (1Cor. 9:25).— Bill Crowder (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.
—Monsell

Running with patience is perseverance in the "long run."

Foolish Baggage—In 1845, the ill-fated Franklin Expedition sailed from England to find a passage across the Arctic Ocean.

The crew loaded their two sailing ships with a lot of things they didn't need: a 1,200-volume library, fine china, crystal goblets, and sterling silverware for each officer with his initials engraved on the handles. Amazingly, each ship took only a 12-day supply of coal for their auxiliary steam engines.

The ships became trapped in vast frozen plains of ice. After several months, Lord Franklin died. The men decided to trek to safety in small groups, but none of them survived.

One story is especially heartbreaking. Two officers pulled a large sled more than 65 miles across the treacherous ice. When rescuers found their bodies, they discovered that the sled was filled with table silver.

Those men contributed to their own demise by carrying what they didn't need. But don't we sometimes do the same? Don't we drag baggage through life that we don't need? Evil thoughts that hinder us. Bad habits that drag us down. Grudges that we won't let go.

Let's determine to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us" (Hebrews 12:1-note). by David C. Egner (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The world has lost its transient lure—
Its evil spell I shun;
I've set my course for higher things
Till earth's brief race is run. —Bosch

Keep out of your life anything
that would crowd Christ out of your heart.

Racing Toward The Goal

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. —1 Corinthians 9:24

When my son began his sophomore year of high school, he also began his second year of cross-country running. Steve started the year fighting for a spot on the varsity team, which was not an easy task.

It meant running miles and miles and miles. It meant lifting weights. It meant getting extra rest and eating right (well, some of the time). And it meant running his heart out at races.

His times gradually improved. Then he pulled a muscle and had to start over. But he didn't quit. Finally he gained a spot on the varsity. And by the time they ran in the regional meet, he was the third fastest runner on the team.

Having goals in life can give us the purpose and drive to accomplish something truly valuable. This principle is especially helpful in our lives as believers in Christ. As we run the Christian race, our goal is to "run in such a way" that we may win an imperishable crown—an eternal reward from our Savior (1 Corinthians 3:12-14; 9:24-25). This requires personal discipline, hard work, and continual improvement. It includes a Spirit-enabled commitment to do our very best for the Lord.

That takes perseverance, an all-out effort, and a push to become increasingly like Christ. But running that way is worth it, for the prize will last forever. By Dave Branon (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

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Lift up your eyes and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.
—Monsell

Great achievement requires great perseverance.

Run to Win - As a teenager, James Martinson had one dream—to someday be on the US Downhill Ski Team. But the army drafted him and sent him to Vietnam, where he suffered a severe injury from a land mine, resulting in the loss of both his legs. He became hateful toward people and toward God, abused alcohol and drugs, and even considered suicide.

Then James met several Christians who explained how Christ could change him. Initially he didn't believe them, but finally he invited Christ into his life. He recalls, "I didn't get my legs back, but I began to experience something new from the inside."

Eager to share Christ, James started working with teenagers. "Come run with us!" they begged. He answered, "I can't. I don't have legs." "You've got a wheelchair," they replied. This was the start of his wheelchair racing, a challenge that eventually made him a big-time winner. People often ask, "Was it wheelchair marathoning that changed your life?" He answers with conviction, "No, it was Jesus Christ."

Feeling like a loser? Turn in faith to Jesus Christ. Then accept the apostle Paul's challenge to run for the prize of an eternal trophy (1 Corinthians 9:24). Jesus will not only transform your losses into gains, but He'll transform you! (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

O Lord, I now admit my sin,
And I accept Your grace;
Transform my life and help me grow
Until I see Your face.
—Hess

When Jesus comes into a life,
He changes everything.

A W Tozer wrote - There was a celebrated Englishman who sat with a friend once, watching and listening to a philharmonic orchestra. As they listened, the Englishman watched a man playing second violin. He was playing it well, but he was second violin. The Englishman said to his friend, "See that man there playing second violin? If I were playing second violin in that orchestra, do you know what I would do? I would never rest day or night until I was playing first violin. And then I would never give myself rest day or night until I was directing that orchestra. When I got to be director I would never rest until I had become a composer. And when I got to composing music for the orchestra I would never give myself rest until I was the best composer in England."

The children of the world are sometimes wiser than the children of light. We have been offered not the directorship of a great orchestra, but glory and truth unsearchable. We have been offered the face of God and the glory of Christ. We have been offered holiness and righteousness and indwelling by the Spirit. We can have our prayers answered and have hell fear us because we have a hold on God who invites us to draw on His omnipotence. We are offered all this, and yet we sit and play second violin without ambition. Lord, don't let me be satisfied with second fiddle. Strengthen me to run in such a way that I might be all that You want me to be, for Your glory. Amen. (Tozer on the Almighty God: A 366-day devotional. 2004 October 16. Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread) (Original excerpt from Rut, Rot or Revival)

Tozer - Failure to see this is the cause of a very serious breakdown in modern evangelicalism. The idea of cultivation and exercise, so dear to the saints of old, has now no place in our total religious picture. It is too slow, too common. We now demand glamour and fast flowing dramatic action. A generation of Christians reared among push buttons and automatic machines is impatient of slower and less direct methods of reaching their goals. We have been trying to apply machine-age methods to our relations with God. We read our chapter, have our short devotions and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy by attending another gospel meeting or listening to another thrilling story told by a religious adventurer lately returned from afar. The tragic results of this spirit are all about us: Shallow lives, hollow religious philosophies, the preponderance of the element of fun in gospel meetings, the glorification of men, trust in religious externalities, quasi-religious fellowships, salesmanship methods, the mistaking of dynamic personality for the power of the Spirit. These and such as these are the symptoms of an evil disease, a deep and serious malady of the soul. (Tozer, A. W., & Eggert, R. 1998. The Tozer Topical Reader 2:209. Camp Hill, PA.: WingSpread)

The Heavenly Race
by Thomas Watson

"Don't you know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize!" 1Corinthians 9:24

True religion is a business of the greatest importance. The soul, which is the more noble and divine part, is concerned in it; and, as we act our part here—so we shall be forever happy—or miserable. The advice of Solomon in this case is most seasonable:

> Whatever your hand finds to do—do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. Ec 9:10.

The business of true religion, requires our utmost zeal and intensity, Matthew 11:12.

… Sometimes a Christian's work for heaven is compared to the running of a race; so in the text,

> Don't you know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 1Cor 9:24

In which words the Apostle seems to allude either to the Olympic games, which were kept every fifth year in honor of Jupiter, or to the Isthmian games celebrated near Corinth in the honor of Neptune, in which games they put forth all their strength to win the prize. Just so, said the Apostle, run the race of Christianity which is set before you with a winged swiftness that you may obtain the prize of salvation!

The words fall into two general parts:

1. The race to be run, "so run."

2. The end of running, "that you may obtain."

The observations out of the text are these two:

1. Christianity is a race.

2. Wise Christians should labor so to run as to win the prize: "that you may obtain."

DOCTRINE: Christianity is a race. The life of a Christian is a race.

> Hebrews 12:1-note, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

We must be **travelers**,
before we are **possessors**.

Heaven is a place of rest.

> Hebrews 4:9, "There remains a rest for the people of God."

No more wrestling there, for then we have overcome the enemy. The saints in glory are set forth with palms in their hands, Revelation 7:9, in tokens of victory. No more running there for the prize being obtained, the saints have thrones to sit and rest themselves upon, Revelation 3:21.

But this present life is a race, and it must be run —so run.

For the illustration of the doctrine there are three things to be opened:

> I. How a Christian's life is compared to a race
>
> II. How a Christian race differs from other races.
>
> III. Why this race must be run.

I. How a Christian's life is compared to a race. That appears in four particulars:

1. In a race, there is the way or path to run in; so in Christianity there is the pathway in which we must run.

> Psalm 119:32, "I will run the way of Your commandments."
>
> Jeremiah 6:16, "This is a good old way."

It is as good as it is old. The way of sanctification and obedience is the way the saints have gone in, and the way which God has been found in.

This way we are to run in is a pleasant way. It is sweetened with comfort.

Proverbs 3:17, "All her ways are pleasantness."

Romans 15:13, "Joy in believing."

The way of true religion is strewn with roses. Oh, the bunches of grapes which God cuts down, the flagons of wine which He gives to those who turn their feet into this way!

