

So Run

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[0:00] I'm running a race. I got up one morning and I decided I would go for a run.

! And when you go jogging it's good to find someone to go running with you. So I invited someone to come and join me. I caught on my little dog to come along with me on this jog. But he just scurried back into his kennel.

So I had to go alone. I had to make that extra commitment to go it alone. And every morning lately since that day I've been going for a jog. Now you can see how trim, taught and terrific I am today. It's not that I really need it. No, of course I do. I do actually need it. I need to be trim. And especially now that I'm getting older. It's been a discipline and a test for me to get out of bed and to go for a jog.

Hopefully it's something I'm developing a good habit. Something that's a healthy thing that will help me keep in shape. And I've learnt some things while I've been jogging along. I've learnt some things about running.

[1:07] Things like it hurts. Things like it's easier to run downhill than to go uphill. And it would be easier just to have a lie in.

And my personal definition of running is putting one foot after another. So there's not a certain speed that I have to achieve. Because I'm finding the more I run the slower I go. There are some spiritual truths that we can learn here.

Some spiritual truths about running. And the Word of God tells us about running. 1 Corinthians 9 verse 24 through 27 it says, Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize.

So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

Therefore I run so 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 preach to others I myself should be a castaway.

[2:19] So run. So run. All of us have a race to run. Will we be in that right race or just in the rat race? You are running a race. Each one of you here, you are running a race.

It's your race. Life is a race. Run so to win. It's a race to be run. And there is a prize. So run. That you may obtain.

So how can we so run? How can we run in such a way that we'll obtain that prize that is spoken of? How can we run well? Number one, preparation. Preparation is important.

You know, when I put on my shoes that first day and ran on them, they were hurting me. And I looked up about running, trying to find some excuses why I shouldn't go running. And one of the things that it says was to get some new shoes.

So I splurged out and spent \$14.95 to get some of the best running shoes I could find. They looked as good as the expensive ones. So I did some preparation. I put some new shoes on.

[3:25] Preparation is important. If you're going to run this race, that you're called to. In 1.24.7 it says in part, Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. Exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

We know that physical exercise is useful, but much more is exercising ourselves unto godliness. Think of how important it is to run the race.

To run the race. Now, there's some African brothers and sisters here today. And I've heard this story that every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. A lion wakes up and he knows that he has to outrun the slowest gazelle or he'll starve to death.

So whether you're a lion or a gazelle, when that sun comes up, you'd better be running.

You'd better be running. And there's a race to run that's much more important than such a thing as that. We're talking about the running of the Christian race. Just like it cost me some pain.

[4:35] It cost a degree of discipline when I strapped on my shoes that morning and since then have been running each morning. The Christian life takes discipline.

It takes a disciplined life. A godly discipline. A godly exercise. There are no shortcuts. When our Lord says, deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow me.

It's discipline, isn't it? He says, be my disciple. There's discipline there. And in this all important race that we're called to run, it calls for some things.

It calls for training. It calls for discipline. It calls for exercise. Now for me, the word exercise reminds me of our military men and women. What they have to do.

They go on exercises. And even in the very minute dimension that I did such a thing. When I joined the army reserves and was in the recruit camp.

[5:30] And I remember how the early morning jog was not optional. The early morning jog was not optional. You couldn't just lie and say, oh I'll give it a miss this morning.

It was early and it was long and it was hard. Especially the first time. And it's training that was not optional. It was training that was critical. And it is training that is critical for our military men and women to have peak fitness.

To be in peak performance in the best shape that they can be. And exercise is important for that. If we want it to be in top condition.

And as I say, when I have been jogging, I've been noticing a few things. Noticing a few things about jogging. Now, some of you may not have got as enthused about jogging.

Maybe this sermon will inspire you tomorrow morning. But exercise can hurt. Exercise can hurt. It can be an exertion that can be painful. And it can be inconvenient. There's a degree of discomfort there.

