

The Christian's Race
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Introduction: The Christian's hope is a powerful incentive for living.

- A. We hear news of the death of a Christian that has impacted many lives.
 - 1. Our reaction is one of loss and one of great joy.
 - 2. In Paul's last letter he wrote of crossing the finish line. **(2 Tim 4:6-8)**
 - 3. For those that remained, the finish stood as an inspiration.
- B. When a godly woman, Dorcus, died. There was joy and sorrow.
(Acts 9:36-40)
 - 1. All she wanted to do was serve others.
 - 2. Dorcus and Paul were happy to be "spent" for others. **(Phil 1:21-24)**

I. The Christian's race begins in death

- A. The entry fee for this race is death! **(Gal 6:14)**
 - 1. What would motivate anyone to freely die?
 - 2. Here is where the power of the gospel is seen.
- B. Our great shepherd showed us the way by His freely giving Himself to death.
 - 1. He plainly spoke of such a sacrifice. **(Mt 20:27-28)**
 - 2. This "ransom" was the only way sinful men could be reconciled to God.
 - 3. Did Jesus die by accident? Never! Look as His willing surrender to the forces that sought to arrest him. **(Jn 18:4-9)**
 - 4. Why did Jesus do this? Consider the alternative for you and me!
- C. We die to self because we were already dead before God. **(Eph 2:1-4)**
 - 1. Do you remember the day you died? **(Rom 6:3-4)**
 - 2. What kind of race does a dead person run?

II. The Christian's race is on a specific course

- A. Every race has a course and has rules. **(2 Tim 2:5; 1 Cor 9:24)**
 - 1. I can not run in the neighborhood and then expect the IOC to give me a medal!
 - 2. I am told ahead of time the race will be difficult. **(2 Tim 3:10-12)**
 - a. Racing involves great sacrifice and effort.
 - b. Every one must "count the cost" before they begin the race! **(Lk 14:28-30)**
 - 3. If I start God's race, there will be support. **(Jude 24)**
- B. We start God's race when we are baptized into Christ. **(Rom 6:3-4)**
 - 1. This "newness of life" is the Christian's race. It is new because it is from God!
 - 2. There are many running the wrong course. God's reward is not in these races.

III. We must expect to make sacrifices in order to finish

- A. We cannot take this race on and expect to do everything we want.
(Heb 12:1; 1 Cor 9:25-27)
 - 1. We "lay aside every weight" because we want to finish. There is nothing more important! (Ex. Man who started race with raincoat and medicine bag.)

2. What must we give up to become a Christian? (**Lk 14:33**)
- B. The great weight we face is sin. (**Lk 21:34**)
 1. There will be the temptation to run in other races with Satan and his multitude. (**1 Pt 4:1-4; Jude 11**)
 2. Your associates will have much influence on which race you run.
 3. Sin by its very nature is distracting. You cannot have the kind of concentration necessary to finish this race when you practice sin. (Ex. Shoestring, blisters)
 4. There is great power in a good conscience. (**1 Tim 1:5-6, 19; 1 Pt 3:16**)
 5. When our affections are in different places we will never finish the race. (**Mt 13:22; Jas 1:6-8**)
- C. We must never quit. (**Heb 10:35-39**)
 1. There is only one goal, we must finish!
 2. Those who quit suffer the pain of the race and the pain of their own conscience.
- D. We need the wisdom to do those things that will make us regular.
 1. There are many who are like a comet. They burn brightly for a short while and then they are gone. (Ex. The Tortoise and the Hare)
 2. God knows our limits and we must let him “train” us as to what things we should take on and what things we should lay aside. (**Mt 11:28-30**)
 3. In a race you must choose a wise pace! You give your all but with wisdom.

IV. We need to draw on the support of others

- A. There are great examples in the Bible and in our lives we can be encouraged by. (**Heb 12:1; Phil 4:9**)
 1. We naturally do better when there are others who give us encouragement. (Ex. Nathan and Stephen at a race)
 2. Parents can instill by example powerful lessons.
- B. There will be those who seek to discourage us. (**Heb 12:3-4**)
 1. We should not be surprised because Jesus faced these men too.
 2. There also will be those in the church who hinder. (**2 Thess 3:2**)
 3. Who do you concentrate on, the encourager or the harsh critic? The choice is yours! (Ex. I will not come because of the hypocrites! Ex. Putting on blinders)
- C. We each need to encourage others in this great race. (**Heb 10:23-25**)

V. We must concentrate on the finish.

- A. This is given great emphasis in the Bible. (**Heb 12:2**)
 1. When we lose sight of the finish then we will lose courage.
 2. In a serious race runners will look over the course ahead of time.
- B. We need to see others finish the race successfully. (**2 Cor 4:16-18**)
 1. The life of a sacrificing faith is needed to be seen by others.
 2. Do you hear voices in your head of those who have gone before?
- C. What a blessing for a child to see a parent die in faith!

Conclusion: Can you picture the finish line now? (**Rev 21:2-5**)