

The Heavenly Race

by Thomas Watson

Christianity is a race that we must run with all our strength and vigor to obtain the prize of salvation.

Topics: "Christian Living", "Perseverance"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the Christian life being compared to a race, emphasizing the importance of running the race of true religion with zeal and intensity, striving, wrestling, and fighting against sin and spiritual enemies. He highlights the need for Christians to run the race set before them, to persevere to obtain the prize of salvation, and to be diligent in their pursuit of holiness. Watson provides insights on the pathway of running the Christian race, the laborious nature of the race, the shortness of time, and the eternal reward awaiting those who finish the race faithfully.

Transcript

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"Don't you know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize!" 1 Corinthians 9:24

True religion is a business of the greatest importance. The soul, which is the more noble and divine part, is concerned in it; and, as we act our part here--so we shall be forever happy--or miserable. The advice of Solomon in this case is most seasonable: "Whatever your hand finds to do--do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom." Ecclesiastes 9:10. The business of true religion, requires our utmost zeal and intensity, Matthew 11:12.

Sometimes the work we are to do for heaven is set out by striving. Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Strive as in an agony--strive as for a matter of life and death. Though we must be men of peace--yet, in matters of religion, we must be men of strife. It is a holy strife--a blessed contention. Indeed, the Apostle said, "Let nothing be done through strife"; but, though strife does not do well among Christians--yet it does well in a Christian. He must strive with his own heart--or he will never get to heaven.

Sometimes our work for heaven is compared to wrestling. Ephesians 6:12, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood--but against principalities and powers." Our life is a continual wrestling. As Jacob wrestled with the angel--so we must wrestle with our corruptions. We must not lay our sins in our bosom--but set our

feet upon their necks! If we beat our sins, and get them down--it is not baseness or cowardice to strike them when they are down. And we must wrestle with Satan. Satan labors to get within us and give us a fall, as he did our first parents. What the devil would have done to Christ, throw Him from the pinnacle of the temple, Matthew 4, that he did to our first parents. He threw them down from the pinnacle of happiness. Therefore, we must wrestle with him. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," James 4:7.

Sometimes the life of a Christian is compared to fighting. 1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith." Christ is the Captain of the saints' forces. He is called the Captain of their salvation, Hebrews 2:10. We must all be military persons. Faith is our shield; hope is our helmet; the Word of God is our sword. We come into the world as into a battle. Lusts war against us, 1 Peter 2:11. Good reason, therefore, that we should war against them. It is a day of battle, and it is dangerous going abroad without our armor.

Sometimes a Christian's work for heaven is compared to the running of a race; so in the text, "Don't you know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." In which words the Apostle seems to allude either to the Olympic games, which were kept every fifth year in honor of Jupiter, or to the Isthmian games celebrated near Corinth in the honor of Neptune, in which games they put forth all their strength to win the prize. Just so, said the Apostle, run the race of Christianity which is set before you with a winged swiftness that you may obtain the prize of salvation!

The words fall into two general parts:

1. The race to be run, "so run."
2. The end of running, "that you may obtain."

The observations out of the text are these two:

1. Christianity is a race.
2. Wise Christians should labor so to run as to win the prize: "that you may obtain."

DOCTRINE: Christianity is a race. The life of a Christian is a race. Hebrews 12:1, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." We must be travelers, before we are possessors. Heaven is a place of rest. Hebrews 4:9, "There remains a rest for the people of God." No more wrestling there, for then we have overcome the enemy. The saints in glory are set forth with palms in their hands, Revelation 7:9, in tokens of victory. No more running there for the prize being obtained, the saints have thrones to sit and rest themselves upon, Revelation 3:21. But this present life is a race, and it must be run--so run.

For the illustration of the doctrine there are three things to be opened:

- I. How a Christian's life is compared to a race
- II. How a Christian race differs from other races.
- III. Why this race must be run.

I. How a Christian's life is compared to a race. That appears in four particulars:

1. In a race, there is the way or path to run in; so in Christianity there is the pathway in which we must run. Psalm 119:32, "I will run the way of Your commandments." Jeremiah 6:16, "This is a good old way." It is

as good as it is old. The way of sanctification and obedience is the way the saints have gone in, and the way which God has been found in.

This way we are to run in is a pleasant way. It is sweetened with comfort. Proverbs 3:17, "All her ways are pleasantness." Romans 15:13, "Joy in believing." The way of true religion is strewn with roses. Oh, the bunches of grapes which God cuts down, the flagons of wine which He gives to those who turn their feet into this way!

