

# RUN THE RACE



*Many hundreds into the thousands gathered at the start line, ready to race. People wearing sunglasses and hats, shirts and shorts both pasted with their track number on their front and back, stretched warming up in the cool of the morning air.*

*A beautiful sight of many with a genuine desire to obey the living God, they entered because they believe.*

*The track was designed to test the best. A distance longer than any: through wet slippery roads, into the deep green dark forests, across windblown faded trails of the desert, and onto unknown paths only time would reveal.*

*The bell sounded ringing far and wide. Instantly, they responded in silence.*

*A strong baritone voice echoed out, "On your mark!"*

*In unison, they positioned to break ahead.*

*"Get ready!"*

*With eager eye, they took focus on the unseen finish line holding their baton pressed against their chest.*

*"GO!"*

*My heart awoke pounding like a hundred horses. I pushed in front of the announcer, gripping the platform rail. I could see for miles, but nothing caught me off guard like this race.*

*"No!" I yelled.*

*For a long moment, I stood mummified in disbelief. I grabbed the handrail of the staircase and entered a race of my own. My upper body carried my weight as I skipped over the steps slipping and sliding down to the midpoint when I jumped onto the wet grass skidding to a halt against nature's finest granite. In an instant, pain shot up through my body from every landing point, but my attention was on the immediate urgency.*

*"Why?" I crawled to my knees pushing up from the ground, while rubbing my paining hip ever so gently. The slightest touch aggravated the injury—it was best left alone.*

*"Why aren't you running?" I begged.*

*The crowd burst into a chatter, all fiddling with either the laces of their shoes, adjusting their hats, or cleaning their sunglasses.*

*A stumbling movement formed an awkward stride as I approached the runners.*

*One replied, "Oh, yes! We're on our way."*

*"No, you're not!" I replied harshly, while scratching my head and pulling on my hair.*

*Another strolled my direction. "The flowers here are just lovely." She hovered a bouquet of scrub under my nose.*

*"Where is your baton?" I asked.*

*She looked over my shoulder moving her head, retracing her steps. "I must have dropped it—somewhere over there." She pointed, her finger moving aimlessly covering 180 degrees.*

*I turned to the people who now were sitting, lounging back all sharing life stories laughing and giggling drunk on ignorance.*

*My heart sank. Even greater pain wounded me. "Believers," I shouted. "You've entered **THE RACE!** You have your baton in hand. Get up and run!"*

*"But how?" a voice in the crowd replied.*

***"STUDY THE RACE—RELENTLESSLY, KEEP IT FOREMOST ON YOUR MIND AND ALWAYS YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY. THE RACE IS YOUR CONVERSION IN CHRIST."** They nodded their heads as I spoke. Some standing helped others up, assuring them that it was time to go.*

**"Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved,** a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing the Word of Truth" (11 Timothy 2:15).

“But **grow in the grace and knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18).

“His **divine power** has given us everything we need for life and godliness... **participate in the divine nature** and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, **make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love... make your calling and election sure. If you do these things, you will never fall.**” (II Peter 1:3-10).

“Dear friends, since you are looking forward to this [the day of God], **make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him**” (II Peter 3:14).

“And **endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation**” (Romans 5:4).

*Before I finished those standing began to run. “Yes!” I whimpered.*

*“But what else?” another voice cried.*

**“DON’T BE AFRAID. THE RACE WILL BE DIFFICULT THAT ONLY A FEW WILL CHOOSE TO CONTINUE. THE DIFFICULTY IS CHOOSING TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD—SET APART AND SUFFERING THEIR CRITICISM AND PERSECUTION, EVEN TO DEATH.”** *To my surprise, a large group stood up and cheered. It was joy for them to suffer for Christ. They stepped through the crowd, with their heads held up high; their determination took them into a sprint onto the track towards salvation.*

“**You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?** This persuasion is not from him who calls you” (Galatians 5:7-8).

“**Go in through the narrow gate,** because broad is the gate and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are going in through it; **whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are finding it**” (Matthew 7:13, 14).

“But Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, **how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!** It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom God’” (Mark 10:24-25).

“By faith Moses, when grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, **choosing to be mistreated with the people of God** rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin, because **he considered the reproach of the Christ to be riches greater than the treasures of Egypt,** for **he looked intently toward the payment of the reward.** By faith he left Egypt, but not fearing the anger of the king, for he continued **steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible**” (Hebrews 11:24-27).

*The remaining began to stand up. From the front a man with one leg stood leaning on his crutches. "Can I make the long journey?"*

*Voices from behind and around him repeated, "Yeah, can **he** make it? Can **we** make it?"*

**"NONE OF YOU WILL FINISH THIS RACE ON YOUR OWN STRENGTH. EACH OF YOU RUN YOUR OWN RACE. ALL WHO ASK FOR GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT AND KEEP THEIR EYES ON CHRIST WILL FINISH WHETHER LAME OR WHOLE. DON'T LET THE LABOUR OF YOUR TEACHERS BE IN VAIN."**

"Let us **run with endurance** the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

"**Devote yourselves to prayer**, being watchful and thankful" (Colossians 4:2).

"Let us **hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm**, for God can be trusted to keep his promise" (Hebrews 10:23).

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us **throw off everything that hinders** and the sin that so easily entangles. And **let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us**. Let us **fix our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

"We want each of you to **show the same diligence to the very end**, so that your hope may be fully assured" (Hebrews 6:11).

"As God's co-workers we urge you **not to receive God's grace in vain**" (II Corinthians 6:1).

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling... do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you will shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the world of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that **I did not run or labor for nothing**" (Philippians 2:12-17).

"An athlete is not crowned unless he **competes according to the rules**" (11 Timothy 2:5).

"Therefore, **I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight like I am beating the air**. No, I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, **I myself will not be disqualified**" (I Corinthians 9:26-27).

*I breathed a sigh of relief watching them encourage one another. The man on crutches took the lead; they began to run. Now, groups small and large started: some walking, some jogging, some sprinting.*

*My heart leapt and as the last man passed by I shouted, “VISUALIZE YOUR PRIZE, ETERNAL LIFE RULING WITH CHRIST AND BURN IT IN THE FOREMOST PARTS OF YOUR MIND, SO THAT YOU WILL ENDURE THE FIERY TRIALS ALONG THE WAY.”*

“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. **I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him**” (Philippians 3:7-9).

“**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 3:14).

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And **we eagerly await a Savior** from there, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

“**Fix our eyes** not on what is seen, but **on what is unseen**. For what is seen is temporary, but what is **unseen is eternal**” (11 Corinthians 4:18).

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, **set your hearts on things above**, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things above**, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4).

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only **I may finish my course** and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to **testify to the gospel of the grace of God**” (Acts 20:24).

“Blessed is the one who **perseveres under trial** because, **having stood the test**, that person will receive **the crown of life** that the Lord has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

*Now, all were running. Scrambling and stumbling up the stairs of the platform, I pulled the loudspeaker from the hand of the announcer and yelled, “RUN TO WIN! THERE IS ONLY ONE RACE WORTHY OF YOUR LIFE—THIS RACE. SO, RUN TO WIN AS PAUL RAN DEVOTING HIS WHOLE LIFE TO FINISHING THE RACE. DEVOTE EVERYTHING TO THIS RACE—AND YOU WILL WIN!”*

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (II Timothy 4:7).

“Do you not know that **the runners in a race all run**, but **only one receives the prize**? **Run in such a way that you may attain it**” (1 Corinthians 9:24).

**“RUN!”**

*Compiled by Janette Andrejowich*