The way of God's commandments is a clean way—it is a way paved with holiness, Isaiah 35:6. Christians may run in this way and never wet the soles of their feet. The way of sin is defiling; such as walk in this way, the filth of hell sticks upon them. In the ways of sin, there are such deep slews, that men sink into perdition—but the way of the Christian race is clean. Such as run this race cleanse themselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2Corinthians 7:1.

2. A race is LABORIOUS.

The running of a race is a strenuous exercise; men put forth all the strength of their bodies in running. Thus, Christianity is a laborious race. We must put forth all our strength in this race.

"My soul follows hard after God," Psalm 63:8.

Philippians 2:13-14, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize."

The word signifies, "I stretch my neck forward;" and, said the Apostle, "I press toward the goal as runners race with all swiftness, and stretch themselves forward to lay hold on the prize." It is not an idle wish or a dead prayer which will win the garland—but a Christian must put forward with all speed and vigor of affection, that he may obtain what he runs for.

3. A race is SHORT.

A race is but a short space of ground; it is soon run. Thus, our time being short, our race cannot be long; and this may encourage us in the race of religion, and keep us from being out of breath. Remember, it is but a short race.

1Pe 5:10, "After you have suffered awhile."

So I may say, after you have run awhile, you will be at the end of the race. It is but awhile, Christians, and you shall be finished wrestling, weeping, and praying, and you shall reap the fruit of all your prayers. It is but awhile, and you shall be finished suffering and be among "the spirits of just men made perfect." It is but awhile, and you shall be at the end of your race, and you shall receive, "the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:9. How should a child of God rejoice to think that he has gotten over a large part of his race and is almost at the end!

As Taylor, the martyr, once said,

"I have but two steps to go over, and then I shall be at my Father's house!"

You who have set out early for heaven and now are in your old age, comfort yourselves with this—you have but a few steps more to take—and then you are at the end of your race!

4. In a race, there is a crown or PRIZE given to the winner.

Just so in true religion, those who win the race shall wear the crown, 2 Timothy 4:8. Such as do not run through sloth, or will not run through pride—miss the reward; but such as run the heavenly race faithfully, shall have a crown, 2 Timothy 4:8. And this reward is fitly resembled to a crown because of the splendor of it. A crown hung full of jewels is bright and splendid; it gives an oriental luster. Neither can pen describe, or pencil delineate, or tongue of angel express—the glory and magnificence of this crown; nor can it be portrayed by all the beauties of heaven, though every star were a sun!

II. The second thing to be illustrated is to show how the Christian race DIFFERS from other races.

1. In other races, one only is crowned; but in the spiritual race, many win the prize.

The saints shall come to heaven from all the quarters of the world, east and west.

Matthew 8:11, "Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

Revelation 7:9, "After this I saw a vast multitude, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands."

By this multitude too great to count, are to be understood those who belong to the election of grace. These as victors are crowned, and stand with palm branches in their hands. Should but one receive the prize, there might be room left for despair.

2. In other races, some stand still and look on; but here, in the heavenly race, ALL must run.

Those who are unfit to run other races, like the lame and blind—must run this race. None are excused from this race. All have run from God by sin—and all must run to Him by repentance! Either run—or be damned! Either flee to heaven—or fall to hell!

3. In other races, the feet run but, in the Christian race, the HEART runs.

> Psalm 119:32, "I will run when You shall enlarge my heart."

In true religion—the heart is all; that which the heart does not do—is not done. It is not lifting up the eye or hand towards heaven, which forwards us in the race—it is the out-going of the heart. Many a man's tongue runs in religion—but not his heart. Do you believe with your heart? Romans 10:9. Do you love God with your heart? Matthew 22:37. This is to run the race of religion; this brings a Christian speedily to the goal. When David's heart was enlarged—then he ran.

4. In other races, only the fastest runner gets the prize; but it is not so in this heavenly race.

Though others may outrun us—yet, if we hold on to the end of the race, we shall receive the reward. Some saints are like Asahel, "as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle," 2Sa 2:18. They run swifter in the race of obedience, as Ahimaaz outran Cushi, 2Sa 18:23. But this is the comfort of weak believers: though they cannot run as fast as others—yet, if they hold on to the end of the race without fainting, they are crowned. He who worked for one hour had his pay, as well as he who worked many hours, Mt 20:9, to show that those who set out later and may be outrun by other Christians—yet persevering, they are saved.

5. In other races, men run for a temporal reward; in the Christian race we run for an eternal reward.

Others run for a corruptible crown, 1Corinthians 9:25. Sometimes the crown bestowed upon the victor was made of olive, sometimes of myrtle. The Egyptians had a crown of cinnamon enclosed in gold—but still it was corruptible. But the crown the saints run for is incorruptible; it is a never-fading crown, 1Peter 5:4. Other crowns are like a garland of flowers, which soon withers, Pr 27:4—but this crown given to the conquering Christian is imperishable. The jewels of this crown are never lost; the flowers of this crown never fade.

6. In other races, the garland is bestowed in a way of merit; but, in the Christian race, it is bestowed as a legacy of free grace.

Though we shall not obtain the prize unless we run—yet not because we run. How can we merit the reward? Before we merit heaven, we must satisfy God's justice—but we have nothing to pay. Besides, what proportion is there between the race—and the recompense? Therefore, the crown bestowed is called a gratuitous gift.

> Romans 6:23, "The gift of God is eternal life."

God will so bestow His rewards in such a way, that He Himself may be no loser; though the saints have the comfort of their crown, God will have the glory.

7. In other races, many times, one hinders another; but, in the race to heaven, one Christian helps another.

> 1Th 5:11, "So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing."

One Christian helps by his prayer, advice, and example—to confirm another. What is the fellowship of saints, but one Christian helping forward another in the heavenly race?

8. One may lose other races and not be miserable—but he cannot lose this race in religion without being miserable.

In other races, a man only loses his wager; but if he falls short of this spiritual race—he loses his eternal soul. How seasonable, therefore, is that Apostolic caution, Hebrews 4:1,

> "Let us fear, lest we should come short."

III. The third thing to be explained, is why we must run this Christian race.

There are three reasons:

1. Because God has set us on this race.

> Hebrews 12:1-note, "Let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us."

It is not arbitrary; it is not left to our choice whether we will run or not. God has set us on the race. God's commands carry power and sovereignty in them. If a general bids his army march—they must march. There's no disputing any duty in the Word of God. The heavens drop down their dew; the stars set themselves in battalion; the earth thrusts forth a crop; the sea is bridled in and dares not go a step farther. If inanimate creatures obey God's word of command, much more those who are endued with reason. When God says to run the race—we must run.

2. There's no other way to get to heaven but by running the race.

By nature, we are distant from the goal; and, if we would have heaven, we must run for it. A man can no more get to heaven who does not run this race—than one can get to his journey's end who never sets a step in the way.

> 2Peter 1:10,11, "Make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you."

3. Our time allotted to us is short.

Job compares our life to a swift runner, Job 9:25,

> "My life passes more swiftly than a runner."

The poets painted time with wings. If time flies—we had need run! The night of death hastens—and there is no running a race in the night!

This shows us that the business of true religion is no idle thing; we must put forth all our strength and vigor. Religion is a race; we must run and run. It is a hard thing to be a Christian. Alas, then, what shall we say to those who stand all the day idle? If we look at many professors—and we would think they had no race to run. They put their hand "in their bosom," Pr 19:24. Is that a fit posture for him who is to run to it? If salvation would drop as "a ripe fig into the mouth of the eater," Nah3:12, men would like it well; but they are loathe to set upon running a race. Never think to be favored upon such easy terms.

The life of a Christian is not like a nobleman's life. The nobleman has his rents brought in by his steward, whether he wakes or sleeps. Do not think that salvation will be brought to you—when you are stretching yourselves on your beds of ivory.

If you would have the prize
—run the race.

The passenger in the ship, whether he sits on the deck or lies on the couch, is brought safely to shore; but there is no getting to the heavenly port without towing hard. "Zaccheus ran to see Jesus," Luke 19:4. If we would have a sight of God in glory, we must run this race. We cannot have the world without labor, and would we have heaven without labor?

If the life of Christianity is a race, this may justify the godly in the haste which they make to heaven.

> Psalm 119:60, "I made haste and delayed not to keep your commandments."

Carnal spirits say,

> "What need do you have to make such haste? Why are you so strict and precise? Why do you run so fast? Fair and softly—a more easy pace will serve."

