

J Slavich - Running The Race

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Running the race.

You know, I run for exercise and I know the scripture from, you know, Paul says, you know, there's not much benefit from it, but there is some benefit is what I'm going to take from that as well, and it helps me for things like, yes, I like to stay in shape, but also stress relief. It's one of my stress reliefs from work and just life. I like to get out there and sort of just hit the pavement, and that helps me and it helps me sort through things that I'm thinking about.

And if I'm doing good, I remember to put my earbuds or I don't my things to listen to discourses on, and that's how I sometimes catch up on discourses. So I try to find some benefit of it, and when I do that, I've. Over the years I've signed up to keep me honest doing it because I need to set sort of a goal for myself to do.

I sign up for some running races in the area every year, some 5Ks and things like some road races, and that just helps motivate me so that I don't embarrass myself when I get out there, that I actually run in between those races, and so that's a personal thing for me, just to help keep me going, and then as I've done that, I've set some goals, and like last year I set some goals of like I'm going to run it in this amount of time.

And I had two different races where I set some goals and I missed them, and so 2025 was the year of not hitting my running goals, and I was a little disappointed, actually. I was pretty frustrated.

And you know, when I was thinking about it, I thought, you know, there could be. There's. When I'm running every once in a while I'm like, oh, there's kind of maybe a spiritual lesson here in running, and you know, I said, well, I want to study this out. I'm going to study out why I didn't really make the times I was wanting to make.

And you know, that was a lesson in itself of that. I should have started with the spiritual aspect of a study first about my own consecrated race, and then I can apply the principles later to other things instead of starting backwards. Right, well, how can I run run better here? Well, when I started going through it, it was quite sobering what I should be doing in my race course, and yeah, I can apply that to running in real life, but really it's about what should I have been doing in my race as a Christian, running for the price of the high calling.

So this is me starting to share some of my studies with you. Some of it you'll see are some, maybe some viewpoints what appeals to our mind. So please realize that as I share these things, I'm a work in progress as we're trying to run this race. The other thought I had is this is right after the beginning of the new year and similar to the testimony meeting yesterday, you know, last year is in the books. So let's look forward into the new year.

What are our spiritual goals in the new year? What aspects of our Christian character do we need to improve upon? And so as we started thinking about running the race and that concept, you know, I really thought, okay, what are we focusing on in the new year? Brethren, what are you focusing on in the new year? Our theme scripture is from 1st Corinthians 9:24.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize, so run that you may obtain it.

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There's a lot of scriptures, especially from Paul, about running a race that must have been in Paul's mind, because it's not just in Corinthians, it's in Galatians, it's in Philippians and Timothy, right? Multiple times he talks about not running in vain or that he didn't run or labor in vain. In both Galatians and Philippians, he talks to the Galatians about, you were running really well, what hindered you, what got in your way.

Philippians 3:14. He talks about his focus. Now, it doesn't say running here, but I always think of when it says, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. I think of a sprinter at the end. You know how they lean forward, they press in to get across the finish line.

And then we have the. I think Paul was given this special promise in second Timothy 4:7. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.

I think that was something special the Lord gave to him at the end of his consecrated walk that he was able to share with Timothy and then be shared with all of us, that, yes, it is possible for an imperfect man to finish the race course faithfully. Hebrews 12:1. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. So we have many scriptures where, all right, we have this picture of running, and Brother Russell talks about it quite a bit, these pictures of the racecourse, and, you know, you can see in the expanded biblical comments.

I appreciated that he had. This was in Harvest Gleanings. It's harvest gleanings. Two, it's a newspaper sermon, pages 414 through 418. He has a nice sermon on this.

And just in very quick summary, you know, we'd say the goal of the race is very simple. It's love that's putting on that Christian character that we were talking about yesterday. Brother Rick was talking about doing the transforming work. So very simply, the end of the race course is love, and Brother Russell says, you know, there could be a couple meanings to this race course in terms of a picture.

One is the continual striving throughout our Christian life from our time of our consecration all the way until death. The ups and downs, the trials, the joys, everything along the way until remaining faithful unto death. But we can also think about it as the four quarter marks of love, and this is a theme that Brother Russell talks about multiple times, and he talks about it in this sermon as well.