The way of God's commandments is a clean way--it is a way paved with holiness, Isaiah 35:6. Christians may run in this way and never wet the soles of their feet. The way of sin is defiling; such as walk in this way, the filth of hell sticks upon them. In the ways of sin, there are such deep slews, that men sink into perdition--but the way of the Christian race is clean. Such as run this race cleanse themselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Corinthians 7:1.

2. A race is **LABORIOUS**. The running of a race is a strenuous exercise; men put forth all the strength of their bodies in running. Thus, Christianity is a laborious race. We must put forth all our strength in this race. "My soul follows hard after God," Psalm 63:8. Philippians 2:13-14, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize." The word signifies, "I stretch my neck forward;" and, said the Apostle, "I press toward the goal as runners race with all swiftness, and stretch themselves forward to lay hold on the prize." It is not an idle wish or a dead prayer which will win the garland--but a Christian must put forward with all speed and vigor of affection, that he may obtain what he runs for.

3. A race is **SHORT**. A race is but a short space of ground; it is soon run. Thus, our time being short, our race cannot be long; and this may encourage us in the race of religion, and keep us from being out of breath. Remember, it is but a short race. 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered awhile." So I may say, after you have run awhile, you will be at the end of the race. It is but awhile, Christians, and you shall be finished wrestling, weeping, and praying, and you shall reap the fruit of all your prayers. It is but awhile, and you shall be finished suffering and be among "the spirits of just men made perfect." It is but awhile, and you shall be at the end of your race, and you shall receive, "the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:9. How should a child of God rejoice to think that he has gotten over a large part of his race and is almost at the end! As Taylor, the martyr, once said, "I have but two steps to go over, and then I shall be at my Father's house!" You who have set out early for heaven and now are in your old age, comfort yourselves with this--you have but a few steps more to take--and then you are at the end of your race!

4. In a race, there is a crown or **PRIZE** given to the winner. Just so in true religion, those who win the race shall wear the crown, 2 Timothy 4:8. Such as do not run through sloth, or will not run through pride--miss the reward; but such as run the heavenly race faithfully, shall have a crown, 2 Timothy 4:8. And this reward is fitly resembled to a crown because of the splendor of it. A crown hung full of jewels is bright and splendid; it gives an oriental luster. Neither can pen describe, or pencil delineate, or tongue of angel express--the glory and magnificence of this crown; nor can it be portrayed by all the beauties of heaven, though every star were a sun!

II. The second thing to be illustrated is to show how the Christian race **DIFFERS** from other races.

1. In other races, one only is crowned; but in the spiritual race, many win the prize. The saints shall come to heaven from all the quarters of the world, east and west. Matthew 8:11, "Many shall come from the east

and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Revelation 7:9, "After this I saw a vast multitude, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands." By this multitude too great to count, are to be understood those who belong to the election of grace. These as victors are crowned, and stand with palm branches in their hands. Should but one receive the prize, there might be room left for despair.

2. In other races, some stand still and look on; but here, in the heavenly race, ALL must run. Those who are unfit to run other races, like the lame and blind--must run this race. None are excused from this race. All have run from God by sin--and all must run to Him by repentance! Either run--or be damned! Either flee to heaven--or fall to hell!

3. In other races, the feet run but, in the Christian race, the HEART runs. Psalm 119:32, "I will run when You shall enlarge my heart." In true religion--the heart is all; that which the heart does not do--is not done. It is not lifting up the eye or hand towards heaven, which forwards us in the race--it is the out-going of the heart. Many a man's tongue runs in religion--but not his heart. Do you believe with your heart? Romans 10:9. Do you love God with your heart? Matthew 22:37. This is to run the race of religion; this brings a Christian speedily to the goal. When David's heart was enlarged--then he ran.

4. In other races, only the fastest runner gets the prize; but it is not so in this heavenly race. Though others may outrun us--yet, if we hold on to the end of the race, we shall receive the reward. Some saints are like Asahel, "as fleet-footed as a wild gazelle," 2 Samuel 2:18. They run swifter in the race of obedience, as Ahimaaz outran Cushie, 2 Samuel 18:23. But this is the comfort of weak believers: though they cannot run as fast as others--yet, if they hold on to the end of the race without fainting, they are crowned. He who worked for one hour had his pay, as well as he who worked many hours, Matthew 20:9, to show that those who set out later and may be outrun by other Christians--yet persevering, they are saved.