Oh—but a Christian may reply,

> "Religion is a race. I cannot run too fast, nor hard enough!"

If any had asked Paul why he ran so fast and pressed forward to the mark, he would have answered that he was in a race.

Here is that which may justify the saints of God in their zeal and activity for heaven: they are racers, and a race cannot be run too fast. **The blind world is ready to judge all zeal as madness**; but have we not cause to run with all speed—when it is a matter of life and death? If we do not run—and run hard—we shall never obtain the prize. If a man were to run for a wager of three or four million, would he not run with all celerity and swiftness?

> 1Sa 21:8, "The kings business requires haste!"

If any should say to us, "Why so fast? Why so much praying and weeping?" we may say as David, "The king's business requires haste! God has given me a race to run, and I must not linger or loiter!" The haste which Abigal made to the king, 1Sa 25:34, prevented her death and the massacre of Nabal's family. Our haste in the heavenly race will prevent damnation. This may plead for a Christian in his eager pursuit after holiness against all the calumnies and censures of the wicked.

This brings us to several
REPROOFS:

1. It reproves those who run a contrary race—not the race God has set them upon—but the race the devil has set them upon—the race of iniquity.

This reproves those who sacrifice their lives to Bacchus and make haste—but not to heaven. They make haste to fulfill their lusts! Proverbs 6:18. They make haste to swear, to be drunk. They are swift to shed blood, Isaiah 59:7, "their feet run to evil." The sinner, in regard of the haste he makes in sin, is compared to a swift dromedary, Jeremiah 2:23. A wicked man's swiftness in sin, is like Absaloms' riding on his mule, 2Sa 18:9, "as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going."

Sinners make haste to sin—as the bird hastens to the snare! They run as the swine possessed with the devils ran into the sea and were drowned! Mark 5:13. Oh, what haste do men make to hell—as if they feared the gates would be shut before they could get there! What need is there of this speed? Why do they run so fast to prison? The sins men commit in haste—they will repent of at leisure! Achan made haste to the wedge of gold—but now he has time enough to repent of it. Sin is an unhappy race, a damnable race! "Will it not be bitterness in the end?" 2 Samuel 2:26, when men come to the end of that race, instead of a crown "behold chains of darkness!" Jude 6.

2. It reproves those who, instead of running the race of God's commandments, spend all their time in joviality and mirth—as if their life were rather a dance than a race.

> Job 21:12-13, "They sing with tambourine and harp. They make merry to the sound of the flute. They spend their days in mirth."

They are at their music—when they should be at their race!

> Amos 6:4, "They sprawl on ivory beds surrounded with luxury, eating the meat of tender lambs and choice calves. You sing idle songs to the sound of the harp."

It is hard to have two heavens. Some are all for pleasure; they are like those hunting-dogs which Diodorus Siculus speaks of. While they run among the sweet flowers, they smell the flowers, lose scent of the hare—and leave off their hunt. So, while many are among the sweet flowers—the delights and pleasures of the world—they fall to smelling these flowers, and leave off their race. Therefore, they go merrily to hell. I may say, as Solomon, Proverbs 14:13, "the end of that mirth is heaviness!"

3. If true religion is a race, it reproves those who are slow-paced in religion—who creep but do not run.

Their motion is slow and dull. They should be like the sun in the sky, which is swift—when they are like the sun of the dial, which moves very slow. Many Christians move so heavily in the ways of God that it is hard for bystanders to judge whether they are making any progress or not. They are hasty in their passion—but slow of heart to believe, Luke 24:25. What haste did Israel make in their march—when Pharaoh was pursuing them! What need do Christians have to expedite their race—when the devil is behind pursuing, ready to overtake them, and make them lose the prize! We read in the law that God would not have the donkey offered in sacrifice. He hates a dull temper of soul. The snail was accounted unclean, Leviticus 11:30, and the slow-paced professor will be tardy at last, and miss the prize.

4. It reproves those who begin the race of Christianity—but do not persevere to the end of the race.

They faint by the way:

> "You did run well—who hindered you, that you should not obey the truth?" Galatians 5:7.

The crown is set upon the head of perseverance. He who runs halfway and then faints, loses the garland. It is sad for a man to come near to heaven and then tire in the race—as it is to see a ship cast away in sight of the shore.

Nay, what shall we say to those who do worse than tire in the race, who run backward into the way of wickedness, like Julian, Gardner, and others. There is no going to heaven backwards. Such cast reproaches upon the ways of God. Better never begin the race—than run back.

> 2Peter 2:21, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness—then after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment."

A soldier who runs from his colors, and lists himself in the enemy's regiment, if he is taken, must expect martial law.

> Hebrews 10:38, "If any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him."

God will bear with infirmity—but He will punish treachery. Wrath shall smoke against the apostate; fury will display itself in its bloody colors. Indeed, in war, there is a retreating sometimes which, if it is done politically and to the enemy's disadvantage, is called an honorable retreat; but, in a race to heaven, there must be no retreats. These are not honorable retreats but damnable retreats; whoever draws back, it is to perdition, Hebrews 10.

Let all Christians be exhorted to run this heavenly and blessed race of piety. What arguments shall I use to persuade? Look upon other creatures winged with activity, and then, Christian, shame yourself. Look into the sky and see the sun as a giant running his race, Psalm 19:5, and do you stand still? Look into the air and see the birds soaring aloft and mounting towards heaven. Look into the earth and see the bees working in the hive. Look upon the angels, they are swift in obedience. Look upon other Christians near you; you shall find them in their race—reading, praying, and weeping. And have you nothing to do? Look upon your precious time; time runs, and do you stand still? Look upon the wicked, how quick are they in sin? And shall they run faster to hell—than you do to heaven! Nay, look upon yourself; how industrious are you for the world, rising early, compassing sea and land, and yet how sluggish and heartless in matters of salvation? Will you run for a feather, a bubble—and not run for a kingdom!

Consider the Prize

To quicken your pace in godliness, consider what the prize is, that we run for. It is a crown of glory! This encircles all blessedness within it; there will soon be an end of our race—but there will be no end of our crown. This blessed reward should quicken us in the race; but how shall we run the race so as to obtain? It is sad to run in vain, Philippians 2:16-note. This brings us to the next point.

I shall prescribe some DIRECTIONS about this heavenly race:

1. Take heed of those things which will hinder you in your race.

Shake off sloth; idleness is the pace of the devil. The sluggish professor will never win the race; he is sleeping when he should he running. Sloth is the rust of the soul, it is the disease of the soul. A sick man cannot run a race. Proverbs 12:27, "Lazy people don't even cook the game they catch." Oh, shake off sloth! Abandon this idle devil—if you intend to run a race!

2. Throw off all weights. There are two sorts of weights we must throw off:

a) The weight of SIN.

> Hebrews 12:1-note, "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that lies before us."

The prophet David felt this weight, Psalm 38:4,

> "My iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me!"

If we do not throw off this weight of sin by sincere repentance—it will sink us into hell. A man cannot run a race with a heavy burden upon his back. An immoral person cannot run the race of holiness; a proud man cannot run the race of humility; a self-willed man cannot run the race of obedience. Oh, Christian, unburden your soul of sin! Throw off this weight—if you intend to lay hold on the crown!

b) The weight of the WORLD.

This is a golden weight which has hindered many and made them lose their race. "Demas has deserted me, because he loved this present world!" 2 Timothy 4:10. So far as the world is a weight, throw it off. I do not say lay aside the use of the world—but the love of the world, 1John 2:15. When the golden dust of the world is blown in men's eyes, it blinds them so that they cannot see their race.

3. Discard false opinions about this race.

Such as, "The race is easy."

Many a man thinks he can run the race from earth to heaven on his deathbed. Oh sinner, you who say that the race is easy—you are a stranger to the Christian race! You are dead in sin until a supernatural principle of grace is infused, Ephesians 2:1.

Is it easy for a dead man to run a race? To run the way of God's commandments is against nature, and is it easy for a man to act contrary to himself? Is it easy for the water to run upward in its own channel? Is it easy for a man to deny himself, to crucify the flesh, to behead his beloved sin? Oh, take heed of this mistake, that the Christian race is easy! Do you know what true religion must cost you—and what it may cost you?

"The race to heaven is impossible."

