

# Will I Finish the Race?

1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:6-8

## Introduction:

- I have been running thirty-five years.
- I had never run a marathon—26.2 miles.
- History of the marathon.
  1. Marathon is a town in Greece, the site of the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, in which the Athenian army defeated the Persians. A legendary run of a messenger named Phidippides from Marathon to Sparta ahead of the battle forms the basis for the modern-day marathon race ( *Wikipedia* ).
  2. After delivering the message, “Rejoice, we conquer,” he died.
- I had never wanted to until I read a book last year.
- I like to see what I can learn from any experience.

## 1. THE PLAN WAS NOT MINE

- I would have done it differently.
  1. I would have worked up to a marathon the week before the marathon.
  2. That shows my lack of knowledge of the subject.
- Some key books have influenced my running.
  1. *Aerobics* , by Major Cooper.
  2. *The Complete Book of Running* , by Jim Fixx.
  3. *Runner’s Day by Day Log and Calendar* , by Jim Fixx, John Jerome, Marty Jerome.
  4. *Marathoning for Non-Runners* , by David A. Whitsett, Forrest A. Dolgener, and Tanjala Mabon Kole.
- If I don’t know how to do something, it can be a good start to find someone who does and take their suggestions.
- I need to run God’s race God’s way.

There is a way that seems right to a man,  
But its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:12).

O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself;  
It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23).

Your word is a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path  
The entrance of Your words gives light;  
It gives understanding to the simple (Psalm 119:105,130).

## 2. NOURISHMENT - FOOD AND WATER.

- I attempted a marathon, to Coble years ago.
  1. I took no food or water.
  2. I didn't do well; I stopped at fifteen miles.
- This time I went by the book.
  1. To gain strength in the days preceding the marathon, I ate and drank much pasta and water.
  2. To maintain my strength during the race
    - I ate jel, peppermint, and Reese's Peanut Butter Cup.
    - In did not pass a water station for water and Gator Aide.
- Many people find the Christian race difficult because of spiritual malnutrition.
- God's word is essential for a good race.

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4).

I have not departed from the commandment of His lips;  
I have treasured the words of His mouth  
More than my necessary food (Job 23:12).

## 3. LIGHT AND HEAVY.

- Long and short runs changed during the training.
- My first long run in training was five miles.
  1. In a few weeks, that became my short run.
  2. Nine miles became a short long run after two weeks of eighteen miles long runs.
- It is by contrasting the light and heavy that we can carry the heavy.
  1. Paul had a tough race.

We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

2. That sounds heavy.
3. But Paul said it was light.
  - Something can be light compared to something heavier.
  - Something can be light compared to the reward at the end.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

#### 4. REST.

- My book recommended a day of rest before and after a long run for strength, healing, and recovery.
- Jesus recommended rest to His disciples.

And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray (Mark 6:31,45,46).

#### 5. RUNNING MY RACE.

- I could have been discouraged because I wasn't as fast as thousands of others.
  1. Luke Kibet from Kenya won the men's division at 2:14:11; he finished three hours and fifteen minutes before me.
  2. I even let a lady beat me—Anuta Catuna from Romania finished about three hours before me at 2:33:36.
- But I was encouraged because I broke several world records.
  1. Every step after twenty miles was a world's record for me.
  2. Yesterday was a world's record for me in the marathon—it is the fastest one I have ever done.
- Jesus encouraged and complimented those who did what they could with what they had.
  1. The poor widow who gave less than a nickel.

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood” (Mark 12:41-44)

2. The woman who anointed Him with costly oil and who was criticized sharply by others. Mark 14:3-8

## 6. ENCOURAGEMENT.

- Gail.
  1. Before the race.
  2. Yesterday—helping me, getting me the food I wanted.
- Bennet Corley, LaDonna Lawson, James Anderson.
  1. Setting the example by running marathons before.
  2. Giving me encouragement and advice when I asked for it.
- Dale Jenkins, who preaches at Granny White, has checked on me and encouraged me during training.
  1. We ran a ½ marathon on March 13 and had our pictures made together.
  2. Since I couldn't stand after the run yesterday, he sat beside me for our pictures yesterday.
- E-mail from Ruth Hoing last week.
- Unknown people.
  1. Bands about every mile.
  2. Cheerleaders often.
  3. Children who gave me high fives.
- I rode the bus with John Strand from Orange, California.
  1. He is sixty-nine years old.
  2. He ran his ninety-eighth marathon yesterday in 5:54:00.
  3. He has run marathons in every state of our nation and on every continent.
- Marvin Wagster came to the devotional at the band stand at Centennial.
  1. We have talked to each and encouraged each other during training.
  2. We talked until the start.
- At mile three, I was encouraged by Bennet and Emily Corley.
- At mile five, there was Channing and Sue Workman.
- As I was approaching mile seven, I learned about more effective and less effective encouragement.
  1. One person in an enthusiastic tone said, “You’re doing good; you’ve nearly finished seven miles!”
  2. About a hundred yards later, a man in a mournful, depressed voice stated an accurate, but less encouraging fact, “You’ve only gone seven miles; you have a long way to go.”
- Todd Randolph, from the East Brained congregation in Chattanooga—miles eleven to thirteen.
  1. It was the first for both of us.
  2. He started as an exercise in spiritual discipline.
  3. We have friends in common.

- Mile seventeen, a man I didn't know came beside and read to me from a sweaty paper with running ink that was difficult to unfold.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed (Hebrews 12:11-13, NIV).

- Todd Lawson—mile nineteen rode for awhile beside me on a bike.
- Bennet Corley—mile twenty-one ran beside me, asked how I was doing and encouraged me not to push too hard.
- Gail, Chad, Shelly, Margaret at the finish.
- Bill Heally, an EMT, was helpful in helping me to stand, walk, be able to get to the car.
- Chad and Shelly walked with us to the car and Chad said he would be ready to preach today, if needed.
- Calls from people after the race.
- In our race, encouragement is important.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works (Hebrews 10:24).

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, 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Conclusion:

- This race was a challenge and was enjoyable.
- But this is temporary.
- You may or may not want to run a marathon or fifteen feet.
  1. If you do or don't, I have some peppermint balls to give you energy.
  2. Please pick up one after services.
- There is a greater race that is very important.

- Notice 4:6-8 in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come (1 Timothy 4:6-8).

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

- Have you started the race?
  1. You have to register to run. Acts 2:36-41
  2. Have you fallen, become discouraged, grown weak, and dropped out of the race and missed your goal?
  3. You can reenter.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

- Will you finish?

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After finishing my first marathon, I bought this dog tag with my name and contact information on one side and this inscription on the other:

