

Introduction:

The Christian life is compared to a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away, (*James 4.14*); the flower of the grass, the grass withers and its flower falls away (*1 Peter 1.24*), a soldier (*2 Timothy 2.4*), a farmer (*2 Timothy 2.6*), to an athlete in training (*1 Corinthians 9.27*), and to a race (*Hebrews 12.1*). We want to take this last analogy and apply it to what we hope to learn this week.

I) THE IDITAROD

A. History

1. 1925 diphtheria broke out in Nome, Alaska. Vaccine had to be flown into Anchorage, Alaska. The problem was how to get the vaccine to Nome? The plane had been dismantled for maintenance.
2. Dogs sleds at various villages teamed up to relay the vaccine. Over all there were 20 dog sleds. Each had to do their part, if one sled failed the whole mission would end in failure.
3. They risked their lives. Temperature was close to -50 degrees with winds over 30 miles per hour.
4. The vaccine arrived in Nome 27 hours, after it arrived in Anchorage. Lives were saved due to the teamwork of the dog sleds.

B. Since 1975 the Iditarod has been run (2005 March 4th)

1. Distance is officially 1049 miles, the 49 due to Alaska being the 49th state in the Union.
2. The mileage can change from year to year due to weather conditions.
3. There is a North route and Southern route.

C. Rules

1. Each sled must carry - a sleeping bag weighing at least 5 lbs., an ax, booties for each dog, food and water, a pot big enough to hold 3 gallons of water, and fuel enough to boil the three gallons of water.
2. Sleds must allow others to pass them.
3. Each driver must take a 24 hour rest break, and 2 eight hour rest breaks.
4. No alcohol or drugs are allowed.
5. A sled can have at the most 16 dogs and at the least 5 dogs. If you decide to not race a dog, the dog must be put into the sled.
6. If all the rules are obey and you come in first, you are the winner. This years winner time 9 days, 11 hours, 11 minutes, and 36 seconds.

D. Weather (obstacles)

1. There is the 30-30-30 rule. Degrees -30 with a wind of 30 miles per hour, will freeze your flesh in 30 seconds.
2. Other racers, wild animals, sickness, injury, etc.

II) The Race Before Us.

A. **Heb 12:1** 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, **2** 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.

1. We are to lay aside every weight (obstacle)- can you imagine a dog sled carrying around TV or microwave oven? The only weight is what is necessary.
 - a. Probably the weight the Hebrew writer is speaking of is the weight of faithlessness. To not doubt the blessings and promises of God
 - b. To not go back to a dead religion such as the Law of Moses and become entangled in the eating of meats, Sabbath observance, etc. *Matthew 5.29-30; 18.8-9*
 - c. What kind of weight are you carrying around?
 - i. The weight of grudges, carelessness, apathy, worldliness, etc.
 - ii. You are the only one that can cast aside the weight you are carrying.
2. We are to run with endurance, -- to finish the race is the goal.

3. We are to run with purpose - looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.
 - a. Why are you here this morning? To serve God, to go to heaven, to encourage others, to be edified, to learn more about God's word, etc.
 - b. Let us not forget our purpose in life, *Ecc. 12.13*

B. *Hebrews 4.1-11* a time of rest

1. There is a proper time and place to rest.
2. Our rest will be on the other side of the grave in heaven.
3. The Israelites were not to rest before their time. Some stopped following God and were lost.

C. *1 Cor 9:24* 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. 25 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. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

1. Self control - requires one to know themselves, to not give into temptations

- a. The athlete trains and watches what he/she eats.
 - b. We must control our physical body, knowing how to possess our vessel, *1 Thess. 4.3.7*
 - c. We must control our minds, *2 Corinthians 10.4-5*
 - d. Let us not be like, Demas (*2 Timothy 4.9*)
2. Must compete according to the rules, *2 Timothy 2.5*
 - a. Remember the first New York marathon for women. The woman disqualified due to not running the course.
 - b. We will not be able to cut corners with God. He knows if we are faithful or not.
3. Obtain the imperishable crown
 - a. Unfortunately I have known many Christians that decided to quit and gave up. They are of all people most miserable.
 - b. Let us be careful to never allow ourselves to be in that position.

Conclusion:

The race we run may be long or short but there is an end and a reward to those who are faithful. *2 Tim 4:8* 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.