

## The Christian Race

There are a number of places in the Bible where our spiritual walk is likened to a race, an analogy from which we can draw several lessons.

Heb. 12:1-2 – “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

(This comparison is not to cars, motorcycles, belt sanders, or even horses, but to foot races.)

### How is the Christian life like a race?

1. We are wanting to complete the race, and we want to win.
2. Winning the race requires desire, discipline, training, and endurance.
3. We need to lay aside every weight, every hindrance.
4. There is a judge to make sure we hold to the course and to the rules.
5. There are spectators.
6. There is a prize to the winner.

### How does the Christian life differ from normal foot races?

1. We are not competing against other people.
2. We do not know where or when the finish line is.

### What observations can we make from this analogy?

1. We are not competing against other people, but against time, temptations, personal weakness, and opposition. This does not require physical, or even mental greatness, but dogged persistence in pursuing God and a life of holiness and service to him. Since this is the case, we all can win the race - our race.
2. Our overall race is a lifelong pursuit of God, in which the finish line is either death or the return of Christ. But there are “little”, or lesser races we run, which are the trials of our faith in this life that can be won or lost. It may be a trial concerning a job, a marriage, a difficult person, or a matter of obedience.
3. In most of these races, we do not know where the finish line is, or when.

Do you remember those tests and quizzes in school, where you were frantically trying to get everything done before hearing the teacher say “Time’s up!”? In the trials of faith, we often have no idea that the finish line is even close. This was the case in the recent death of our son Jordan. We had no idea the previous day that this particular trial of life was about to end, for good or bad, ready or not. The point to be learned is that we need to live ready, to be watchful, to be faithful without fainting, because we never know when we will hear those words, “your time is up.”

4. This race is not a sprint, but a long-distance race.

Some people are strong for awhile, and can rise to the challenge as long as they know it will be over soon, but our race requires long enduring. We need to pace ourselves so we don’t wear our selves out before the race is done, but we also cannot afford to lag around, just jogging. Most of us would be much more studious, much more faithful, much more loving if we knew our time was about up, but God doesn’t give us that knowledge. He wants us to be faithful to the end, as in the parables of the talents, or the householder not aware that his house was about to be burgled, or the rich man that was so concerned about building bigger barns that he didn’t realize that his time was up.

5. To win a race requires discipline and training.

1 Cor. 9:24-27 – “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore run, not as uncertainly;

so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. “

Unlike earthly races, where we train and prepare for a long time leading up to a race, in this race our training is a part of the race. We are in the race as soon as we are born again, and do not stop until the finish. Every triumph is for our encouragement, and every fall is a lesson. The race is not won by a single win or loss, but by getting up and proceeding. We are strengthened as we run.

“If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same  
...  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run” (from “If-“, by Rudyard Kipling)

6. We need to lay aside every weight.

Heb. 12:1-2 – “... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us ...”

Gal. 5:7 – “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?”

This weight can be sin, or an unequal yoke, an undisciplined life, or erroneous teaching.

7. As in a race, the runners are inspired by the spectators, we also have “spectators” – not only those who actually live with us, but also the example and testimony of all those who have gone faithfully before us, as in Heb. 11. This is not to say that they are actually watching us from heaven, but that their lives are like a cloud of witnesses, testifying to us that we too can hold out to the end and be faithful unto death. (Heb. 12:1-2)

8. Not every one is running the same race.

2 Tim. 4:6-7 – “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: “

Notice that Paul had just about finished his course. Your race is not the same as others. There are different lengths, different obstacles, different things to overcome. Peter asked Jesus (Jn. 21:21-22) about John – “Lord, and what shall this man do?”. Jesus said “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.”

9. There is a reward, the crown of righteousness, which awaits us.

2 Tim. 4:8 – “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Some people have no love of, or desire for, righteousness, and so this is no motivation to them. Their lives are in this world, but ours are in the next. This race and crown will be to those who are truly vexed by sin and determined to overcome it through the trials and temptations of life, and so will in the next, be crowned.

Jas. 1:12 – “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [trial], for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

Isa 40:(28-31) – “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”