

# In God's Race (Keswick Convention)

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer emphasizes the importance of expectation, perseverance, and balance in the Christian faith, using the metaphor of running a race to encourage believers in their spiritual journey.*

**Duration:** 43:58

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 9:24, Hebrews 12:1

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that as believers, we are in God's race. He encourages the audience to examine their hearts and be honest about themselves, even if it may be painful. The speaker mentions that sometimes Christians create barriers to avoid facing the truth about themselves, but emphasizes that there can be no gain without pain. The sermon also references the film 'Chariots of Fire' and the story of Eric Little, who later became a missionary. The speaker uses this story to illustrate the determination and perseverance required in the Christian race.

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## Transcript

Well, it's certainly a great challenge to be back again in Keswick. I've just come from Norway and certainly what Arthur Punt has said is true, that you've given very warm welcome. It wasn't this way last time I was here in terms of the weather, but in case you feel hot, even though where I was is much further north, it's hotter up there.

We were in a very large building, it looked like a tent, it was actually a building, and it was very, very, very hot. But you know, all over the world, people are praying for Keswick. Just before that, I was at the OM conference in Belgium, where we had about 900 young people preparing to go out on teams around Europe.

And I know that some of those young people, they came from different parts of the world, for the first time in their life heard about Keswick. And some of them, of course, have already purchased some of the books, the Keswick message books, which I'm sure many of you have from other years. I've been reading those books for the last 20, almost 25 years, and it's been a great influence, one of many powerful influences in my life.

So a lot of people are praying for Keswick, and I just feel and sense that God is going to work in our midst. We don't want to force the hand of God. I was reading the history, whenever I come to Keswick, I read the

history of Keswick.

It really both warms your heart and scares you to death at the same time. And the most exciting part of Keswick history is when the people from the Welsh revival came up here in the year 1905. I won't tell the stories, but it's very, very exciting.

People running through the streets late at night, announcing late night prayer meetings and great discussions going on. Maybe the problem in 1905 was that some feel that people tried to force something that wasn't necessarily in God's timing. And one of the strongest convictions I have in my whole spiritual understanding is that God works in different ways in different people.

And Keswick is so unique, so beautiful. And if you haven't read the history of Keswick, you've missed one of the most exciting bits of Christian history you could ever read. And it's a very humbling and challenging opportunity to be with you, just with a team of speakers, realizing our great confidence is not in what any one man is going to say, whether he's a quiet type of speaker like I always long to be.

And it's a tremendous struggle. As I followed Keswick and as I sat for a week under George Duncan when I was a student at Moody Bible Institute, and as I read Andrew Murray, and then I got into F. B. Meyers, and then into this guy Gordon. Everything with him was quiet.

Quiet talks. And I thought to be spiritual, you had to be quiet. And so I prayed, Lord, just help me be quiet.

Also, people said in England, loudmouth Americans really turn people off. I've been living with that for 23 years since that's when I came here. So I had a prayer and I just prayed, Lord, help me to be quiet.

I kept praying and suddenly I found out that I was saying, oh, God, help me to be quiet. And then I realized that God wasn't deaf, but that somehow I did have to, if I was going to survive in England or anywhere else in the world, I had to accept myself. So whether it's the loud type of speaker or a nice quiet speaker, if you read the Keswick history, some of the chapters put an emphasis on what wonderful voices these men have.

Like the toning of a bell. Mine would be more like the dropping of a bell. And I find it difficult to listen to my own voice.

Someone encouraged me with a note, and I always love to receive notes, I read them all, that not to worry about my voice. It didn't bother him. I don't know whether he was a deaf person, but it's great to be here.

And I have a burden on my heart and I know the different speakers have burdens, but, you know, I think as we say in tennis, the ball is in your court. We can give messages, Bible readings, but you determine what happens here through your prayers. And the word that the Lord put on my heart before I speak was just this one word expectation.

And I want to ask you, do you have a spirit of expectation for Keswick this year? It's incredibly important. And if we don't have it, may God at this early time in the convention give us that spirit of expectation. I was reading an article the other day that said that men and the male temperament, basically they get bored sitting in meetings.