And I like to think of this in a track analogy. If you go out to most tracks at a high school, that's a quarter mile one time around the track, and so I think about four quarter marks and I think about four times around the track is a mile, and that we used to, growing up in middle, in middle school, they'd have us go out there and run the mile and you would always be running, you know, four times. We'd always be like, how fast were you?

We were always checking on that. Well, the four quarter marks of love, the first one is a duty love to God. This is the love that we ought to give God because he created us. Second is a love of God because of his character. We love his goodness.

We come to appreciate his righteousness, his character. The third quarter mark as we again go around that track, the love of our brethren, and this isn't just the love of the brethren. I'm familiar with the brethren that I get along with really well. This is the love of all of the brethren.

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You know, sometimes we can have some personality conflicts, can't we? We might not see eye to eye on different things.

Lord saying, love the brethren, I called that individual. I see something great in them that they can be.

Our job's to love them. So, you know, sometimes it's easy when we have the ones that love us really well. Right, and we have a really close relationship. How do we love all of our brother?

And then the fourth quartermark of love is agape love. I always, for me, I have to define this myself. Selfless love. I know sometimes Brother Russell uses the word disinterested love, and I always have a hard time with it because that makes it sound like I'm not interested in you.

No, that's. You're not interested in yourself. It's selfless. I say it in a way for me, in my mind, I say a love that expects nothing in return. So I'm doing something for you that's for your best, your best outcome.

Sometimes at work we talk about that. I give feedback to individuals. I say, I want to give you some feedback. I'm doing this. I want you to hear from me.

It's out of a place of my heart. I want what's best for you, and so I'm going to tell you this, that love has to be for all of mankind, even our enemies. So those are the four quarter marks of love. So we get a couple of different pictures of the race course.

And I was telling Brother David earlier today, I said, I come from. Sometimes I mix my metaphors, sometimes I'll say, so be patient with me as I go through some of the pictures in the racecourse here, because I'm going to. I'm going to call them pictures, but I'm going to give you some. In the second half of the discourse, we're going to talk about some different pictures. But Brother Russell, even when we're talking about the race course, is saying, hey, there's some different pictures here when we're talking about running the race.

Well, let's focus on 1 Corinthians 9, 24, 27. We're going to go walk through these four verses and really look at the scriptural reasoning and meaning behind running the race. This is where Paul, I think, really talks about it the most and really talks about this picture of running the race.

In verse 24, he says, do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives a prize? So run that you may obtain it. So right off the bat, we've got to run to win the prize. So that doesn't mean like, hey, sitting down on the track halfway through doesn't mean like, oh, I'm going to just kind of mosey on out there. Or think when you watch a race, you're seeing, like, who's going to make it to the end, aiming to get first place.

That's their goal. We'll talk about that a little bit more about first place a little bit later, and this wasn't foreign to the Corinthians. When he was writing it. They were used to the Grecian Games.

So I was going back. I mean we think about the Olympics. There was one in preparing for this, I didn't realize the Isthmian Games. Well, Corinth's right there on the isthmus that connects the Peloponnesus to the rest of Greece, and they had games there as well.

And really there was four different cities in Greece that alternated games, and so this was really a point of awareness in the Greek and then Roman world, and what did they do at the games? Well, they had races at the games. They had sprints that were about 200 something meters.

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They had four to 600 meter type sprints. They did have a longer distance one pro close to our five kilometer race. Nowadays it might have been two to four miles somewhere in there. There are sort of differences in how long that was. So there are all these different types of race.

So this is a very much would be in the minds, it would be a cultural aspect of the world then, and we get it now right from the Olympics now. So we have an idea. We see or marathons, half marathons, things like that, and here's brother Russell's comments on running to win the prize.

He says with diligence, energy, patience and perseverance. So, James 1:12, Blessed is the man who one remains steadfast under trial. What's the result if he remains steadfast? He will receive the crown of life. You know, in First Corinthians 9:24 it says they're running to win a prize, aren't they?

Well, James is starting to give us an indication of what happens if we remain steadfast under trial. If we keep running this race, there's the opportunity to receive a crown of life and we'll talk a little bit more about that. But who is it available to which God has promised to those who love him? Well, it goes back to those four quarter marks that we were talking about, doesn't it? The first two quarter marks were about loving God, our duty, loved to God and love for his goodness, his righteousness.

You know, when we think about that crown, and it was interesting when I was reading about the different Greek games, we think about the olive branch crown, right? And that was the Olympic games. Apparently each game in these four different cities had different, you know, it was either pine or they had different types of crowns. But all of them were natural crowns that they received, right? And that's what they were running for.