There is so much work to do that surely we shall never win the race. Cyprian confesses that, before his conversion, he had many thoughts tending to despair. He imagined that he would never get the mastery of some of his corruptions. The thoughts of impossibility, cut the sinews of all endeavors. God has encouraged us to run not only by promising rewards when we win—but by promising strength to enable us to run. Has He not said He will put His Spirit within us, Ezekiel 36:27, and then we can run and not be weary?

How many has Satan disheartened through despair? "Surely," says the despairing soul, "I may run—but I shall never so run as to obtain. There is no hope." "So," says the despairer, "I might as well go on in my sins; I might as well keep the old road. There's no hope; all help is cut off." This is a dangerous precipice. Despair takes a man off his legs—and then, how can he run? Despair is the great devourer of souls; he who is under the power of this sin—disputes himself into hell!

4. Take heed that company does not hinder you from running the race.

If a man should be running a race, and he should have a friend come and take him by the hand and desire to speak with him while he is running—this might make him lose the race. So stands the case here. Many will be ready to meet with us, and stop us in our race to heaven. "Why do you need to set out so soon? Why do you need to run so fast? Stay and bathe yourselves a while in the luscious delights of the world!" Thus have many been stopped in the middle of their race—and lost the prize! To him who would hinder us in our race, we must say with a holy indignation, as Christ, "Get behind Me, Satan!" Matthew 4:10.

Lastly, you must use all MEANS to help you in the heavenly race.

Run the right race. The Apostle calls it "the race which is set before us," Hebrews 12:1-note, that is, the race chalked out in the Word of God, the race of self-denial and sanctity. It is not any race—but the race set before us—which we must run; which confutes the opinion that a man must be saved in any religion.

Fit yourselves for the heavenly race!

1. Diet yourselves.

The racers in ancient times dieted themselves; they would not eat any fatty meat, nor yet a full meal, that they might be the more prepared for the race. Thus must Christians diet themselves by sobriety and mortification, that they may, by a well ordering of themselves, be more fit to run the race which is set before them. Paul beat down his body, 1 Corinthians 9:27, that he might be more fit for his race.

2. Strip yourselves for the race.

The runner in a race used to strip himself of all unnecessary clothing, and wear only a white garment, that he might be light and nimble. Just so, should Christians strip themselves of all conceits of merit—and only wear the white garment of Christ's righteousness!

3. Begin the race early.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Young ones think they may set upon the race too soon. Can a man be godly too soon? Can he run the race of repentance too soon? But suppose he might—it is still better to repent a year too soon—than an hour too late! Esau's tears as well as his venison—came too late, Genesis 27:33-34. David would seek after God early, Psalm 36:1. Augustine, in his confessions, complained that he knew God no sooner. They will hardly be able to run the heavenly race—who have old age and old sins upon them!

4. Run the pathway, not the roadway.

Hell's road is full of travelers; most go wrong. Exodus 23:2, "You shall not follow a multitude to do evil." The multitude does not consider what is best—but what is fastest. Our Savior has told us, "Narrow is the way which leads unto life," Matthew 7:14. Run in the narrow way of self-denial and mortification!

5. Resolve to hold on in the race, notwithstanding dangers and difficulties.

A godly man must be steeled with courage, and fired with zeal. It is probable there will be thorns and stones in the way of our race—therefore, we need to be well-shod. We must be shod with the gospel of peace, Ephesians 6:15. He whose heart is filled with that peace which the Gospel brings, will be able to run over the hardest piece of religion, with ease.

We must he shod with endurance. Hebrews 12:1-note, "Let us run with endurance, the race set before us." Endurance bears up the heart of a Christian and keeps him from tiring in the race. If this shoe of endurance is off, we shall soon halt and give up running.

6. Always keep you eye upon the right mark.

The Grecians had a white line drawn at the end of the race—and the racer's eye was always upon it. Looking upon the prize quickens Christians in their race! Paul looked towards the mark, Philippians 3:14-note, as archers look at the bulls-eye, and racers at the prize. And Moses, Hebrews 11:26, "looked ahead to the great reward that God would give him!" He looked with one eye at God's glory—and with the other eye, at the prize!

7. Oh, run with delight!

Psalm 119:47, "I will delight myself in Your commandments."

Oil supples the joints and makes them agile and nimble. The oil of gladness makes Christians lively and fit to run the heavenly race!

"The joy of the Lord is your strength," Nehemiah 8:10.

8. Run in the strength of Christ.

Do not think you can, of yourselves, run the race. The Arminians talk of freewill, "but it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs," Romans 9:16-note. By nature we are blind, and lame; therefore, unfit to run a race. We run fastest when Christ takes us by the hand!

9. Be often in the exercise of grace.

It is not enough to have grace in the heart—but it must be in the exercise. Such as run the heavenly race, must not only be living—but lively. They must have a flourishing faith and a flaming love! What is the meaning of the loins girt and the lamps burning, Luke 12:23—but grace in its activity? Without this, there can be no speed in the heavenly race!

If you would run hard—pray hard. Prayer helps us on in the race. Pray over that prayer, Song of Solomon 1:4, "Draw me—and I will run after You."

Pray that you may not mistake your way through error—nor stumble in it through offenses. In a word, let us pray for the Holy Spirit, who animates us in the race, and carries us above our own strength. God's Spirit breathed in us—keeps us in full breath for running the race!

Going For the Gold
1 Corinthians 9:24-27
Robert Morgan

Billions of people around the world have been absorbed for the last two weeks in the Games of the 28th Olympiad, which end tonight in Athens, Greece. The Apostle Paul was familiar with the Olympics, for we know that he spent a good deal of time in southern Greece as he ministered in the city of Corinth which is not far from the fabled city of Delphi, Greece, the home of the original Olympics.

My wife and I once visited Delphi, and I had the joy of racing across the original stadium where the races were held. I came in second. It was a two-man race, and the other fellow got the crown of leaves put on his head. I just counted it a privilege that I got to run the course of the original race that made a portion of the ancient original Olympics. I was never much of an athlete. I was always picked last on school teams, and whatever team I was on inevitably lost, and for some reason I was almost always blamed. My one claim to fame in athletics was when I was manager of the high school football team. I took the trash out to burn it on afternoon and accidentally set the football field on fire. There never was a hotter game than we had that Friday night.

The Apostle Paul must have had some interest in athletics, because he frequently used the games as illustrations for his messages. He was familiar, not only with the Olympics of his day, but with all the other ancient games. Every major city had its sports coliseum, its hippodrome for horse racing, and its local athletes and teams. And just like a good preacher today, the apostle Paul sometimes used sports allusions to illustrate his sermons and writings.

For example:

- Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for

an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified—1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

- For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places—Ephesians 6:12
- And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules—2 Timothy 2:5
- I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing—2 Timothy 4:7-8.

We therefore have biblical warrant for drawing spiritual lessons from the world of athletics, and perhaps even from the Olympic Games themselves. So today I'd like to do something quite different. We've spent the last eight weeks in an intense study of the most difficult book of the Bible—Leviticus. Today I think we need a little mental break from a steady diet of deep theology and systematic study, so I'd like to share with you some lessons we can learn from stories we read from the history of the modern Olympic Games.

Earlier this year, I was asked to do some research into this subject for an article I was writing for a magazine. I happened to be in Roan Mountain at the time, so I spent a good deal of the week in the Elizabethton Public Library, in the sports section. And there I read the stores of five Olympians and from them we can glean some great truths.

Eric Liddell: Meet with the Coach Each Morning

> It almost goes without saying that when we think of the modern Olympics and Christians in the same sentence, we think of Eric Liddell, the Flying Scotsman. Eric was born in 1902 in China where his parents were missionaries for the London Mission Society. He attended Edinburgh University where he was hailed as one of their best track and field runners ever. He ran the 100 yards and the 220 yards for the university.
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> Liddell represented England in the 1924 Paris Olympics. When he learned the heats were to be run on Sunday, he declared that he could not run on Sundays as it would violate his convictions regarding the Sabbath. He switched to the 400 meter competition where he won a gold medal. His story has been made famous in the movie Chariots of Fire.
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> What many people don't know is that after the Olympics, he followed in his parents' footsteps as a missionary to China. It was there during World War II that he was interned in the Weishien Concentration Camp where he died while serving Christ Jesus.
>
> Sally Magnusson, in her biography of Liddell, explained the secret of his radiant life: "Every morning about 6 a.m., with curtains tightly drawn to keep in the shining of our peanut-oil lamp… he used to climb out of his top bunk, past the sleeping forms of his dormitory mates. Then, at the small Chinese table, (he would sit) with the light just enough to illumine (his) Bibles and notebooks. Silently (he) read, prayed, and thought about the day's duties, noted what should be done. Eric was a man of prayer..."
>
> That was his great secret. He knew how to devote his mornings to meeting with his divine Coach. There are many lessons that can be drawn from Eric Liddell's life, but chief among them is this: Champions for God often devote their morning hours to spending time with Him. As Eric Liddell knew, when we begin the morning with God, we can enjoy His presence all day long. As Henry Ward Beecher said, "The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day."