Women, they can handle meetings better than men. I don't necessarily agree with this, just something I read. But it is interesting that women in general attend church meetings far more regularly than men.

And I think it's true that if we're going to see reality in a man, it's not a matter of just getting him in another meeting. It's giving him a job to do, getting him involved. And of course, this is one of the burdens of this convention, that as a result of what we hear and what we receive from the word of God, we will go from here and we'll get involved in God's work, in God's church, in our own church.

And I have a spirit of expectation for these days together. Now, you'd all be disappointed, those who know me, if I didn't at this point push a few books. And we wouldn't want people to be disappointed, especially the chairman.

And so I will push just two books. I've already mentioned the Keswick books, which I hope you're going to get a hold of. You can even order this summer's messages.

And I'm not going to push my own new book, which is just published a few days ago, especially for Keswick, called No Turning Back. I was going to give that to Arthur, but I forgot. But I want to push these two books.

Arthur Matthews, Born for Battle, an OMF book. I guess that's my favorite. Mission Society, together with WECC.

I go back and forth. Of course, BMMF is there in the middle. Born for Battle, and then Dr. Lloyd-Jones' book, Spiritual Depression.

You know, I have reason to believe that before he died, a few years before he died, in a number of areas he came into great balance. He was a bit of an extreme character. People never dreamed that Dr. Lloyd-Jones would come to OM.

We're known as an inter-dominational sort of a Heinz variety organization. Not exactly accused of being hyper-Calvinist. And praise the Lord, before he died, Dr. Lloyd-Jones came to the ship when it was in London.

You know what he preached on? I've listened to the cassette. He preached on the need for balance. Of course, he's in heaven.

He's got perfect balance now. I'm going to speak about that later in the week. The balance in that we need sound doctrine, and yet we need a work of the Holy Spirit.

And I praise God that this, in my feeble study of these hundred and some years of this movement of God, whatever you want to call it, I see that emphasis on balance. And you know, in the history of Keswick, a number of times it started to go a bit extreme. And different men, because there are different kinds of men from different churches involved in this fellowship, they, through the work of the Holy Spirit, brought it back to balance.

Balance is not compromise. Balance is not mixing error and truth. Balance is not lukewarmness.

Balance is that place on the narrow road walking with Jesus. And I hope to get to that later on this week. Turning now back in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12.

I'm using two Bibles, and I'm sure these days, with all the translations, you have at least two or three translations with you. And it's such a wonderful to have a big pulpit. A lot of the meetings with young people today, they don't even give you a pulpit.

They stand out there with a microphone in front of a couple thousand people. And, you know, you're trying to juggle your Bible, especially if you have two different Bibles. It becomes quite a talent show.

But I have a damaged Bible, and we have a way of getting damaged Bibles free. This is a new international version. The only thing wrong with it is that this John 16 to Acts 23 falls out.

But that's true of a lot of Christians. They seem to leave out large chunks when it comes to putting it in practice. But I want to follow both the new international version and my authorized version that I have been using for 29 years since I was converted.

This, to me, is one of the greatest passages in the word of God. We've already had it read. Let me just read the first two verses again.

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 author and the 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. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

I'd like to read the whole thing again, but let's just pray. Father, this is your word. We are not here to hear the words of men.

We thank you, O God, that you use men. We thank you that you have ordained some to proclaim your word and to preach your word. And Lord, you know, I'm a natural coward.

And if anything strong, anything significant is said that really breaks into our hearts and breaks into our minds, we'll have to only give the credit to you, O God. And we pray that all the speakers in Keswick may be hid behind the cross, and that somehow by your grace in these days we would see Jesus. And we would move even through this town of Keswick with our eyes upon Jesus, and yet our feet on the ground, for we are in a race.

Lord, we thank you that you can give us a spirit of expectation. You desire to meet with us in this place. You desire to do a new thing in our lives.

You desire to show us greater victory over sin, Satan, and self. Not only those more obvious sins, but those subtle sins and even other things that hinder us in this great race. Grant us, God, the humility to receive what you have for us, even though it will come in each case from an earthen vessel.