There's another important aspect about a race, and it corresponds to the Christian race in second Timothy 2. 5, it says an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. So if you were going to run the race and you wanted to win that race, you had to abide by the rules. So are there rules in our Christian race? Sure.

Well, to enter the race it requires a full consecration, a full dedication to God and doing his will. From Romans 12:1, right. Laying our life down as a living sacrifice.

So that's just to enter the race, right? That's the opportunity. So when we're talking about this race course, this is geared toward those that have consecrated their life to serving God. Brother Rick mentioned this yesterday. Jesus gives some conditions on running the race.

Self denial, right? Denying what our fleshly interests are. Cross bearing, being willing to undergo persecution even to the point of death, and then following Jesus directions, his commandments. If we read through the Gospels, there's a lot of things we need to be doing.

So those are all part of the rules, and then Hebrews 12:1, it talks about laying aside every weight in sin. Well, we all come with some type of baggage into this race. We're all sinful, we've all fallen short. So part of our work is laying all that aside and saying, just as it says in First John 3:3, One who purifies himself.

That's part of our work during this race course. So those are some of the rules to the race. Let's move on to verse 25. Every athlete exercises self control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath.

But we an imperishable first. Let's talk about that self control. Proverbs 25:28. A man without self control is like a city broken into and left without walls. Think of an unwallled city or a city, their walls

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have been demolished, right?

What's constraining anybody from coming in and taking advantage of the citizens? What's stopping the citizens from going out and doing whatever they want? So the same thing with ourselves, right? We have to have that self control around us. We have to be able to put away the desires of the flesh.

We have to be able to withstand distractions from the outside.

Well, the same thing for a runner, right? If you're like, hey, I really want to run the 400 meter, I want to get a lot faster, and you're like, but I got to practice today. I got to do speed training. I don't really want to do it.

I think I'm just going to sit at home. Well, you could do that, but you've lost the self control battle. That day, right. So the self control is essential, and we know it's one of the fruit of the Spirit, it's one of the graces of the Spirit.

So we know we have to have this as one of the characteristics of our race. Let's talk about some more about that crown. So we talked about those different wreaths that the winners would receive. Well now we're comparing that with an imperishable crown. 2nd Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who loved his appearing in 1st Peter 5:4 and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

So what happens when you save some branches or some leaves? They start to dry out, become brittle. Eventually they'll just disintegrate. Paul's giving this as the comparison to a crown that's laid up for him, a crown of righteousness, that its glory will not fade. Some other supporting verses, 1st Peter 1:4 it's an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven.

For you it's a heavenly reward. 2nd Peter 1:4 2 Peter 1:4 he has granted to us his precious and great promises so that through them he, you may become partakers of the divine nature. It's not just a heavenly reward, it is the reward of the divine nature. I think this was discussed yesterday as well from the platform. Think about in the race course.

Why do you have to run the race to receive the crown? This prize?

God is inviting each one that's on this race course to something that's only being offered now. I think Brother Rick was talking about this as well. That's why I was smiling yesterday when Brother Rick was talking. I was like, well Brother Rick, you got a lot of the verses I got.

It's a one time opportunity. It hasn't been available in all the ages past, all those centuries past before Christ, and it's not going to be an opportunity into the future in the kingdom. The opportunity is now and it's for the divine nature. I don't think we really can understand at all what that means.

But when we see the love, the mercy, the power of our Heavenly Father, he's saying, here's an invitation to come up higher.

He has to be sure that we are going to be faithful, obedient, loving, and being able to put on the character of his son.

So the race course is going to have to prove that out in each one of us.

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Verse 26. So I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one. Beating the air. I had a little hard time with this verse because when you go out to run, I don't know how many times I go out and run aimlessly.

Like, I'm kind of just like, you know, it's okay. I'm just out here, and so that was hard to meet. Beating the air, right? Think of a boxer doing shadow boxing, right?

And they really don't have an opponent in front of them, and so it's like, almost like, what are they doing it right before the match? Like, wasting a little bit more of extra energy that they needed to throw the punches with, to show off to the other guy. Like, okay, that makes. So what's Paul saying?

Run with purpose, and okay, maybe I could equate it to, like, I showed up in a city somewhere and I'm just like, I'm just going to go out for a jog. I don't know really where I'm going. I don't know how long I'm going to go. That's kind of an aimless run.

I'm kind of like, I got to a corner. Which way should I go? I'll go this way. I'll go right. Paul's saying, don't do that.

Have focus. Have a concept of where you're going and stay focused on that goal.

And this is where Philippians 3, 13 and 14 come into play again. But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. There's a brother, when he gave a talk on this section of Philippians, said Paul did really well at putting first things first and everything else after in their proper order. Paul was so focused on doing that one thing which was running his race. He was so focused on the goal.

And it's important. The goal is different than the prize. The goal is putting on the Christlike character, putting on love, reaching all four quarter marks of love. That's the goal. The prize is what results because of reaching that goal.

So we're not just running just solely for a prize. No, we're running to put on Christ's character.

Final verse by discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified.

This is probably the part that was the most sobering to me. Discipline, and we talked. I think Brother Homer brought up from Hebrews 12 yesterday, I think you or somebody was citing from Hebrews 12 yesterday. So we know that as sons and daughters that we're going to be disciplined.

And that's not a bad thing, it's a good thing. It means the heavenly Father is working with us. It means he loves us. So there's going to be discipline that goes along this race course, and when he's talking about my body, Brother Russell is talking about saying, that's my flesh.

It's our earthly desires. We're going to have to put that away. There's a lot of verses that talk about it. There's a number of them up here. Just a couple real quick.

In Colossians 3, 5, we have to put to death what is earthly in you. Romans 8:13. Put to death the deeds of the body. We have to put those things behind.

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That's part of the work.

We got to do that lest I be disqualified, and this one I looked at and I said, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified. You know, this is the Apostle Paul saying this, and if he's concerned about being disqualified, I gotta get very concerned about being disqualified, right? Because I look at.

It doesn't matter that I'm standing up here sharing a discourse today. The point isn't standing up here and speaking to brethren.

The point is all the work we've got to do, the transformation work internally. That's the point.

2nd Corinthians 13:5. Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail to meet the test. Do we set some time aside during the year that we examine ourselves?

I know memorial is usually a time. There's some times I like. I like general convention because for me, that's where I had my immersion. So it's always a good time to. For me to reset, reflect on my walk.

The New Year. We have a watch night service in Orlando every year. So it sort of allows me to look back, how did the year go? What am I going to be doing in the new year spiritually? Do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?

I think that's talking about that transformation inside of us.

So we've got to. It's looking at, how are we doing on our character?

Luke 9:25. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? So if we're looking for praise, riches, glory, power, all the things that the earthly things that can provide if that's our focus, I think the scripture is saying we're going to lose.

We're not going to make the goal at the end of the race course.

Okay. That, to me, was the scriptural study of running the race. That's a lot of what. When I went through that, I was like, wow, there is a lot there. There's a lot that I need to put into work.

Brother Jay's got a lot to work on. But I think there's some other, really, for me, when I'm running, I'm like, oh, there's some other pictures, I think, in running, and so I'm going to share those briefly as we go. Let me do a little. Okay.

First one, pacing.

Both of my boys run cross country now, and it's fun to watch young runners go out there and race, and I have. I get all excited and I'm like, go, go, go. You know, it's really a positive atmosphere. I would encourage parents, if they have the opportunity, to have their children run cross country.

I remember I did in high school as a really upbuilding team, and it was in the boys. Same with them. It's a lot of encouragement that goes along. People are just building each other up. But you get young runners out there and they're excited, they're ready, the gun goes off, and boom, they're out there and, wow, they're hauling.

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I don't know if they can keep up that pace the whole race, and sure enough, especially early in the season, it's like you get. You start. You look at halfway through the race, and, oh, someone was starting to walk. Dragging a little bit out there.

Okay, they're not running as fast. Pacing is important when we're running, especially when we're running for a goal, and I thought, well, you know, we know that from running. That's a natural earthly thing. Is that really the case in the scriptures?

And Solomon talks about it in ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes 9:11, he says this, and I had a little challenge with this again. I saw that under the sun, the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge. But time and chance happened to them all the races into the swift. What are you talking about, Solomon?

I mean, we watch it all the time. The race, whoever wins is who's the fastest? What's Solomon talking about? And so when we looked at the context of Ecclesiastes 9, we realized, you know, this is at the end of Solomon's life, and I think he witnessed and saw a lot of things in his own life and in others.