5. In other races, men run for a temporal reward; in the Christian race we run for an eternal reward. Others run for a corruptible crown, 1 Corinthians 9:25. Sometimes the crown bestowed upon the victor was made of olive, sometimes of myrtle. The Egyptians had a crown of cinnamon enclosed in gold--but still it was corruptible. But the crown the saints run for is incorruptible; it is a never-fading crown, 1 Peter 5:4. Other crowns are like a garland of flowers, which soon withers, Proverbs 27:4--but this crown given to the conquering Christian is imperishable. The jewels of this crown are never lost; the flowers of this crown never fade.

6. In other races, the garland is bestowed in a way of merit; but, in the Christian race, it is bestowed as a legacy of free grace. Though we shall not obtain the prize unless we run--yet not because we run. How can we merit the reward? Before we merit heaven, we must satisfy God's justice--but we have nothing to pay. Besides, what proportion is there between the race--and the recompense? Therefore, the crown bestowed is called a gratuitous gift. Romans 6:23, "The gift of God is eternal life." God will so bestow His rewards in such a way, that He Himself may be no loser; though the saints have the comfort of their crown, God will have the glory.

7. In other races, many times, one hinders another; but, in the race to heaven, one Christian helps another. 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing." One Christian helps by his prayer, advice, and example--to confirm another. What is the fellowship of saints, but one Christian helping forward another in the heavenly race?

8. One may lose other races and not be miserable--but he cannot lose this race in religion without being miserable. In other races, a man only loses his wager; but if he falls short of this spiritual race--he loses his eternal soul. How seasonable, therefore, is that Apostolic caution, Hebrews 4:1, "Let us fear, lest we should come short."

III. The third thing to be explained, is why we must run this Christian race. There are three reasons:

1. Because God has set us on this race. Hebrews 12:1, "Let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us." It is not arbitrary; it is not left to our choice whether we will run or not. God has set us on the race. God's commands carry power and sovereignty in them. If a general bids his army march--they must march. There's no disputing any duty in the Word of God. The heavens drop down their dew; the stars set themselves in battalion; the earth thrusts forth a crop; the sea is bridled in and dares not go a step farther. If inanimate creatures obey God's word of command, much more those who are endued with reason. When God says to run the race--we must run.

2. There's no other way to get to heaven but by running the race. By nature, we are distant from the goal; and, if we would have heaven, we must run for it. A man can no more get to heaven who does not run this race--than one can get to his journey's end who never sets a step in the way. 2 Peter 1:10,11, "Make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you."

3. Our time allotted to us is short. Job compares our life to a swift runner, Job 9:25, "My life passes more swiftly than a runner." The poets painted time with wings. If time flies--we had need run! The night of death hastens--and there is no running a race in the night!

This shows us that the business of true religion is no idle thing; we must put forth all our strength and vigor. Religion is a race; we must run and run. It is a hard thing to be a Christian. Alas, then, what shall we say to those who stand all the day idle? If we look at many professors--and we would think they had no race to run. They put their hand "in their bosom," Proverbs 19:24. Is that a fit posture for him who is to run to it? If salvation would drop as "a ripe fig into the mouth of the eater," Nahum 3:12, men would like it well; but they are loathe to set upon running a race. Never think to be favored upon such easy terms.

The life of a Christian is not like a nobleman's life. The nobleman has his rents brought in by his steward, whether he wakes or sleeps. Do not think that salvation will be brought to you--when you are stretching yourselves on your beds of ivory. If you would have the prize--run the race. The passenger in the ship, whether he sits on the deck or lies on the couch, is brought safely to shore; but there is no getting to the heavenly port without towing hard. "Zaccheus ran to see Jesus," Luke 19:4. If we would have a sight of God in glory, we must run this race. We cannot have the world without labor, and would we have heaven without labor?

If the life of Christianity is a race, this may justify the godly in the haste which they make to heaven. Psalm 119:60, "I made haste and delayed not to keep your commandments."

Carnal spirits say, "What need do you have to make such haste? Why are you so strict and precise? Why do you run so fast? Fair and softly--a more easy pace will serve."

Oh--but a Christian may reply, "Religion is a race. I cannot run too fast, nor hard enough!" If any had asked Paul why he ran so fast and pressed forward to the mark, he would have answered that he was in a

race.