James Connolly: Persevere Through Difficulties

> Here's another story, and one that was totally unfamiliar to me, although I think it's well known by anyone who studies the history of the modern Olympics. The very first Olympic champion in the history of the modern games is an American named James Connolly, the first person to win a gold medal after the resumption of the games in 1896.
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> James Connolly, who was born in south Boston, dreamed of attending Harvard University, but he couldn't afford it. He worked multiple jobs for many years to save enough for tuition; and at age 27, he finally enrolled. The year was 1896, and soon rumors spread that the ancient Olympics would be reborn in Athens. At Princeton University, runner Robert Garrett had already decided to go, taking three teammates with him. Princeton gave them six weeks off for the trip.
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> Back at Harvard, Arthur Blake, another runner, was granted permission to attend the Olympics. But when

James asked for the same privilege, the school refused. 'You're only an undergraduate," said the dean. "If you leave now, you will have to quit—and you may not be allowed back in."

"I'm a good enough jumper to beat anybody in the world," James replied. "I'm going to Athens to prove it. And if that means quitting Harvard, then I quit right now." Storming from the school, James withdrew his college funds and, shortly afterward, left for Europe aboard a German steamer. The other athletes were on board, too, but they had lots of funding and could travel first class. James found himself far below deck in a cramped, musty, dank cabin with little food. He suffered terribly from seasickness.

James was no sooner off the boat in Naples then someone bumped into him on the crowded streets; and when he later reached for his billfold, it was gone. He'd been robbed of every cent by a pickpocket. He arrived in Athens exhausted, penniless, frazzled, and traveling at the mercy of wealthier teammates. He was weak and out of shape. But at least he had two weeks to recover from the trip. That's when he suffered his next shock. The Greeks used a different calendar than the Americans, and Olympic competition was set to begin the very next day!

When morning came, James dragged himself out of bed for the opening ceremonies and stood for hours in the blazing sun awaiting the arrival of the King of Greece. When the games began, James' event, the triple jump, was first on the schedule. "I don't know if I can manage even one jump," James said. "I'm exhausted."

But his teammate pulled him aside. "I've seen you make it this far despite all the problems you've had getting here," said his friend. "And I've seen you jump. There's no one here who can beat you. Just remember. You're representing Americans now."

As the competition proceeded, James watched his opponents. The French jumper had the best marks, a triple jump of 41 feet, 8 inches. Walking to the edge of the runway, James' threw his cap a yard beyond his opponent's distance. A rush of adrenaline came, along with a fresh surge of confidence. Racing down the runway, James leaped into the air and to everyone's amazement, his triple jump measured nearly 45 feet—beyond even where he had thrown his cap.

Leaping to their feet, the thousands of spectators began roaring, "Nike! Nike!"

"What does that mean?" asked James. The judge said, "That means victory." That afternoon, James Connolly stood on the victor's stand and was awarded the silver medal, at that time signifying first place. Not only did he become America's first Olympic hero, he was the first Olympic champion of modern times.

As I read that story, I was reminded that we must all persevere through difficulties if we're going to win the crown. The Bible says that we must run with perseverance the race that is set before us. We mustn't give up. I recently listened to tape recordings of the speeches Franklin Roosevelt gave to America during World War II, including his famous fireside chats. In one of those speeches, he said something like this: "These are difficult days, but they are not dark ones." The Christian has many difficult days, but they aren't dark ones. We must keep on going until the prize is one.

Jesse Owens: Nurture the Right Friends

Another famous Olympian was Jesse Owns, who humiliated Adolf Hitler at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Hitler disliked black athletes and felt they were inferior to Arians. Hitler was hoping that the 1936 Olympics would prove him right.

Jesse Owens was an African-American track star whose main event was the Long Jump. But Owens was having trouble with that event in Berlin. In the qualifying rounds, he missed two times. The first time, he thought he was just taking a practice jump, but the official counted it as one of his three actual attempts to qualify. On his second attempt, he misjudged the takeoff spot and fouled again. One more miss, and he would be eliminated from competition. His main competitor was a German named Lutz Long, the only jumper there with a reasonable shot at beating Owens.

It was just then that Lutz Long walked over to Jesse Owens and chatted with him for a few moments. "Something must be bothering you," Long said. "You should be able to qualify with your eyes closed. Owens explained that he hadn't realized that his first jump counted as a qualifying attempt. That had so rattled him that he overcompensating in his second jump.

Long said, "Since the distance you need to qualify isn't that difficult, make a mark about a foot before you reach the foul line. Use that as your jump-off point. That way you won't foul."

Jesse did just that. He used his foot to dig a mark in the grass next about a foot short of the foul line, and he

used that as his jump-off spot. He qualified that time with a couple of feet to spare.

Later that afternoon, Jesse Owens and Lutz Long went head-to-head in competition. It was nip-and-tuck to the end, but when Jesse Owens won the gold metal, Hitler reportedly scowled, but Lutz Long ran over and threw his arms around him in congratulations. Years later, Jesse Owens talked about that moment, and he said, “You could melt down all the medals and cups I have and they wouldn’t match the 24-carot friendship I felt for Lutz Long at that moment.”

The two men became good friends and stayed in touch, even during World War II when the two nations were locked in a terrible war with each other. Lutz was a lieutenant in the German Army, but he wrote to Owens and said, “I hope we can always remain best of friends despite the differences between our countries.”

It was the last communication the two of the ever shared, for just a few days later, Lutz was killed in battle. But the story doesn’t end there. Years later, Owens received a letter from Lutz Long’s son, who was then 22-years old and getting married. The letter said, “Even though my father can’t be here to be my best man, I know who he would want in his place. He would want someone that he and his entire family admired and respected. He would want you to take his place. And I do, too.”

And Jesse Owens flew to Germany to be the best man at the wedding of the son of his former arch competitor and rival. What does that tell us? It tells us that friends are important, and that we must carefully guard and nourish our friendships. The Bible says that love never fails.

Lawrence Lemieux: Rescue the Perishing

One of the most incredible stories coming from the Olympics occurred during the 1988 games in Seoul, South Korea. There was a young competitor there whose whole life had been in pursuit of an Olympic medal. The 1988 games represented his best chance. He was a Canadian named Lawrence Lemieux, and his event was in sailing. Off the coast of Korea, he was racing for the Gold. The sea was stormy and rough, but Lemieux was in second place with an excellent shot at first. Suddenly his attention was drawn aside by an overturned boat, and he saw a sailor draped over the hull, desperately trying to hold on. Another sailor was bobbing in the water. The tides and winds were pushing both men further out to sea. They were Olympians, too, and were competing in another event. The man who was draped over the overturned hull of the boat had cut his hand in the accident and was rapidly losing strength. The crewman in the water was drifting away from the boat and going down. Lemieux had a heart-rending decision to make. If he didn’t stop to help the men, they would likely drown; but if he did stop and help them he would lose his lifelong dream of winning an Olympic Gold Medal. Well, it might have been a heart-rending decision, but it didn’t take the young champion long to make it. He turned his boat toward into the screaming wind and paddled toward the desperate men. As he approached the man who was thrashing in the water, the man gasped, “Please help me! I can’t last much longer.”

“Grab onto my boat when I come past you,” said Lemieux.

“I can’t,” said the man. “I hurt my back and I can’t pull myself up into your boat.” Lawrence leaned over and grabbed the man’s vest and tried to haul him aboard, but the effort almost capsized the little craft. “Just try to hold on until we get to your boat,” shouted Lemieux. Somehow he managed to navigate his boat through the crashing waves and he managed to rescue the other man as well. He held them both until a patrol boat arrived.

But the delay cost him any chance he had of winning an Olympic medal. He resumed the race, but finished in 21st place. In its place, the International Olympic Committee awarded him The Fair Play Award of the 1988 games in Seoul. And when he returned home, the members of Northwood Presbyterian Church in Spokane, Washington, had a special medal cast for him and draped it around his neck while the Canadian National Anthem was played. He told the congregation, “You spend your whole lifetime trying to achieve a goal, and my goal was winning a gold medal. I didn’t win a gold medal, but I won something more valuable—the love you’ve shown me here today.”

While everyone else in the world is trying to win medals, accomplish goals, accumulate prizes, and achieve status, we have only one mission, don’t we—to rescue the perishing and care for the dying.

This one life will soon be past,
Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Felix Carvajal: Finish Well

My favorite Olympic story is an odd one, and a wonderful story that brings us back to one of our original texts from the Apostle Paul. When the Olympic Games were held in St. Louis in 1904, there was an unusual entry in the Marathon. A small Cuban mail carrier named Felix Carvajal announced one day to his fellow postal workers that he was going to travel to the United States and win the Marathon for Cuba. He was without money or backing, yet he quit his job and began begging on the streets of Havana, seeking traveling funds. “Help me go to the United States,” he appealed, “and win a race for Cuba.”

No one took him seriously, but somehow he collected enough money for the trip. He took a boat to New Orleans where he promptly lost all his money in a dice game. From New Orleans, he hitched rides to St. Louis where he arrived hungry and in rags. Members of the American team befriended him and gave him some food and a place to sleep.

He had no running clothes and no running shoes, only heavy street shoes. He knew nothing about running and had no experience in track and field. Nevertheless, he cut off his pants above the knees and there he was at the starting line, street shoes and all.

It was a sweltering day; the heat and humidity were oppressive. One by one, many of the other runners collapsed. One American runner nearly died. Felix, however, being from Cuba, thought nothing of the blistering conditions. He fairly skipped along, laughing and sometimes even pausing to joke with spectators along the way.

With only two miles to go, Felix had a huge lead. He was running alongside an orchard and he spotted some apples. They fairly beckoned to him, and he stopped to eat some of them. They were green, and soon he was stricken with severe stomach cramps. He lost the lead, though he did come in fourth, doubled-over with pain. Of the thirty-one starters that day, only fourteen finished, and Felix was fourth among them.

The Apostle Paul said: Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

He kept his eyes on the prize to the end, writing to Timothy near the end of his life, saying, “I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Let’s rededicate ourselves to meeting with the coach each morning, persevering through difficulties, nurturing the right friends, rescuing the perishing, and finishing well. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

DEVOTIONALS RELATED TO RUNNING THE RACE IN HEBREWS 12:1

Hebrews 12:1 Run with Endurance

Hebrews 12:1 tells us to “run with endurance” the race set before us. George Matheson wrote, “We commonly associate patience with lying down. We think of it as the angel that guards the couch of the invalid. Yet there is a patience that I believe to be harder—the patience that can run. To lie down in the time of grief, to be quiet under the stroke of adverse fortune, implies a great strength; but I know of something that implies a strength greater still: it is the power to work under stress; to have a great weight at your heart and still run; to have a deep anguish in your spirit and still perform the daily tasks. It is a Christlike thing! The hardest thing is that most of us are called to exercise our patience, not in the sickbed but in the street.” To wait is hard, to do it with “good courage” is harder!

Weighted Down by Plunder - The army of Alexander the Great was advancing on Persia. At one critical point, it appeared that his troops might be defeated. The soldiers had taken so much plunder from their previous campaigns that they had become weighted down and were losing their effectiveness in combat. Alexander immediately commanded that all the spoils be thrown into a heap and burned. The men complained bitterly but soon came to see the wisdom of the order. Someone wrote, “It was as if wings had been given to them—they walked lightly again.” Victory was assured.

Hebrews 12:1 THINGS TO BE LEFT BEHIND

LEAVE BEHIND your past sins. They have been many and great, more than you can count. But if you have confessed and forsaken them, they have been put away, "as far as the east is from the west.'" Nothing could be more explicit than 1Jo1:9. It is useless to brood over the past. God has buried it in the grave of Christ. Go and sin no more!

Leave behind your bad habits that encumber you (R.V. marg.). You know what they are, and how they cling--ill-temper, jealousy, pride, evil-speaking, and many another! You have fallen again and again, overtaken by them, tripped up, your robes stained and torn. There should be some finality in your life, a mark on the grass from which you start to run the race. The command to put off the old man is in the definite tense (Col3:8-9). It be-speaks one sudden strong act of the will, God-nerved and God-empowered. This, then, is the hour when you must strike for liberty "Ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Leave behind your accomplished ideals. They were once far in front and above you. As you climbed they seemed almost inaccessible, and mocking voices rang out their defiance of your attempt. But by the grace of God things that once you dreamt of are now realised, and you are sitting on the peak that once seemed to laugh you to scorn. But you must leave it behind! Look up! look forward! Are there not fresh ideals calling to you? Leave behind your attainments and strike your tents. One battle is fought, but a yet stronger foe bars the way immediately in front. It is suicidal to rest on your oars; to do so will expose you to the inevitable backward drift.

The best way to leave behind is to press forward. The Spirit of God bids us "run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus." He is our Forerunner, always before us, always leading us on. His crest, like the plume of Henry of Navarre, is always in the very thick of the fight. Let the soul follow hard after Him, and it will become almost oblivious to what it leaves behind. The boy who is running for the goal, in his eagerness to win the prize, strips himself of one and another article of clothing. He will not count their worth, so long as he may win the prize. So run that ye may attain! Apprehend that for which you were apprehended! Lay hold on the outstretched crown of life!

PRAYER - Most gracious God, quicken me by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may run in the way Thou hast marked out for me. May I ever be kept looking off unto Jesus. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

Hebrews 12:1 The Power Of Sin

I was having lunch with a pastor-friend when the discussion sadly turned to a mutual friend in ministry who had failed morally. As we grieved together over this fallen comrade, now out of ministry, I wondered aloud, “I know anyone can be tempted and anyone can stumble, but he’s a smart guy. How could he think he could get away with it?” Without blinking, my friend responded, “Sin makes us stupid.” It was an abrupt statement intended to get my attention, and it worked.

I have often thought of that statement in the ensuing years, and I continue to affirm the wisdom of those words. How else can you explain the actions of King David, the man after God’s own heart turned adulterer and murderer? Or the reckless choices of Samson? Or the public denials of Christ by Peter, the most public of Jesus’ disciples? We are flawed people who are vulnerable to temptation and to the foolishness of mind that can rationalize and justify almost any course of action if we try hard enough.

If we are to have a measure of victory over the power of sin, it will come only as we lean on the strength and wisdom of Christ (Rom. 7:24-25). As His grace strengthens our hearts and minds, we can overcome our own worst inclination to make foolish choices. —Bill Crowder

The price of sin is very high
Though now it may seem low;
And if we let it go unchecked,
Its crippling power will grow.
—Fitzhugh

God’s Spirit is your power source—don’t let sin break the connection.

Hebrews 12:1 Foolish Baggage

In 1845, the ill-fated Franklin Expedition sailed from England to find a passage across the Arctic Ocean.

The crew loaded their two sailing ships with a lot of things they didn't need: a 1,200-volume library, fine china, crystal goblets, and sterling silverware for each officer with his initials engraved on the handles. Amazingly, each ship took only a 12-day supply of coal for their auxiliary steam engines.

The ships became trapped in vast frozen plains of ice. After several months, Lord Franklin died. The men decided to trek to safety in small groups, but none of them survived.

One story is especially heartbreaking. Two officers pulled a large sled more than 65 miles across the treacherous ice. When rescuers found their bodies, they discovered that the sled was filled with table silver.

Those men contributed to their own demise by carrying what they didn't need. But don't we sometimes do the same? Don't we drag baggage through life that we don't need? Evil thoughts that hinder us. Bad habits that drag us down. Grudges that we won't let go.

Let's determine to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us" (Hebrews 12:1). —David C. Egner

The world has lost its transient lure—
Its evil spell I shun;
I've set my course for higher things
Till earth's brief race is run.
—Bosch

Keep out of your life anything that would crowd Christ out of your heart.

Hebrews 12:1 Weight Loss

The army of Alexander the Great was advancing on Persia. At one critical point, it appeared that his troops might be defeated. The soldiers had taken so much plunder from their previous campaigns that they had become weighted down and were losing their effectiveness in combat.

Alexander commanded that all the spoils be thrown into a heap and burned. The men complained bitterly but soon saw the wisdom of the order. Someone wrote, "It was as if wings had been given to them—they walked lightly again." Victory was assured.

As soldiers of Christ, we must rid ourselves of anything that hinders us in the conflict with our spiritual enemy. To fight the battle effectively, we must be clad only with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17).

The Bible also likens Christians to runners. To win the race, we must "lay aside every weight" that would drag us down and rob us of our strength and endurance (Hebrews 12:1). This weight may be an excessive desire for possessions, the captivating love of money, an endless pursuit of pleasure, slavery to sinful passions, or a burdensome legalism.

Yes, if we are to fight the good fight of faith and run the spiritual race with endurance, the watchword must be: Off with the weight! —Richard De Haan

Fight the good fight with all thy might!
Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally.
—Monsell

If your Christian life is a drag, worldly weights may be holding you back.

Hebrews 12:1 Patient Endurance

The purposes of God often develop slowly because His grand designs are never hurried. The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times, however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him feverishly pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What's the trouble, Mr. brooks?" he asked.

"The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" Haven't we felt the same way many times?

Some of the greatest missionaries of history devotedly spread the seed of God's Word and yet had to wait long periods before seeing the fruit of their efforts. William Carey, for example, labored 7 years before the first Hindu convert was brought to Christ in Burma, and Adoniram Judson toiled 7 years before his faithful preaching was rewarded. In western Africa, it was 14 years before one convert was received into the Christian church. In New Zealand, it took 9 years; and in Tahiti, it was 16 years before the first harvest of souls began.

Thomas a Kempis described that kind of patience in these words: "He deserves not the name of patient who is only willing to suffer as much as he thinks proper, and for whom he pleases. The truly patient man asks (nothing) from whom he suffers, (whether) his

superior, his equal, or his inferior… But from whomever, or how much, or how often wrong is done to him, he accepts it all as from the hand of God, and counts it gain!"

The Great Race "Run in such a way as to get the prize" 1 Corinthians 9:24 - Joseph Stowell

The month of June brings many sure signs of summer: the sweet smell of cut grass, soft breezes, picnics, fireflies, thunderstorms—and runners. This unique breed of humanity, forced to run circles in cramped indoor quarters during the North American winter, emerges with the first hint of spring and spends the summer dashing through neighborhoods and parks.

I have nothing against runners. Some of my best friends are addicted runners. Though I have never seen a runner smiling, apparently there is something fulfilling about it. I even tried it once, waiting for that surge of ecstasy that my friends told me I would experience, only to find that the ecstasy came when I stopped running!

So, whatever you think about running, it's important to note that the Bible often speaks of living the Christian life as if it we were running a race. Following Jesus is clearly more than a leisurely stroll in the park! And the issue is not whether you will run the race. When you became His follower, you were put in the race. The question is not will you run, but how will you run?

So, here are three keys to running well.

First, stay in shape! I like Paul's perspective in 1 Corinthians 9:24: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." In other words, you need to be in it to win, and, like any race, winning requires discipline. As spiritual runners, we must discipline ourselves in the exercise and dietary habits of prayer and reading God's Word. Drinking at the fountain of prayer and digesting the food of God's Word gives us strength and motivation to run and win.

Secondly, obey the rules! Like all races, running to win means staying in the boundaries. Paul committed himself to living his life by God's rules. He did not want to be "disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:27). As good runners, we embrace the rules and gladly submit to them.

Thirdly, run light! As Hebrews 12:1 instructs us, we are to lay aside every hindering weight and the sin that so easily besets us. What is it that distracts you and what is the sin that slows you down? Take them off and run light!

And finally, a couple more tips. Hebrews 12:1 also tells us to be willing to persevere. Our race is more than a few laps around the track—it's a long-distance marathon. And let's face it, this marathon can be stressful. Sometimes it's the wind of life blowing against us—or mud kicked in our face from the runner in front of us. But whatever the case, runners that win never give up!

And keep your eyes on the finish line. Jesus is there! When you run for the honor and glory of His name, He reaches out with the victor's crown and says, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

In my book, that's worth running for!

YOUR JOURNEY…

- Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Would you say that you are running "aimlessly," or are you competing for the "crown that will last forever"?
- Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What things hinder and entangle you, and how do you intend to throw them off? What does Paul say to do so that you will not "grow weary and lose heart"?
- In Paul's parting words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, he says that he is not the only one who will be awarded by the Lord. How does that encourage you to keep running for the prize?

Hebrews 12:1 Still Climbing

Few experiences match the challenge and exhilaration of mountain climbing. Those who participate in this exercise of endurance and skill like to compare peaks and share experiences. When European climbers get together to swap stories, they often tell of passing a certain grave along the trail to a famous peak. On the marker is a man's name and this inscription: He died climbing.

To me, mountain climbing is a picture of the life of faith. Throughout our lives we are to continue moving upward--learning more about God, growing in our relationship with Christ, becoming stronger in our battle with temptation, pushing ahead in telling the lost about Christ.

The author of Hebrews put it this way: "Let us run with endurance." The words with endurance may be translated "with perseverance," or more commonly, "to the end."

Joshua was just such a man of God. His "climb" began in Egypt and ended in the Promised Land. He won great battles. We are told that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua" (Josh. 24:31). At the close of his life, Joshua was still urging Israel to serve God faithfully (v.23).

Lord Jesus, help us to serve You faithfully. May we still be climbing to the very end. --D C Egner

I want to scale the utmost height
And catch a glimpse of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till heaven I've found,
"Lord, lead me on to higher ground."
--Oatman

Faith grows stronger as we climb higher

Hebrews 12:1 Unsung Heroes

They may never be publicly applauded. Only a handful of people may praise them. In fact, they may be criticized and written off as foolish or even weak-minded. Yet they are the unsung heroes who serve as the salt that saves society from total corruption.

Michael Weed of the Institute for Biblical Studies in Austin, Texas, identifies some of these individuals who won't get TV coverage but who ought to be in humanity's Hall of Fame. One such person, "though viciously slandered and misunderstood, refuses to become discouraged or to fight back." Another is the "person who, in spite of bitter disappointments, still praises God as the Giver of all good gifts."

God has many heroes who are unsung on earth. Hebrews 11:35-40 lists some of the unidentified heroes. The author does not give their names, but they are recorded individually in the Book of Life (Phil. 4:3).

We may not be called on to spend our days in sacrificial service or to suffer courageous martyrdom. But in our places of responsibility we can choose to be faithful followers of Christ. We may not hear the applause of this world, but we will someday be rewarded in heaven. --VCG

Look not to the people around you,
Nor wait for their laurels of praise;
Enough that the Savior has found you
And taught you to serve all your days.
--Hess

Your name in heaven is not based on your fame on earth.

Hebrews 12:1 Learning Patience

To those Christians who are always in a hurry, here's some good advice from the 19th-century preacher A.B. Simpson:

"Beloved, have you ever thought that someday you will not have anything to try you, or anyone to vex you again? There will be no opportunity in heaven to learn or to show the spirit of patience, forbearance, and longsuffering. If you are to practice these things, it must be now." Yes, each day affords countless opportunities to learn patience. Let's not waste them.

Commenting on our need for this virtue, M.H. Lount has said, "God's best gifts come slowly. We could not use them if they did not. Many a man, called of God to… a work in which he is pouring out his life, is convinced that the Lord means to bring his efforts to a successful conclusion. Nevertheless, even such a confident worker grows discouraged at times and worries because results do not come as rapidly as he would desire. But growth and strength in waiting are results often greater than the end so impatiently longed for. Paul had time to realize this as he lay in prison. Moses must have asked, 'Why?' many times during the delays in Midian and in the wilderness. Jesus Himself experienced the discipline of delay in His silent years before His great public ministry began."

God wants us to see results as we work for Him, but His first concern is our growth. That's why He often withholds success until we have learned patience. The Lord teaches us this needed lesson through the blessed discipline of delay.

Hebrews 12:1 How To Treat Halloween

The word Halloween comes from All Hallows Eve, which was the evening before a religious holiday in Medieval England that became known as All Saints' Day. It was a time set aside by the church to commemorate its saints.

Today's celebration of Halloween, however, is more closely related to pagan customs that originated in ancient Europe. The Druids believed that the spirits of the dead returned to their former haunts during the night of October 31, so they lit torches and set out food for these unwelcome visitors. They did this out of fear, thinking they would be harmed if they didn't.

