

The Race For Eternal Life

Paul compares the life of a Christian to the running of a race in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Some of Paul's last words were, "*I have finished the race*" (2 Timothy 4:7). The Hebrew writer says in Hebrews 12:1, "*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*" The Christian life is just like a race. We will now look at some of the similarities between the two.

First a race must have a purpose. There must be a reason why we want to race in the first place, and that reason is the prize! Every race has a prize. Our prize is the crown of everlasting life in Heaven (2 Timothy 4:8). Heaven is a prize because it is beautiful (Revelation 21:16-21), the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4), we will be with God forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17), etc. The list goes on and on.

Since we have a purpose or a goal, we must enter the race. We cannot get to our goal if we do not first start and we cannot start unless we enter the race. Some say that all one has to do to enter the race for eternal life is believed. Certainly one must believe but also confess (Romans 10:10), repent (Luke 13:3), and be baptized (Mark 16:16) to enter. If the prize is worth it, and Heaven certainly is, we should be willing to do what it takes to enter the race, no questions asked.

Once we begin the race we must fight! We must discipline ourselves! In 1 Corinthians 9:26-27, "*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*" Paul fought and brought his body into subjection knowing that even though he had taught and converted many, he could still lose his soul if he didn't exercise self-control. The way to heaven is straight and narrow (Matthew 7:14), therefore we must remain on the race course. Without self-control we will wander astray and be disqualified.

Finally, we must have persistence! We cannot give up! Heaven is closer and life is shorter than we may realize therefore we must keep fighting until the end. It will not be long until we get to lay all of our burdens down at the master's feet. Until then, keep on keeping on and do not look back at everything that you had before you became a Christian. Instead look at what you have now and never take your eyes off of the goal set before you! "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always*

abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

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