O God, give us discernment. Give us wisdom to discern that which is just part of the earthen vessel getting in the way and that which is a divine message to our own hearts that can be appropriated and put into practice back in our homes or wherever we're from, for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I wonder if you had the privilege of seeing that film, Chariots of Fire. Seldom in my life has a film so moved my heart and moved me to tears and to a recommitment of my life to the Lord Jesus Christ and to run in his race. I'm afraid you're looking at someone who gets rather tempted to give up.

I'm afraid I can't come to you with a great, glorious testimony that because I've appropriated all of these messages that I've been reading for 25 years, I don't get weary and I just soar along on some kind of spiritual concord, combine wings of eagles without discouragement or difficulty. And I do not share with

you from a position of having arrived, I share with you as a fellow struggler, as a fellow learner who wants to, by God's grace, understand more of what the apostle is saying in this great chapter in his word. Obviously, these believers that he was writing to were growing weary.

Understanding in its context, it seems that they were going through hard times. They were being persecuted because they were Jewish believers. They had come from Judaism to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you can imagine the explosion that that caused in those days, even today, because we are committed to winning Jews for Christ in our work in Israel and other parts of the world. And I will tell you, we've had newspaper articles against us. When a Jew really comes out and out for Jesus Christ, you can be sure the road may not be an easy road, even more so today when a Muslim comes to Christ.

Oh, how I would love to talk to you about the challenge of the Muslim world. But that's not our theme for this morning. But I can tell you this, without this kind of reality, those of us committed to the Muslim world, we're finished.

I look out here and see a man who's just come back from a particular Middle East country where it's almost impossible to witness. I won't mention his name or the country for security risks, but I'm sure that he finds this chapter very, very important. We are in a race.

You remember in the film, Chariots of Fire, when Eric Little, by the way, later went to be a missionary. I'm trying to find out whether Eric Little ever went to Keswick. If you know that, don't shout it out now.

Just see me quietly after the meeting. They made a new film about what happened to him after he won the Olympics and then went to China and he died in a prison camp. And in one of the races, of course, this film was esteemed even highly, even though it was sort of a Christian story.

It won the Academy Awards, won Oscars because it was such a well done film. And in one of the sequences, they use slow motion, they use beautiful camera work. He fell in one of the races.

Do you remember that? And then with a beautiful camera work, he got back up off the track, back into the race and giving every inch it was written across his face. You could feel it if you if you run as I do. You could just feel it.

You could start to feel the pain as you're watching the film. And he won that race. And the word of God teaches that as believers, we are in God's race.

We are in God's race. And I think God wants us to examine our hearts this morning. And I think we need to consider openly and honestly, that's not always easy.

I believe sometimes as Christians, we become dishonest. We've had to survive with ourselves for so long. We can no longer handle the truth about ourselves.

And psychologically, we create barriers so that the truth doesn't get in too far because it would create too much pain. But as one man of God once said, there'll be no gain without pain. And as Billy Graham once said, the greatest obstacle to our sanctification is our unwillingness to really face ourselves as we really are.

And that speaks to me. And I can't come to Keswick without heart searching. I can't come and be involved here even in listening without some repentance and without some heart searching.

And I know this is going to be a hard week for me in some ways. But I know God will bless. Because whom the Lord loveth, he chastened.

And that's what this chapter is about. And it goes into quite detail. I haven't got time to expand the whole chapter.

You know the chapter well. But it goes into considerable detail about this chastening, about this correction. This is not some kind of whip.

And there are some people who are so deep in spiritual schizophrenia that when they hear a strong message, they allow it to just be a whip and they allow themselves to go through some kind of evangelical purgatory. But that will never change your life. Going out of the tent, just feeling more guilty and going through a couple of days of overemphasis on introspection.

That's not God's plan. That's a human mechanism, a form of evangelical purgatory. And it frightens me when I counsel and I've counseled many people who are trapped in that.

And it takes a lot of wisdom and it takes understanding from the Word of God to discern between false guilt and true guilt, to discern between the voice of the Lord, which is linked with the Word of God and voices from past memories, from a hypersensitive conscience. Some people say, well, can't we always trust our conscience? Some may disagree, but I say absolutely no. If you are a mature believer who has been grounded in the Word of God over many years, who knows the reality of the crucified life and has a lot of discernment and a lot of wisdom.