[6:31] Exercise is meant to be that way. It's meant to be intensive. It's meant to be constant for it to do its work. There needs to be the need for preparation.

Whether it's shoes that fit. Whether it's that preparation of just psyching yourself up. And getting in that condition. Getting in that mindset that I'm going to get out of bed. And I'm not going to care about how I feel.

Whether I want to or not. And that's the Christian life sometimes. It's an exercise in discipline. And exercising ourselves unto godliness. And thankfully, brothers and sisters, we have the perfect coach.

We have the perfect trainer who's done the hard yards for us. He's been there and he is there with us for us as we head down that race track. So preparation is something important for you.

If you're going to run in that physical race. If you want to run in a marathon, there's lots of days of training before that big race. And of course, we know that familiar scripture in Hebrews 12 on.

[7:34] It says, Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside the weight, our every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

When you're running the race, there's preparation in taking off. Sometimes I sleep in a dressing gown. I like to be nice and warm. And I have to shed all of that extra clothing and put on the running clothes.

There's a preparation of letting go of the things that will weigh us down and slow us down. They're called weights. Weights. Now, the Bible distinguishes, it's interesting, there's weights and there's sins, isn't it?

The weights are the things that are hindering our running the Christian race. There's weights and there's sin. Sin. Some things may not be sin, but they are weights.

Lay them aside. You might say, Oh, it doesn't say I shouldn't do such and such in the Bible. But you know it's a weight for you. It's a weight for you. There's sinful habits, there's questionable habits that are a weight for you.

[8:38] Things to drop off if you're going to run the Christian life. You know, I'm sure you can imagine what they could be. We must remove what is

slowing us down in our spiritual progress to get in that necessary preparation to get ready to get in condition for that race.

So run. So run. Run with preparation. Run with preparation. Secondly, so run. Run with patience. Run with patience. This race calls for patience.

As it says in Hebrews 12, Let us run with patience. Let us run with patience. The race that is set before us. The race is set before us.

It's clearly marked out. It's set before us. It's set before us in the Scriptures. It's set before us in the preaching. It's set before us by the Spirit of God. The Word of God tells us of the way that we are to go.

It's called the way of holiness. The way of God. And so let's make an honest assessment today. We've been challenged already. Make an assessment of yourself. It's the condition that you are in.

[9:42] Are you running from God? Or are you running for God? Let us run the race. Let's make an honest assessment. Am I going forward? Standing still? Or falling behind?

In this race that I'm called to run. We are to run one foot after the other. You might run not as quick as another. But it's just one foot after another. After another. After another.

After another. That's the truth of it. Don't let it deter you. Even though you might not be an Olympic standard. Run that race. One step after another.

Here's a quote. We must run. Running implies great exertion of bodily strength. Call forth all of our strength. And exert all of our power. Run as Lot ran out of Sodom.

Or as the manslayer to the city of refuge. Your life is at stake. Ruin is behind you. And pursues you fast. Run from danger.

[10:40] Safety, peace and glory are before you. Run forward. Run forward. Make haste on the way. You have no time to lose. Run as Lot ran out of Sodom.

I know actually of late someone was mentioning how Lot was actually dragged out of Sodom. He was led by the hand as the, you know, he was lingering. We shouldn't need to be coped when God's judgment is to fall.

We need to get where God wants us to be. We need to be in the will of God. So run with patience. Run with endurance. Run with persistence. Run with stamina. It's like someone said, the race is not always to the swift, but to him who keeps on running.

Keep on running. It's like Spurgeon said, it was by perseverance that the snail reached the ark. You know, it's about perseverance, brothers and sisters.

I know, in running a church I've learned perseverance. You know, perseverance, especially with this man here. Perseverance. To keep on keeping on. To keep pressing on.

[11:43] No matter what. No matter what the disappointments might be. In marriage too. Julie's learning perseverance. You know, she finally gave in to me, I think the sixth time I asked her to marry her.