And he certainly saw that, yeah, the swiftest don't always win the race. They might not even complete it. Just because you're strong doesn't guarantee that you're going to win the battle.

Just because you're wise doesn't put food on the table. Just because you're smart doesn't mean you're making millions of dollars. When I step back a little bit and I say, yeah, I've started to witness some of those things in life as well.

And when he says, but time and chance happen to them all, I'm kind of, I think it's really saying it's all under the Lord's direction. There's nothing that any one of us can force to happen, especially in our consecrated life, that's not under the Heavenly Father's direction.

But there's others. Other scriptural examples of this idea of pacing. Psalm 147, 10:11 his delight is not in the strength of a horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man. But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope, in his steadfast love. So it's not about the self reliance and our own strength.

It's about those who reverence. Fear is the reverence of the Lord and who have hope in his love. There's a couple of other examples. There's Asahel in 2nd Samuel 2:18. I'm not going to get into his example for time, but Ahima is just real quick in 2nd Samuel 18:23.

This is the battle, this is the culmination of the battle between Absalom and David, and you know, Absalom rebelled. David expressly said in this battle, he said, don't kill my son. Absalom and his generals go out and what does Joab do? Absalom gets stuck in the tree riding his donkeys hanging there.

And Absalom or Absalom's hanging there, Joab says, kill him, and they killed him. They made sure he was dead and buried, and Job's getting ready to send a man back to King David with the news, a kushite runner and says, go, run back until King David, and Ahimaaz was like stood up, said, I'm fast, I would like to go.

And Job said, you know, today's not the day. So he's about to send the rain. Ahimaaz, no, no, send me, and again Job's like, no, this is, you know, you're going to have another day. You'll have

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another day.

It'll work out. Ahima's like, no, I want to go. Let me follow after him.

Yeah, I could just sort of see Joab. Joab was a wily political operative, is sort of how I view Joab. He said, all right, I warned you, go for it, and the first runner takes off and Ahimaaz takes a different path and he gets there the fastest. He shows up and he says, king David, you had a great victory.

And David's first concern is, what about Absalom? And Nahimas is like, well, there was a lot going on. He doesn't really come out and say anything, and finally the next runner comes and says, king David, you've had a great victory. He said, what about Absalom?

And gives him the news that he died, and he was so heartbroken, right? He goes up into the tower of the gate and he's reflecting on that. Was there any glory for Ahimaaz that day?

So do we rely on our own strength? Can we sometimes run ahead of the Lord, his will, his plans? Don't worry, I got this. Let me run. Let me run and be the first out there.

Right? So that's. I think those are maybe some lessons in pacing. There's one other that I sometimes hear told to myself, and I'm not sure that I might put aside question mark at the end of this because I sometimes hear, let's be burnt up versus burnt out. So let's be burnt up in his service, in the Lord's service.

But if we run so fast and so hard at the beginning of our race that we can't finish it, we could get burnt out as well. I'd love some fellowship on that because that's probably what I struggle with anyway. So I'd love to hear the brethren's viewpoint on that. Another lesson in training I'm just giving you a picture of this, was training for a half marathon, just one of the weeks. You can see there's different things, days of rest.

There's a day where some mileage is done. There's days where there's tempo intervals where you're running a fast pace. There's days where you're doing a long run to get the endurance. So when we're training, when we're run for running, it takes different types of training that we need to accomplish the goal that we want to achieve. I think the same thing in our spiritual life.

2nd Timothy 2:15. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth. How should we know what we. Oh, how do we know what we should do if we haven't studied the word of God?

But once we've studied it, we got to put it into practice, and that's what James 1:22 is saying. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers, only deluding your own selves. So that can be a challenge for me because I studied all of this, and I look at, how's the character doing? How's the life doing?

Am I following through on that? Oh, I got to be the doer of the word. I think we all know this, right? It's the doing of it.

Thoughtful response versus reacting.

James 1:19. Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

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How often do we take. Do we, you know, our interactions with each other at work, with family, with friends, with the world, the person that cuts us off while we're driving? It's practice every time. It's training to have the right spiritual response, and it's hard because initially we have a reaction, right?

Oh, I want to lay on that horn. Oh, I want to think something not so nice about that driver.