Then, of course, your conscience controlled by God's Word, controlled by the Holy Spirit is an important guide. But here's the final guide. The Word of God and a lot of young people who have been reared in over strict homes are hypersensitive and their conscience brings them into continual bondage.

Many of the young people who come on OM from strong, strict homes, sometimes even non-Christian homes, they are so riddled with damaged emotions. And if you think as one writer, I read in a recent article in a Christian magazine that most of these young people have some kind of superiority complex, then I don't think you're involved with young people today. So many of them do have inferiority.

There are exceptions. And we know that pride can work through the inferiority complex as well as the superiority complex. And we know that pride often brings self-pity, such a strong, difficult emotion to handle.

Yes, we are all in this race. And when we think about this race, as we examine the Scriptures and as we look at other Scriptures, we realize it is intensive. Running is intensive.

I've been running for about 20 years. I'm not in any kind of races. I just do it to survive.

You know, I have too much energy. That energy, sometimes in my type of temperament, I'm sure you don't know about these things, converts into hostility. And throughout the day with all the OM leaders, I keep quite calm.

But when I get home with my wife, she has to absorb the hostility. I wonder if you men have ever released some of your pent-up hostility, trying to be so sanctified, a dignified Christian leader, a wonderful spirit-controlled counselor, pastor. But your wife gets it.

You don't have the problem. OK, I don't want to project my problems on you. You can just pray harder for me.

No, pray for my wife. And I found that if I run a couple of miles each day and do some push-ups, I did 11 push-ups just before the meeting, just trying to get rid of some of it, because I didn't want to be too hard on you in the first meeting. It really works.

It really works. But that, of course, is not what Paul is talking about in Hebrews. Bodily exercise profits a little, and I'm not even sure that's a correct exposition.

But I know enough about running, the maximum I usually go is about eight miles, to know that all the way, at least for me, it's hard. And you feel it. And sometimes you feel that you're going to collapse.

Now, it's a big thing now to run these marathons. That's hit London. All ages.

You know, I don't want to push jogging, because that's not part of the Keswick ministry as far as I know. But it's amazing to see some of these people, 65 years of age, on a 28-mile marathon. You know, I like that as a spiritual reminder that there's no retirement program.

This doesn't look like a young people's meeting from where I am. Of course, my sight may be failing. But I just remind you of a dear man of God in Chicago.

His name's Harper. He's 101. Some of you feeling a bit old? 101.

He just had his 100th birthday. One of the things that's kept him going is an exercise program. And in his house, he has a pole, just like this pole here.

And on his 100th birthday, he grabbed onto the pole and he shot his body out completely horizontal with the pole. Have you ever tried that? Some of you have trouble just getting out of bed. And he's been preaching, I think, up until recently.

What a testimony. And you know, I'm so happy that I've arrived in these middle years. Really.

Some of you, are you going through the midlife crisis? A lot of the Americans are talking about this. I've been over here 22 years now, so I don't understand the Americans very well. But they're talking a lot about midlife crisis.

And I picked up this book on midlife crisis and I felt great till I started reading that thing. I believe these middle years, and some of you look like you may be there. You know, the hair begins to fall out, new wrinkles.

Sometimes our wives encourage us. I've been away from my wife for 10 days. I was really feeling terrific this morning.

I came overnight on the train, you know, these wonderful trains to Carlisle. And I was feeling great this morning. My wife, one of the first things she said to me, you look terrible.

Is that the way your wife encourages you? Maybe you better send me a list of prayer requests. And lo and behold, I'm in the home of Peter Maiden, my boss, British director of OM, lives in Carlisle. He's a Cumbria man.

And he said, yeah, you do look terrible. I thought I'm going home. But you know, as we get in these middle years, I just had my birthday, more and more wrinkles, hair falling out.

The outward man perisheth. But I want to tell you something that I've known every day for 29 years. That's not an exaggeration.

The inward man is renewed every day. And when you're in God's race, there is a sense in which God is doing the running. It's not a matter whether you're young.