Here is that which may justify the saints of God in their zeal and activity for heaven: they are racers, and a race cannot be run too fast. The blind world is ready to judge all zeal as madness; but have we not cause to run with all speed--when it is a matter of life and death? If we do not run--and run hard--we shall never obtain the prize. If a man were to run for a wager of three or four million, would he not run with all celerity and swiftness? 1 Samuel 21:8, "The king's business requires haste!"

If any should say to us, "Why so fast? Why so much praying and weeping?" we may say as David, "The king's business requires haste! God has given me a race to run, and I must not linger or loiter!" The haste which Abigail made to the king, 1 Samuel 25:34, prevented her death and the massacre of Nabal's family. Our haste in the heavenly race will prevent damnation. This may plead for a Christian in his eager pursuit after holiness against all the calumnies and censures of the wicked.

This brings us to several REPROOFS:

1. It reproves those who run a contrary race--not the race God has set them upon--but the race the devil has set them upon--the race of iniquity. This reproves those who sacrifice their lives to Bacchus and make haste--but not to heaven. They make haste to fulfill their lusts! Proverbs 6:18. They make haste to swear, to be drunk. They are swift to shed blood, Isaiah 59:7, "their feet run to evil." The sinner, in regard of the haste he makes in sin, is compared to a swift dromedary, Jeremiah 2:23. A wicked man's swiftness in sin, is like Absalom's riding on his mule, 2 Samuel 18:9, "as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going." Sinners make haste to sin--as the bird hastens to the snare! They run as the swine possessed with the devils ran into the sea and were drowned! Mark 5:13. Oh, what haste do men make to hell--as if they feared the gates would be shut before they could get there! What need is there of this speed? Why do they run so fast to prison? The sins men commit in haste--they will repent of at leisure! Achan made haste to the wedge of gold--but now he has time enough to repent of it. Sin is an unhappy race, a damnable race! "Will it not be bitterness in the end?" 2 Samuel 2:26, when men come to the end of that race, instead of a crown "behold chains of darkness!" Jude 6.

2. It reproves those who, instead of running the race of God's commandments, spend all their time in joviality and mirth--as if their life were rather a dance than a race. Job 21:12-13, "They sing with tambourine and harp. They make merry to the sound of the flute. They spend their days in mirth." They are at their music--when they should be at their race! Amos 6:4, "They sprawl on ivory beds surrounded with luxury, eating the meat of tender lambs and choice calves. You sing idle songs to the sound of the harp." It is hard to have two heavens. Some are all for pleasure; they are like those hunting-dogs which Diodorus Siculus speaks of. While they run among the sweet flowers, they smell the flowers, lose scent of the hare--and leave off their hunt. So, while many are among the sweet flowers--the delights and pleasures of the world--they fall to smelling these flowers, and leave off their race. Therefore, they go merrily to hell. I may say, as Solomon, Proverbs 14:13, "the end of that mirth is heaviness!"

3. If true religion is a race, it reproves those who are slow-paced in religion--who creep but do not run. Their motion is slow and dull. They should be like the sun in the sky, which is swift--when they are like the sun of the dial, which moves very slow. Many Christians move so heavily in the ways of God that it is hard for bystanders to judge whether they are making any progress or not. They are hasty in their passion--but slow of heart to believe, Luke 24:25. What haste did Israel make in their march--when Pharaoh was

pursuing them! What need do Christians have to expedite their race--when the devil is behind pursuing, ready to overtake them, and make them lose the prize! We read in the law that God would not have the donkey offered in sacrifice. He hates a dull temper of soul. The snail was accounted unclean, Leviticus 11:30, and the slow-paced professor will be tardy at last, and miss the prize.

4. It reproves those who begin the race of Christianity--but do not persevere to the end of the race. They faint by the way: "You did run well--who hindered you, that you should not obey the truth?" Galatians 5:7. The crown is set upon the head of perseverance. He who runs halfway and then faints, loses the garland. It is sad for a man to come near to heaven and then tire in the race--as it is to see a ship cast away in sight of the shore.

Nay, what shall we say to those who do worse than tire in the race, who run backward into the way of wickedness, like Julian, Gardner, and others. There is no going to heaven backwards. Such cast reproaches upon the ways of God. Better never begin the race--than run back. 2 Peter 2:21, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness--then after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment." A soldier who runs from his colors, and lists himself in the enemy's regiment, if he is taken, must expect martial law. Hebrews 10:38, "If any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." God will bear with infirmity--but He will punish treachery. Wrath shall smoke against the apostate; fury will display itself in its bloody colors. Indeed, in war, there is a retreating sometimes which, if it is done politically and to the enemy's disadvantage, is called an honorable retreat; but, in a race to heaven, there must be no retreats. These are not honorable retreats but damnable retreats; whoever draws back, it is to perdition, Hebrews 10.