I had one at work. I had to say, tell somebody, and I don't. This is. I give myself only a partial. Like, this was a 50% grade on it because I was getting really worked up, and I told them I had to.

I just end up saying, I'm getting really worked up, and I'm gonna have to take a breath and take a minute. Just give me. Just give me a second. I did. I took a second.

I just took a deep breath. I said, okay, let's talk about whatever the issue is that's going on now. I think better would have been I'd already done that. I could hear it, listen to it, process it, and say, just, okay, let's move on with the thing. But I had to take a moment because my initial reaction was, oh, you're driving me nuts with what you decided to do.

So that's part of our training, right? We get these opportunities almost daily.

Waiting on the Lord. Psalm 27:14. Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.

Patience, perseverance, waiting for direction. That can be hard because we kind of want to sometimes just go forward or like, I'm positive I need to make this turn up here. Are we listening for what the Lord is telling us?

Endurance, another important aspect of Especially long distance running is Hebrews 12:1, let us run with endurance, the race that is set before us. Now, when we look at the Scriptures, we know that we must endure a number of different things. We must endure suffering, we must endure temptation, we must endure persecution. Even says in Hebrews 12:7, we must endure discipline. It's hard to go through it when we have to go through it.

It's not a joyful experience at the time. It produces wonderful fruit afterwards, you know, in a runner, they have to endure suffering. So if you're out running, running a race, oh, my legs are getting tired, breathing's not doing so well right now, but I got to keep going. There's a temptation to stop. We're running this half marathon that we ran this last year.

I really wanted to stop and walk really, really bad, and there was a young runner I had in my mind that he has some physical challenge running that makes it painful for him to run. When I ask him, how is it painful? Is it just painful at the end of the race? He's like, no, it's painful every step.

I was like, wow, that puts into perspective because the first half of my race felt pretty good. It's just the second half that's really rough right now, and I just kept that in mind as, like, he doesn't walk. I'm not going to walk. I'm going to try my hardest not to walk either.

And I just kept putting that in mind. Do we have examples, scriptural examples like that, right. That we can put our mind on to say, I'm not going to slow down or I'm going to keep going. I'm not going to stop.

So I think we have some pictures from this idea of endurance and running the race, that temptation to slow down, to stop, to pull over to the side.

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And there's a promise for us in 2 Timothy 2, 11-12, that if we endure, we will also reign with him. So in our race course, that's the promise. If we endure, we will reign with him.

Unexpected challenges.

You know, sometimes when we're training, we can run into different challenges. Maybe it starts raining, maybe we get a head cold the week before a big race. All of a sudden, these are unexpected to us. But when I think about this, maybe in our race, in our Christian walk, we can think of challenges being trials, and when I used the word unexpected at first, the more I thought about it, I said, you know, they may look unexpected at the time for us, but they are from our Heavenly Father and are custom made to help refine our character first Peter 4:12.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. So maybe we should call this expected trials.

We have this promise in Romans 8:28, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. Everything's under God's guidance in our walk.

It might feel unexpected, but it's for our best outcome that the trial of your faith being much more precious than. More precious than of gold. So our trials are so precious, they're worth more than gold.

And we talked about this already in James 1:12 remaining steadfast. The opportunity is to receive the crown of life.

And I was thinking, there's a story of a gentleman. I'm not sure if you remember this. This gentleman on the left is Derek Redmond, and that's his father, Jim Redmond. This is a picture of them at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

Derek Redmond went out. He had been having all types of injury issues in the years leading up. He'd finally gotten in the right. He felt really good in the right sh for running in the Olympics. He was in the 400 meter semifinal heat.

And they start, he's off and tears a muscle in his thigh and just goes down. Can you imagine? Right? Think of all the Olympians that have been working all years to make this race, to just get to them, the final race, to then run their best race.

His father was watching. Jim Redmond was at the top of the stadium, and he saw his son fall, and he saw his son get up and proceed to start hobbling down the track, intent on finishing his race. Jim Redmond, the father, proceeded from the top of the stadium to make it all the way down, get to the track, get through probably a half a dozen security folks run onto the track, run up to his son and put his arm around him to hold him up, and I was reading some of the stories about this. His son didn't even know who it was at first.

And he's holding him, and his father talks to him, and he recognizes it because of his father's voice, and he puts his arm around his father, and at one point he just leans his face onto his father's shoulder and starts weeping, and his father, actually, in the story, in real life, he was encouraging him, you don't have to do this, and Derek was, no, I want to finish this race, and so his father, with his arm over his father, walked with him toward the finish line, help carrying him along the way until the last few meters and he let him go.