It's not a matter of whether you're middle age or old, whether you can put in 15 hours a day or seven hours a day. My beloved brother, Jonathan McCroskey, missionary, child, son of missionaries, the OM leader of Europe up to a little over a year ago was one of the most active on the move. His legs were never still persons that OM has ever had.

He was in a motor accident a year ago and is now paraplegic like Johnny. I was just with him for a week. He's gone off on a preaching tour of the United States with his new little wheelchair.

And I can tell you his outward man has perished from here down. It's dead. It's gone.

It's like carrying around a corpse. But I have seen through the struggles he has faced one year in hospital, the inward man being renewed day by day. And you may be feeling weary.

You may be feeling that old age is setting in. You may be feeling that somehow you're being set aside. They've asked you not to be superintendent of the Sunday school now that you're 75 years of age or you've been asked to step down from leadership in the youth fellowship since you've become 60.

And you may feel that somehow you're being set aside and you're feeling a little bit weak. Don't worry about it too much because worry only adds to the problem and will bring on premature aging as quick as anything. Let that inward man be renewed day by day.

That's why we've come to Keswick. To seek the renewing of the inward man and what Christian can stand amongst us anywhere in the world and say he never needs renewal. He never needs this kind of meeting.

He never needs a little extra dose of the Word of God. He never needs to sit down and listen to other men who have run in the race well. Yes, I've heard criticism.

Oh, Keswick, it's a bit conservative, isn't it? You know, we say it down in London, you know, a bit conservative, isn't it? Something like that. I've been trying to learn English for 23 years. I praise God that there are a few conservative things left in this country that I think at times religiously is going bananas.

You maybe don't know what I mean by that. We'll cover that later in the week. But it seems to me the devil has two strategies.

First, he tries to keep you from commitment, from the Lordship of Christ, from full surrender, different passages explained in different ways, deeper reality with God, knowing God, walking with Jesus, call it whatever you want, just get it. And when you start to move in that kind of a lifestyle, it seems that the enemy strategy changes and his next strategy is to get you into extremes. And I fear that 20 years ago, especially among the youth, we had strategy number one when I came to this country.

Lack of people willing to commit their lives, lack of people who knew about the power and the reality of the Holy Spirit. And I fear, though, that battle still goes on. The devil always keeps many strategies going at once.

I fear today in Britain, the enemy has changed his strategy and now he's getting and trying to do everything to get some of the most zealous and wonderful people into extremism, into cul-de-sacs. You can't imagine how dumb I was when I first arrived here in 1962. I came from Spain.

I had learned Spanish. I came here in a mysterious way. And I remember looking at this street, cul-de-sacs street.

And in town after town, I saw the same street. I thought, well, I knew the British were conservative and repeat things a lot. And I only found out finally when I went down one of those streets, what that sign means at the end of the street.

Why we use this French terminology around this country, I've not figured out yet. Dead end, we say in American lingo, dead end street. And I fear that there's a subtle strategy going on in our churches, in our youth fellowships, in our Christian unions to get young people down a cul-de-sac.

The cul-de-sac of emotionalism, the cul-de-sac of total answerism, the cul-de-sac of local churchism, the cul-de-sac of evangelical pacifism. Speaking emotionally, the cul-de-sac, well, I won't get into that. But I think that when we're running the race, it's very basic, very basic that we ought to stay on the track.

What do you think? That's pretty basic. Not run off into the grandstands during the race, not run over and see if there's a circus on the other side of town that we can enjoy. We ought to stay on the track.

And oh my, just reading these verses, we're running this race and we're given the command in verse 2 to look on to Jesus. Now that's the key. That's nothing to you.

That's nothing special, isn't it? You know, I did not want to have another book, another George Verwer book. I am not a writer. I'm a distributor.

I just love to distribute other people's books. Alan Redpath books, George Duncan books. There's about 1,000 books I got pretty excited about over the 25 years.

When I try to keep it down to 100, I'll be glad to send you the list. And I don't believe I'm a writer. And Hodder and Stodden who published this book, this editor, Tony Collins, who put it together for my tapes, and then I rewrote some of it.