Let all Christians be exhorted to run this heavenly and blessed race of piety. What arguments shall I use to persuade? Look upon other creatures winged with activity, and then, Christian, shame yourself. Look into the sky and see the sun as a giant running his race, Psalm 19:5, and do you stand still? Look into the air and see the birds soaring aloft and mounting towards heaven. Look into the earth and see the bees working in the hive. Look upon the angels, they are swift in obedience. Look upon other Christians near you; you shall find them in their race--reading, praying, and weeping. And have you nothing to do? Look upon your precious time; time runs, and do you stand still? Look upon the wicked, how quick are they in sin? And shall they run faster to hell--than you do to heaven! Nay, look upon yourself; how industrious are you for the world, rising early, compassing sea and land, and yet how sluggish and heartless in matters of salvation? Will you run for a feather, a bubble--and not run for a kingdom!

To quicken your pace in godliness, consider what the prize is, that we run for. It is a crown of glory! This encircles all blessedness within it; there will soon be an end of our race--but there will be no end of our crown. This blessed reward should quicken us in the race; but how shall we run the race so as to obtain? It is sad to run in vain, Philipians 2:16. This brings us to the next point.

I shall prescribe some DIRECTIONS about this heavenly race:

1. Take heed of those things which will hinder you in your race. Shake off sloth; idleness is the pace of the devil. The sluggish professor will never win the race; he is sleeping when he should be running. Sloth is the rust of the soul, it is the disease of the soul. A sick man cannot run a race. Proverbs 12:27, "Lazy people don't even cook the game they catch." Oh, shake off sloth! Abandon this idle devil--if you intend to run a race!

2. Throw off all weights. There are two sorts of weights we must throw off:

The weight of SIN. Hebrews 12:1, "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that lies before us." The prophet David felt this weight, Psalm 38:4, "My iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me!" If we do not throw off this weight of sin by sincere repentance--it will sink us into hell. A man cannot run a race with a heavy burden upon his back. An immoral person cannot run the race of holiness; a proud man cannot run the race of humility; a self-willed man cannot run the race of obedience. Oh, Christian, unburden your soul of sin! Throw off this weight--if you intend to lay hold on the crown!

The weight of the WORLD. This is a golden weight which has hindered many and made them lose their race. "Demas has deserted me, because he loved this present world!" 2 Timothy 4:10. So far as the world is a weight, throw it off. I do not say lay aside the use of the world--but the love of the world, 1 John 2:15. When the golden dust of the world is blown in men's eyes, it blinds them so that they cannot see their race.

3. Discard false opinions about this race. Such as, "The race is easy." Many a man thinks he can run the race from earth to heaven on his deathbed. Oh sinner, you who say that the race is easy--you are a stranger to the Christian race! You are dead in sin until a supernatural principle of grace is infused, Ephesians 2:1.

Is it easy for a dead man to run a race? To run the way of God's commandments is against nature, and is it easy for a man to act contrary to himself? Is it easy for the water to run upward in its own channel? Is it easy for a man to deny himself, to crucify the flesh, to behead his beloved sin? Oh, take heed of this mistake, that the Christian race is easy! Do you know what true religion must cost you--and what it may cost you?

"The race to heaven is impossible." There is so much work to do that surely we shall never win the race. Cyprian confesses that, before his conversion, he had many thoughts tending to despair. He imagined that he would never get the mastery of some of his corruptions. The thoughts of impossibility, cut the sinews of all endeavors. God has encouraged us to run not only by promising rewards when we win--but by promising strength to enable us to run. Has He not said He will put His Spirit within us, Ezekiel 36, and then we can run and not be weary?

How many has Satan disheartened through despair? "Surely," says the despairing soul, "I may run--but I shall never so run as to obtain. There is no hope." "So," says the despairer, "I might as well go on in my sins; I might as well keep the old road. There's no hope; all help is cut off." This is a dangerous precipice. Despair takes a man off his legs--and then, how can he run? Despair is the great devourer of souls; he who is under the power of this sin--disputes himself into hell!

4. Take heed that company does not hinder you from running the race. If a man should be running a race, and he should have a friend come and take him by the hand and desire to speak with him while he is running--this might make him lose the race. So stands the case here. Many will be ready to meet with us, and stop us in our race to heaven. "Why do you need to set out so soon? Why do you need to run so fast? Stay and bathe yourselves a while in the luscious delights of the world!" Thus have many been stopped in the middle of their race--and lost the prize! To him who would hinder us in our race, we must say with a holy indignation, as Christ, "Get behind Me, Satan!" Matthew 4:10.

Lastly, you must use all MEANS to help you in the heavenly race.

Run the right race. The Apostle calls it "the race which is set before us," Hebrews 12:1, that is, the race chalked out in the Word of God, the race of self-denial and sanctity. It is not any race--but the race set before us--which we must run; which confutes the opinion that a man must be saved in any religion.

Fit yourselves for the heavenly race!

1. Diet yourselves. The racers in ancient times dieted themselves; they would not eat any fatty meat, nor yet a full meal, that they might be the more prepared for the race. Thus must Christians diet themselves by sobriety and mortification, that they may, by a well ordering of themselves, be more fit to run the race which is set before them. Paul beat down his body, 1 Corinthians 9:27, that he might be more fit for his race.

2. Strip yourselves for the race. The runner in a race used to strip himself of all unnecessary clothing, and wear only a white garment, that he might be light and nimble. Just so, should Christians strip themselves of all conceits of merit--and only wear the white garment of Christ's righteousness!

3. Begin the race early. Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Young ones think they may set upon the race too soon. Can a man be godly too soon? Can he run the race of repentance too soon? But suppose he might--it is still better to repent a year too soon--than an hour too late! Esau's tears as well as his venison--came too late, Genesis 27:33-34. David would seek after God early, Psalm 36:1. Augustine, in his confessions, complained that he knew God no sooner. They will hardly be able to run the heavenly race--who have old age and old sins upon them!

4. Run the pathway, not the roadway. Hell's road is full of travelers; most go wrong. Exodus 23:2, "You shall not follow a multitude to do evil." The multitude does not consider what is best--but what is fastest. Our Savior has told us, "Narrow is the way which leads unto life," Matthew 7:14. Run in the narrow way of self-denial and mortification!

5. Resolve to hold on in the race, notwithstanding dangers and difficulties. A godly man must be steeled with courage, and fired with zeal. It is probable there will be thorns and stones in the way of our race--therefore, we need to be well-shod. We must be shod with the gospel of peace, Ephesians 6:15. He whose heart is filled with that peace which the Gospel brings, will be able to run over the hardest piece of religion, with ease.

We must be shod with endurance. Hebrews 12:1, "Let us run with endurance, the race set before us." Endurance bears up the heart of a Christian and keeps him from tiring in the race. If this shoe of endurance is off, we shall soon halt and give up running.

6. Always keep your eye upon the right mark. The Grecians had a white line drawn at the end of the race--and the racer's eye was always upon it. Looking upon the prize quickens Christians in their race! Paul looked towards the mark, Philippians 3:14, as archers look at the bulls-eye, and racers at the prize. And Moses, Hebrews 11:26, "looked ahead to the great reward that God would give him!" He looked with one eye at God's glory--and with the other eye, at the prize!

7. Oh, run with delight! Psalm 119:47, "I will delight myself in Your commandments." Oil supple the joints and makes them agile and nimble. The oil of gladness makes Christians lively and fit to run the heavenly race! "The joy of the Lord is your strength," Nehemiah 8:10.

8. Run in the strength of Christ. Do not think you can, of yourselves, run the race. The Arminians talk of freewill, "but it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs," Romans 9:16. By nature we are blind, and lame; therefore, unfit to run a race. We run fastest when Christ takes us by the hand!

9. Be often in the exercise of grace. It is not enough to have grace in the heart--but it must be in the exercise. Such as run the heavenly race, must not only be living--but lively. They must have a flourishing faith and a flaming love! What is the meaning of the loins girt and the lamps burning, Luke 12:23--but grace in its activity? Without this, there can be no speed in the heavenly race!

If you would run hard--pray hard. Prayer helps us on in the race. Pray over that prayer, Song of Solomon 1:4, "Draw me--and I will run after You."

Pray that you may not mistake your way through error--nor stumble in it through offenses. In a word, let us pray for the Holy Spirit, who animates us in the race, and carries us above our own strength. God's Spirit breathed in us--keeps us in full breath for running the race!

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