She gave in. She didn't persevere that long. But, you know, it's wonderful that we can have a perseverance. And, you know, that's why Julie's so wonderful. Because, what does it say?

Perseverance makes... I'm thinking of that. What's that saying? Yeah. Something like that. You know, by tribulation worketh patience.

And then patience worketh... Must be perfection. Yeah. We must run with patience, brothers and sisters. With perseverance, with endurance in this race. And what will it take to stop you running? What will it take to stop you running? Or could it be excuses? We've heard about excuses already this morning. What's your excuse for not getting out of bed tomorrow morning and go for a job? Now, I'm sure you can think of lots of them.

[12:46] I'm sure you've got lots of excuses. Some of them might be valid excuses. But what's the excuse that's going to stop you from running the Christian race? From running the race that really counts? Or what's going to be your excuse to stop you from running?

There's many obstacles along the way. We have need of patience, brothers and sisters, to run the race. We've known of late we had a dangerous brown snake at our back door recently.

A dangerous brown snake. It was so big. It was a big snake. I didn't actually see it but it's reported to me. And I thought, well maybe that would be a good excuse not to go jogging.

Because the snake's out there. You know, I could get hurt. Especially if I go down on the... I mean it says in how it tells you how to go jogging, it's not good to run on hard surfaces. So you want to go jogging on the grass.

And where do the snakes go? They're in the grass. So maybe that's a good excuse. I could have used that. I could have reasoned... found some reason why not to go jogging.

[13:49] There's dangers out there. There's difficulties that faces on this track. What will it take to stop you running? To stop you running the Christian race? It's easy to think of excuses why not to run.

You know, another thing that I was trying to find some excuse not to go jogging, was I heard it said that joggers can get... you know, their knees can get damaged from a lot of jogging. But then I did some research about this and they say the jury is out on that question.

So it's not confirmed either way. So another excuse, I just had to not use that excuse too. But how about, you know, are you using excuses why you're not running the Christian race as strongly as he calls you to?

Are you running the race? Or are you looking for excuses to opt out? So run that you may obtain. We want to run so we obtain a prize.

To not be deterred by people, by pressures, by feelings, by circumstances. Paul writes, so run that you may obtain. Run with patience, with consistency.

[15:00] I'd like to think that I can maintain this habit. It could be a... you know, after I've done this sermon, I've used that illustration, I can sort of quietly stop running. But you know, it's been said that we're all creatures of habit.

You know, if you do something long enough, it becomes a habit. And there's good habits and bad, but we're all creatures of habit one way or the other. And what we do today influences what we do tomorrow.

When we're inconsistent today, we make it more likely we'll be inconsistent tomorrow. When we're pursuing righteousness today, it makes it more likely we'll be pursuing righteousness tomorrow.

So patience, perseverance, endurance. Keep on keeping on in that race. Run, so run. So run with preparation. So run with patience.

And thirdly, so run with purpose. Run with purpose. Paul writes, he says, I therefore so run, not as uncertainly. I don't want to run uncertainly, he says.

[16:00] I want to run purposefully. It helps when you're running to set a goal. Having a goal, having something to head to, motivates you to get there. Aim for something with your life.

With your spiritual life, with your Christian life. When we run, where we look is important. Where we're heading to is important. Of course, you read in Hebrews 12 verse 2, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

Who for the joy that was set before him, despising the shame, enjoyed the cross and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Where are we looking? Are we looking unto Jesus?

Are we aiming for him? For his smile? For his welcome? Or are we running uncertainly? Like all over the place. Are we running with a purpose? You know, when I was doing that jogging, I hadn't always gone to the same place, but I set some kind of landmark I headed to.

To aim to, to get to, and then to get back home again. And it's like that with running the Christian race. I know this fanatical older chap, he ran all around the... He's one of my heroes in my life.

[17:09] He ran all around the city of Moota. And there's big squares. Four miles, is it? A square? Or thereabouts. So, certainly quite a distance.