He said they want another book by George Verwer. I said, why? And they said, so many of the books are written for students. So many of the books, they didn't mean to put it that way, are written for people with intelligence.

And we need somebody who'll write a book for people. I said, don't say it. Don't say it.

Then he backed up a little bit. He said, you know, ordinary people. I said, okay, that sounds better.

You know, I'm an ordinary person. And the message of my life is that God can use ordinary people. If God could use for 29 years a weak, failing, needy sinner, as he has been able a little to use me and my co-workers, then I know he can use every one of you in ways perhaps you've never dreamed.

You may not be an Eric Little. You may not be a Sebastian Coe or a Steve Ovett. But you are in God's race.

And God has a plan for you to win in your own situation, in your own life, in your own town, in your own church, to be a winner in God's race. You say, well, what's the biblical basis for that? Great. I'm glad you're asking questions.

Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 9. 1 Corinthians chapter 9. A very important related passage of scripture. And you will see one of the strongest verses in the whole of the Word of God. I'd love to read this whole chapter, but let's just look where we talk about running.

Verse 24. Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prizes. So run that you may obtain.

You know, it's amazing today you get people saying, well, you know, don't, don't get too worried about having fruit. Don't, don't be too worried about being coming successful. I mean, don't worry about your church needing to grow.

Just be faithful. Now let me say something. I love that message and I preach that message, but it's not the whole message.

Don't play one truth of the Bible against another truth. And here at Keswick, be careful of playing one speaker against another speaker. We're all human beings.

We live totally different lifestyles and different backgrounds, and we will have different emphases. And if a man comes here and emphasizes faithfulness more than other things, I'll be out there saying, praise the Lord. But it's just not the whole message.

We are also, as God gives it, as God gives it, not humanly, we can be successful. We can actually win people to Christ. We have been given weapons in our warfare, spoken about in this amazing book, Born for Battle.

And the Bible says the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty unto God, to the pulling down of strongholds. That's why I believe myself that the morning prayer meetings here are as important as the preaching. And I personally, though I find it difficult to get up in the morning, I love the sack.

Do you use that expression here yet? I don't know what's English and what's American. I love the bed. And sometimes when it's time to get up in the morning, this morning was easy, pretty shrill, they'd bang on the compartment with a cup of tea.

Woo! You know, that's revival. But in our house, when it's time to get up, I look at my wife. How about getting some tea? She looks at me.

You get some tea. No, I got it yesterday. You get it.

We both fall back to sleep. Getting out of bed. But my oh my, as God meets with us in the morning, and as God deals with us, He can and He will thrust us into that day.

And God will use us. We as Christians can be successful. There's nothing wrong with that.

I know it's overemphasized. I shudder at some of these success-oriented books. I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about 1st Corinthians chapter 9. I'm talking about using the weapons of the warfare to tear down strongholds of the enemy. Do you know how many people that come even to a place like Keswick or to something like OM have deep, deep needs, problems, sins, things that are destroying them? Many. One of the fastest-selling books that I've read lately is Healing for Damaged Emotions.

I don't think you can get it yet in Britain. It's written by a man of God. It's not just cheap psychology.

It's very balanced and biblical. But it does seem today that a lot of young people have damaged emotions. They have been scarred.

Just in one area alone. You may not be aware of this. The increase of incest, especially in America.

Europe rapidly following in her steps. The increase of incest, sexual relations within the home. It's staggering.

Nobody can be in a counseling ministry. And for every hour I spend preaching, I spend four hours counseling. You cannot be in counseling without getting involved with people who have deeply scarred emotions.

And we can praise the living God that through prayer, through love, through faith, through the proclamation of the Word, through biblical counseling, there are answers. It's not just being faith. It's not just somehow gasping along in the race.

Oh Lord, I'm still in the race. I'm going down fast. The Bible speaks about doing things exceeding abundant above all we could ask or expect.

The Bible speaks about Christ in us, the hope of glory. And I want to ask you with all of my heart, are you in God's race? If you're in God's race, at times you will feel the intensiveness of that race. That's normal.