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And Derek crossed the finish line.

We have unexpected trials. They might feel unexpected. We know from the scriptures intellectually that they're going to happen. Our Heavenly Father is there with us through every single one. He's there to hold us up, to carry us through.

He will do his part to make sure that we are faithful until the end.

Burden bearing, it's a similar concept, but something that we can do. These are all pictures of people in the Boston Marathon. We were told in Galatians 6:2 to carry each other's burdens and in this way fulfill the law of Christ. So this one's a personal witness. I had.

I was in college and I was down in Boston and watching the end of the race, and here are all these people just speeding through it faster than I could ever run, and they're at the end of 26 miles and I'm just. I'm amazed. Right here you have their fastest runners coming through.

And, and then those that aren't the professional ones and they're still like, who has this incredible genetics and will and discipline to get to this point, and there's a man that falls down, There's a man running next to him and takes us a few paces past, and these are still, if you're runner, like, this is still, I think under three hours. So this is very fast paced.

This is like you've probably been working. Boston is a huge marathon to run. This is something you probably been working for all year long. You probably really focused on your time. This man falls down and the other man runs past him, stops, turns around, comes back, picks the man up, and they walk together to the end of the race.

There's pictures. I just grabbed these from online, right. It happens basically all on multiple races out there is this picture of others helping each other. We can help our brethren during the race course. We're not running the race alone.

Not only is God with us, not only is our Lord Jesus helping support us, but we have each other here to help carry the burden. We can't run the race for our brethren, but we can help our brethren run their race coming up short. So this is probably originally why it was thought about this talk to begin with, and I think there's a couple of pictures here. One not finishing the race if we by quitting or walking away.

And I have to warn this is exactly what we cannot and should not and should never do. Because I think the picture in that is potentially walking away from the Lord, and ultimately if we fulfill that. If we go down that path, whether it's denying the Heavenly Father, denying Jesus, or giving over completely to a sinful life where the sin is no longer separated from the sinner. I believe that second death is what occurs.

Complete destruction.

Okay, there's that part of it. What about missing you're a runner and you set out a goal or a time.

So, and this came into my mind because I ran this last year, had a 5k race. I had set a goal and I missed it by 10 seconds.

I was so frustrated and I thought, 10 seconds, that's three seconds a mile. I just had to run faster. Three seconds each mile, and I thought about it. I started thinking about, is there a spiritual lesson

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here?

I think I thought about it and said I would be so sorrowful if I got to the end of my walk.

And I was 10 seconds short. Our loving Heavenly Father has provided grace and an opportunity. It's not the opportunity we're running for, but it is a class of mercy, and that's for the great company. But none of us signed up to run for it.

I think when I thought about that, I just thought about the level of disappointment I would have and the sorrow I'd have in myself, and what led me to go back and think about studying. Say, let me look into this, and I put this picture up here, and it's really unfair to Hailey Carruthers who ran this race, because I couldn't actually find a lot of pictures of people falling short of the race at the end of the race.

And it looks like she is here, but this is what happened.

This is the London Marathon 2019.

She ran, she ran really fast. She's an elite female runner, actually the only elite female runner that was also holding down a full time job.

She said in an interview afterwards, we started off a lot faster than I should have started off with, and we ran, and the second half of the race, it was painful, and by the end, the last thing I remember was just trying to count steps and I collapsed. I kind of lost sight in one eye.

And then she crawled to the end of the race. She finished with a personal best by three minutes.

So sometimes we can feel like we're coming up short.

We have to rely on the grace of our Heavenly Father. We have to rely on his help and his strength to see us through. But we have to finish the race.

My second one that I had a challenge with was a half marathon. Again, I missed the goal. I had a time in mind and missed it. I was telling Brother Bob Goodman back home. We were hiking along later on, I just sharing my frustration.

He looked at me, he said, but you finished the race. That's the important thing, Brethren. Let's focus on running our best race. We're not running a competition with each other. We're only running against really ourselves, against the challenges of the adversary, the world.

But let's take Paul's advice to apply self control, discipline and focus in our consecrated lives. So let us run the race, brethren, in such a way that you and I may obtain the price. May the Lord add his blessing.