And then jogging on the beach. And it's good to set some places to go, some things to get around to achieve. And as a Christian, we're looking unto Jesus. That's what matters. We're looking unto him.

There's lots of places you can look. It's been said if you want to be distressed, look within. It's not a pleasant sight sometimes, is it? Looking within sometimes. If you want to be defeated, look back. All the disappointments and failures, all the mistakes you've made, look back. If you want to be defeated. If you want to be distracted, look around. There's lots of things to take your attention from what matters.

If you want to be dismayed, look ahead. Maybe there's things that you're not quite ready for, that you're worried about. If you want to be delivered, look up. Look up.

[18:06] Look unto him. Look unto the Lord. Look above. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Look unto him and look above. Don't look at what others are doing or not doing.

Don't look about the things around you, but look unto him. Run with purpose. Run, not uncertainly, but run with purpose. So if you want to be in good shape, spiritually, there's some self-discipline. Just as the analogy of the runner shows to us. Don't shy away from strenuous effort. In Hebrews 12.4 it says, you have not resisted unto blood.

Striving against sin. There's a need for striving. A strenuous effort. A striving that's a good thing. Not a striving to come under a bondage or under a heaviness.

But a liberty that motivates us. That love that drives us. That love of our Saviour that makes us want to. The purpose that we have motivates us to make every effort.

[19:08] In 1 Corinthians 9 verse 25 it says, And every man that striveth for the mastery. There's that word again. Striveth for the mastery. The mastery is temperate in all things.

That's pretty heavy isn't it? Temperate in all things. In other words, go the distance. Go the distance and then a little bit more. It's been said for training to reap its maximum benefit.

An athlete must discipline his entire life. His entire life. Not just his time on the track. It's about not just the running, but about the preparation in all aspects of the runner's life.

Avoiding the distractions. Eating well. Getting sufficient rest. Avoiding engaging in activities that could result in injury. And our perfect coach is there all the time.

And his training manual. The training manual. The runner's training manual. Don't forget that. The perfect training program is here for us. To exercise discipline. As Timothy was urged by Paul.

[20:09] To flee from some things. Flee from evil desires. And to pursue some things. Righteousness. Faith. Love. And peace. The pursuit of excellence.

We've got to throw off some things, brothers and sisters. There's some weights. Maybe they're hanging onto you still. Some weights you've not shared. Some things that are holding you back. Dragging you down.

Heavy things. Things that will hinder your Christian walk and faith. And the sin that does so easily entangle. It's like the weight as we see in the allegory of Pilgrim's Progress.

Pilgrim's Progress. He had a heavy weight. A big sack on his back. That represented the weight of his sin. Of his loading down. Of his conviction. Of his guilt. And yet, it was released as he came in faith to Christ and the cross.

We must focus on our goal and let go of those things that will hold us back. 1 Corinthians 9 verse 25 where it says, Striving for the mastery. It's that word that we get our word agonized from.

[21:15] There's an agony to it. There's a strenuous effort. As a champion runner in this race that is your life. Your life. Be willing to pay the price.

To put the time, the hard hours. To develop those habits that will make you a winner in this race that matters. To have that purpose in mind. That all consuming purpose. Just like a champion athlete would have.

As he or she would undertake that training program. Would undertake that hard work. That discipline. But when the alarm goes off, there won't be a second thought. When your eyes open, there won't be a second thought.

You want to get out of bed and on the race track. You want to keep in condition spiritually, so to speak. You won't let the bad weather put you off. Or any excuses you can dream up.

It's about putting your faith into action. And training to win happens only with that strong commitment. Brothers and sisters, if athletes can do it, then oughtn't we as Christians?

[22:20] Oughtn't we more so? You know, just, it was earlyish one morning, I saw the cricketers out on the pitch. It wasn't even nine o'clock in the morning.

And there they were practicing and training and playing. What of us? What of us, brothers and sisters? I passed the Jehovah's Witness church at the same hour. And the car park was filled with