The Bible warns against all dabbling in the occult and preoccupation with witches and ghosts. What then can Christians do? One enterprising pastor had a special gathering in which he asked some of the church people to come dressed in the costumes of Bible heroes and the great saints of church history. In a dramatic way they were calling to mind the sufficiency of God's grace in the lives of His people.

Yes, the example set by that great "cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1 encourages our faith. Remembering them on Halloween can remind us of the triumph of trusting the Lord. —Herbert Vander Lugt

Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword—
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
—Faber

The greatest gift anyone can give us is a godly example.

Hebrews 12:1 Good Courage

George Matheson wrote, "We commonly associate patience with lying down. We think of it as the angel that guards the couch of the invalid. Yet there is a patience that I believe to be harder -- the patience that can run. To lie down in the time of grief, to be quiet under the stroke of adverse fortune, implies a great strength; but I know of something that implies a strength greater still: it is the power to work under stress; to have a great weight at your heart and still run; to have a deep anguish in your spirit and still perform the daily tasks. It is a Christ-like thing! The hardest thing is that most of us are called to exercise our patience, not in the sickbed but in the street." To wait is hard, to do it with "good courage" is harder!

Hebrews 12:1 Keep Running!

You may have heard the story of John Stephen Akhwari, the marathon runner from Tanzania who finished last at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. No last-place finisher in a marathon ever finished quite so last.

Injured along the way, he hobbled into the stadium with his leg bloodied and bandaged. It was more than an hour after the rest of the runners had completed the race. Only a few spectators were left in the stands when Akhwari finally crossed the finish line.

When asked why he continued to run despite the pain, Akhwari replied, "My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race. They sent me here to finish."

The attitude of that athlete ought to be our attitude as we grow older. There is a "race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1), and we are to keep running until we reach the finish line.

No one is too old to serve God. We must keep growing, maturing, and serving to the end of our days. To idle away our last years is to rob the church of the choicest gifts God has given us to share. There is service to be rendered. There is still much to be done.

So let's keep running "with endurance." Let's finish the course—and finish strong. —David H. Roper

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.
—Rusthoi

It's always too soon to quit.

Hebrews 12:1 Weighed Down Or Way Up?

A former commander of the Imperial Russian Navy said that he went to London during World War I for training. There he learned how to fly one of three dirigibles that Russia had bought from England.

But first he had to learn to fly a balloon. He recalled getting into the gondola and seeing all four sides covered with sandbags. To begin the ascent, sand was released until the huge balloon slowly lifted off the ground. As more sand went over the side, the craft ascended higher.

The man then applied this to our relationship with the Lord: "Now that I'm a Christian, I understand that when God begins to clean up my heart, I get closer and closer to Him."

Hebrews 12:1 and 1 John 2:15 express that same spiritual truth. Carrying this world's weight hampers our fellowship with the Lord and keeps our hearts from rising in love for Him. John wrote that we cannot love the world and love God at the same time. How often we have proven from experience just how true that is!

Selfish attitudes, besetting sins, and worldly cares keep us from getting off the ground spiritually. But when we lay them aside, we experience the uplifting joy of fellowship with the Father. --MRD II

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.
--Oatman

If you're not as close to God as you used to be, guess who moved.

Hebrews 12:1 WINNING THE RACE

On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister became the first man in history to run a mile in less than 4 minutes. Within 2 months, John Landy eclipsed the record by 1.4 seconds. On August 7, 1954, the two met together for a historic race. As they moved into the last lap, Landy held the lead. It looked as if he would win, but as he neared the finish he was haunted by the question, "Where is Bannister?" As he turned to look, Bannister took the lead. Landy later told a Time magazine reporter, "If I hadn't looked back, I would have won!"

One of the most descriptive pictures of the Christian life in the Bible is of an athlete competing in a race. First Corinthians 9:24-27 tells us that discipline is the key to winning. In Hebrews 12:1-2, we are encouraged to lay aside anything that might hinder our spiritual advancement and to stay focused on Christ. And in Philippians 3:12-13, the apostle Paul said, "I press on… forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead."

Lord, give us endurance as we run this race of life. Help us not to wallow in past failures, but to be disciplined and to shun sinful ways. May we fix our eyes on the eternal goal set before us and keep looking unto Jesus. -- Henry G. Bosch

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.
-- Monsell

You can't make spiritual progress by looking back.

Hebrews 12:1 BARNYARD DUCKS

Does the following anonymous poem describe how you feel?

My soul is like a barnyard duck
Muddling in the barnyard muck,

Fat and lazy with useless wings;
But sometimes, when the northwind sings

And wild ducks fly overhead,
It ponders something lost and dead,

Then cocks a wary, bewildered eye
And makes a feeble attempt to fly.

It's quite content with the state it's in,
But it's not the duck it might have been.

Are you haunted by the fear that you'll never be what God meant you to be? That you're preoccupied with the trinkets of this passing world? Are you "living in the barnyard" when you could be soaring?

Do you really want to fly? Do you long to soar above the pettiness and insignificance of the barnyard muck?

You can! Put aside the sin and worldly weights that are holding you down (Heb. 12:1) and get busy with the tasks the Lord has for you. Only in Christ do we find the fulfillment He longs for each of us to enjoy.

Remember that Jesus came to set you free and let you soar as you look for His coming (Ti. 2:11-13). Isn't it time you got out of the mud and did some flying? -- Haddon W. Robinson

In this world but never of it,
Help me, Lord, to live this day
Free from all that would entangle,
Of the dazzle and array.
-- Graves

If your Christian life is a drag, worldly weights are probably to blame.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Keep on Swimming

Florence Chadwick was the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. On the Fourth of July in 1951, she attempted to swim from Catalina Island to the California coast. The challenge was not so much the distance, but the bone-chilling waters of the Pacific. To complicate matters, a dense fog lay over the entire area, making it impossible for her to see land. After about 15 hours in the water, and within a half mile of her goal, Chadwick gave up. Later she told a reporter, "Look, I'm not excusing myself. But if I could have seen land, I might have made it." Not long afterward she attempted the feat again.

Once more a misty veil obscured the coastline and she couldn't see the shore. But this time she made it because she kept reminding herself that land was there. With that confidence she bravely swam on and achieved her goal. In fact, she broke the men's record by 2 hours!

Hebrews 12:1-2 The Race

In 1992 the Summer Olympic Games were held in Barcelona, Spain. One of the runners in the 400-meter race was an English athlete named Derek Redmond. He had trained for years to compete in the Olympics. But while sprinting in a qualifying heat, he suddenly pulled a hamstring and crumpled to the track in pain.

Determined to go on, Derek struggled to his feet. He was hobbling toward the finish line when his father scaled the retaining wall and jumped onto the track. Before anyone could stop him, Jim Redmond reached his son. The young runner leaned on his father's shoulder as he staggered to complete the race. The entire crowd stood and cheered the two men on. When they crossed the finish line, it was as if the runner, his father, and the spectators had done it together.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to run the race of faith and persevere to the end, following the example of those who have gone before us. It takes all of our spiritual stamina to complete it, but we don't run the course alone. Christ Himself helps us toward the finish line. Therefore, "let us lay aside every weight, and … run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). — Haddon W. Robinson

Run the straight race thru God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.
--Monsell

We are judged by how we finish, not by how we start.

Hebrews 12:1 - J C Philpot - "Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1

Every fervent desire of your soul after the Lord Jesus Christ; every inward movement of faith, and hope, and love toward his blessed name; every sense of your misery and danger as a poor, guilty, lost, condemned sinner, whereby you flee from the wrath to come;

every escaping out of the world and out of sin for your very life, with every breathing of your heart into the bosom of God, that he would have mercy upon you and bless you--all these inward acts of the believing heart in its striving after salvation as a felt, enjoyed reality, as the prize of our high calling, are pointed out by the emblem--"running the race set before us."

The Christian sees and feels that there is a prize to be obtained, which is eternal life; a victory to be gained, which is victory over death and hell; and he sees the certain consequences if this prize is not obtained, this victory not won--an eternity of misery. He sees, therefore, let others think and say what they may, he must run if all others stand still, he must fight if all others are overcome. But to do this or any part of this a man must have the life of God in his soul. To begin to run is of divine grace and power; to keep on he must have continual supplies communicated out of the fullness of a covenant Head; and to be enabled to persevere to the end so as to win the prize, he must have the strength of Christ continually made perfect in his weakness. But he does win; he is made more than conqueror through Him who loved him. Jesus has engaged that he shall not be defeated; for the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong; but the lame take the prey; and not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.