

Running the Race of Our Life!

Introduction:

One of the most exciting things to watch is the athlete who has prepared for months to compete in a really big race such as the Olympics. One can feel the tension as the contestants await the starting signal and then put forth every ounce of energy as multitudes cheer them on.

The Christian runs the race of life so that he might receive the glory and honor which comes from God. One cannot expect the crown of life unless he enters and runs **“the race that is set before us.”**

1. The Hebrew writer after showing us the list of the faithful, and telling of their good deeds, compares these activities to running a race.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us**, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

2. This race that we are running is not to be as the proverbial “rat race,” which is a frantic scurry or a mad scramble - like people on the streets of New York ushering in the new year, but rather it is to have a purpose and a goal.

All Are Invited to Run the Race

1. The spiritual race of life is an invitation open to all. Jesus said:

Matthew 11:28-30 **Come to Me**, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

All must Enter the Race in Order to Run the Race

1. Before one can run in a race in order to receive the prize, one must first officially enter the race.
2. It is not enough to hear about the race, or to know of the terms of entry.
 - A. One must be officially entered by those who are in charge.
3. There are certain rules for entry into the race of life.
 - A. One must first hear the word
Romans 10:17
 - B. After hearing, one must believe in God and His word
Hebrews 11:6
 - C. When one believes, they then must repent of sins
Acts 17:30
 - D. After one repents, they must confess that Jesus is the Son of God
Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32
 - E. Then one must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins and in order to enter into the body of Christ
Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27
 - 1) These are the terms of entry to get into the race. One cannot run the race until one is officially entered into it.

All must Run Within the Established Track or Be Disqualified

- 1. One cannot receive the reward if they do not stay within the given track.**
- 2. The Lord, long ago told Joshua, who was to tell the children of Israel that they needed to stay within the established guidelines.**

Joshua 1:7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

A. We have similar guidelines today:

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;

- 1) Christ certainly is the Lord of this track that we are running on.**

Matthew 28:18All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

All must Run and Abide by the Rules of the Race

1. **We cannot just be spectators. Christianity is not a spectator sport. “...let us run” (Heb 12:1).**
 - A. **Those who do not run, not only hurt themselves, but they hinder others along the way.**
2. **There are many things that could disqualify one’s “run.” Such as running out of bounds.**
 - A. **We must stay focused and on track. Some will step out of bounds and still want to claim the reward.**

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

- 1) **“You can run on a foul ball, but you sure can’t score.”**
 2. **So it is with life’s race — we must abide by the rules of the race.**
- 2 Timothy 2:5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

All must Run the Race until it Is Finished

1. **Once we enter the race we MUST finish the race.**
 - A. **One cannot “retire” or “quit” the race before it is over if one wants a reward.**
2. **We cannot afford to be hindered during the race and stop!**

Galatians 5:7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

- A. **Paul is saying that these brethren were running the race well, but then something or someone hindered them from staying the course.**
3. **We must be determined to endure to the very end (Rev 2:10).**

Matthew 10:22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But **he who endures to the end will be saved.**

4. **If we stay with it, no matter how hard the race becomes we shall reap the reward!**

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season **we shall reap if we do not lose heart.**

5. **We must run the race with great patience. It is a long race for those blessed with long life.**

Hebrews 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

As We Run the Race, Keep Focused on the Finish Line

- 1. If we constantly keep our eyes focused on the goal, we will not become discouraged by what others may or may not be doing.**
 - A. Staying focused is not always easy, but is something that we must strive to do.**
- 2) We must stay focused upon the goal of heaven.**

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Christ Will Judge the Race

- 1. We should be thankful that our judgment is not left in the hands of men.**

John 12:48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

- 1) Jesus established the rules of the race and He will judge us to make sure that we did abide in His rules.**
 - B. The judgment will be rendered on an individual basis.**

Romans 14:12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

There Is a Prize for All That Endure to the End!

1. It will not be a matter of who finishes first, but who finishes period.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 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. 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.

2. We are not competing with other persons in this race, but with ourselves and time. Our physical life is the time limit!

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

3. All that run this race faithfully, will not have run in vain!

Philippians 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

4. Everyone who presses onward WILL WIN THE PRIZE!

Philippians 3:13-14 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion

1. **Life is a race and we are running the race of our life!**
 - A. **The Christian life must be lived as one would run a race, a race that one strives diligently to finish!**
2 Timothy 4:7-8
2. **May we all enter the race and run the race according to the rules so that we might gain the prize.**
 - A. **The Rule Book is the Bible ----- The Prize is **ETERNAL LIFE!****