Are some of you bothered by tensions, struggles? Why doesn't this problem in the home get resolved? Why doesn't this problem in the office get resolved? Why doesn't this problem in the church get resolved? I spend a lot of time one end of England and the other, not big meetings like this, little tiny church meetings, many of them. And in most churches, there are tensions, there are problems, there are struggles. In many churches, there's disunity, there's broken down relationships.

But at the same time, God is working. Don't allow the enemy to discourage you in those church problems. Great faith is not made in the absence of problems and struggles and tensions.

Great faith, my beloved brothers and sisters, is made as we battle through those tensions and struggles. And to some degree, as mature Christians, we learn to live with some of them. We got a lot of people today, they want instant deliverance over everything.

And that's a great mistake. We know God can deliver. But we also know God can give grace to press on in the race when the pain in the side comes, when maybe you fall as Eric Little did in that film.

Because we're looking on to Jesus. And perhaps if you're discouraged this morning, perhaps if you're not experiencing reality in prayer and reality and witness and reality in church life and reality in relationship, perhaps it's because you've taken your eyes off Jesus. That's what this passage seems to indicate.

And we're commanded to put our eyes back on the Lord Jesus. And that means self-control. 1st Corinthians 9 25.

And every man that strives for the mastery is self-controlled in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we are incorruptible. Don't those verses inspire you? Oh, again and again, when I felt weary and tired, I've turned to 1st Corinthians chapter 9. And look at verse 26.

I therefore so 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. What a challenge.

And to me, this is where I believe God wants us to be here on this Monday morning. A renewed commitment that we are going to run in God's race. Though there be struggles, though we fall, we've got 1st John chapter 2. First part of the verse, sin not, don't fall.

Second part of the verse, if you fall, if you sin, you have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ, the righteous. He's our coach. He runs the race with us, yea, by his spirit in us.

You can't get any closer coaching than that. And when you fall, he doesn't desert you, even if it be something that your friends may desert you. At that moment, he is there.

He knows all about you and he loves you still. And this morning he knows our burdens. He knows our failures.

He knows some of us are not really in the race. We're sitting in the grandstands watching other people race. And so many churches, it seems to me that 5% of the people are doing all the work and 95% are watching.

And in God's race and in God's plan and in God's great army and in this great spiritual warfare into which we have been called, there are no spectators. And I pray at Keswick in 1983, there'll be no spectators. It's not a matter of coming and listening to another nice little Bible study and getting a few, a few more notes that you can compare with your friends who didn't come.

But that Keswick 83 will be a time of putting ourselves completely in the hands of the Lord Jesus and getting 100% into his race to run and not throw weary with our eyes upon him. So that those circumstances may get difficult, though friends may disappoint us. And though in our own lives, we may get depressed.

When we look at ourselves, we look back to Jesus and we say, Oh God, if your son, the Lord Jesus Christ could go all the way, the Gethsemane and all the way to the cross and the shedding of blood for me, then this little I can do for you to run in your race by your help, by your grace, by your power, right to the end, right to the end. May God grant it. And if you want it and you're ready for action this week, I can assure you he will grant it for his promises are yea and amen.

Take them, live upon them and your life will become the kind of life that was so pictured in the life of Eric Liddell and the apostle Paul and this great band of witnesses, Hebrews 11, read it in preparation who went on before us. Amen. Let us just pray.

Father, we thank you for your word and we don't want to be found this week playing with your word. We don't want to be found in operation excuse. We don't want to be found just talking, but we want to be found walking.

We want to be found running. We are your chosen people and you have called us into this great life race, this great spiritual race. And though Lord, sometimes we're tempted to grow weary and those sometimes we feel discouraged and the fiery dart of discouragement is coming upon our soul.

We will buy your grace, turn away from that discouragement or that cul-de-sac or whatever other subtle, tricky strategy the enemy tries to pull on us. And we will run with our eyes upon you. And by your grace, we will bring our bodies into subjection and learn the reality of self-control and spirit control that by your grace, we will never be the same again because we have met you.

We have met you, Lord Jesus, in this place and in these days together, granted, O God, by your power through your son, Jesus Christ, who is with us and who lives through us.

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