

The Race Is On!

As you and I go through life on earth and fulfill our purpose for being alive in God we often find that we grow weary and become lazy in our walk. I pray that this writing will inspire you to gird up your loins and prepare for the journey that is set before us. It is not a time to drop out, it is a time to merge in. We must focus in on the task at hand and refuse to be lulled asleep by the rhythm of the world. Make no mistake about it, creation is standing in the wings on their tiptoe, waiting for the manifestation of this new man in the earth. The Lord has dealt with my heart concerning what the Apostle Paul called "the race."

1 Cor. 9:24-27 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. 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. (KJV)

I am sure that we have all read this verse often, but the Lord has been speaking to me that there is a need in His body of people to understand what kind of race we are involved in. After all, there are many types of races and each is run differently. In other words, it is not enough just to run, we must run to win! As Paul advised, run that ye may obtain. Some dear ones ministering the higher truths today have given the impression that because of the lofty heights of revelation we have received, this somehow excludes us from running the race. As a result, many have quit going to meetings and are staying at home. The truth of the matter is that revelation never makes you less responsible for the body, it always makes you more responsible. To whom much is given, much is required. We don't become Physicians and then stay home, we use the knowledge that is given to us and minister to the sick. So run!

Okay, you have decided to run the race. Now what? First, let us decide what type of race Paul was talking about. This might be done easier if we understand what kind of race it isn't. Using our knowledge of the history of the Church, we can assure you this is not a sprint race. In the natural track competitions, races are divided into short distance and long distance categories and each runner must decide the type he is best suited for.

The race we are in is without a doubt classified as a marathon. It began from the foundations of the world and has continued until now. The race won't be over until every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord! I know some minister that everything is done and we can just rest in the work of the cross and the resultant resurrection of Jesus. This is all true. Everything is finished in the heavens, or the invisible realm, but God doesn't intend for this great salvation to remain in the invisible! He wants to be seen in the temple and revealed in this new creation man. Heaven must invade earth and that which is invisible must become visible. The scripture is too full of terminology that implies a further work to be done, and I believe this work is to be done in a corporate man made up of many sons. These sons of God are appointed and sent forth of the Father in the same way that Jesus was sent forth as an individual Son. The greater works are in a

corporate expression appearing in a company of individuals who have given up their lives in the individual sense and have found them in a corporate anointing of life. So, again, this is not the time to sit on the sidelines, it is the time to run! Having said all this, let us now refine the type of race we are in by classifying it as a marathon relay!

Why is it so important to look at the race as a marathon instead of a dash? Well, there are some stark differences between the dash and marathon in the actual running of them and in the way you prepare and train for them. The dash is run with one thing in mind. Start quick and accelerate throughout the race. Indeed, the dash is said to be won or lost at the starting blocks. When racers train for the dash they spend most of the time perfecting ?getting out of the blocks?. The 100 meter dash for example is usually won in about 9 seconds in world class competition. The others who place 2nd or 3rd are only slower by fractions of a second. This means a race can be won or lost simply by the first lunge at the start. The marathon isn't begun in the same way. Usually, the contestants are standing at the start and are not too concerned with whom is in the lead at the beginning. In fact, most of the runners don't want to take the lead at first until they know how the others are pacing themselves. The worst thing a long distance runner can do is be lured out of his pace and start running another man's race. So the marathon is won or lost mostly during the race itself and involves a mental battle as well as a physical one.

The long distance race is run mentally as much as physically. Each marathon has a runner known as a rabbit. He can't stand not being in the lead from start to finish and so starts at a fast pace and takes the lead. But, as a rule, the rabbit hardly ever wins! I was thinking on this and my mind went to the many amongst us whom seem physically weak with so many ailments and life-threatening situations. My wife is one of these that has been so afflicted in the body that it could discourage them as they see and hear those who have never been sick in their life go racing by them and seem to regard the afflicted with suspicion as to their walk in God. I went to her recently and told her the Lord said not to run after the rabbit but stay in the race that God has called us to run. The prize of life isn't to those who run the swiftest at the beginning, it is to those who endure to the end! Hallelujah!

Another way the marathon differs from the dash is where it is run and its condition of terrain. The dash is run on a smooth surface with no obstacle except the wind. The marathon is run cross country and is filled with obstacles along the course. They can include ditches, small creeks, long hills, logs, woods, fast dogs, etc., etc., Many run a race that is obstacle free, going to any length to avoid anything that would suggest effort on their part. During the marathon the runner must stay with the course that is marked out for him. For some, obstacles in life mean they are off course and they stay in the area of least resistance. I'm afraid they are running the wrong race. This race is meant to try our resolve and test our faith. What if Paul was of that mind that seeks a trouble free walk and complained to God the minute any ditch came up or a log had to be jumped? On the contrary this man that was let down a wall in a basket to save his life and was ship-wrecked and many other things has this to say concerning his race.

2 Tim. 4:5-8 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that

love his appearing. (KJV)

No bellyaching here! Paul was prepared to run a cross country marathon! He had the right mental attitude and was trained on the backside of the desert to cross every obstacle and overcome every thing that resisted the Gospel. Are you ready to run the race? Then quit complaining and start running!

Not only must we be equipped with the right mental attitude to run the marathon, we must have the right equipment covering us. You can't run effectively with the wrong attire. For instance, some are running the race with combat boots as a part of their racing attire. Now, army boots have their place but one place they are not suited for is in a race. Of course, it depends if you are in this day to finish the course and obtain the crown of life, or if you just plain love war and plan to spend the rest of your days fighting flesh. As for me, I'm tired of fighting large men with small minds. I'm getting in the race, and leaving these others up to the Lord. I've got some light weight track shoes on my feet and am in the process of getting rid of all my extra baggage that hinders me in the race.

Heb. 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (KJV)

I would like to address the most interesting aspect of this race that we are running and this is something that will refine the type of race we are in even more. An important feature of this race is in it being a ?relay?. The relay race is one of the most unique events in the world of running. It has many rules that set it apart from the individual races.

One feature concerning the relay is that it is a corporate effort made by a certain number of individuals. Each segment of the race is individually run, but the end result of winning or losing is determined by the overall achievement of the runners as a whole. In other words, a team of runners can be behind their opponents in three out of four segments of the race, only to have the last runner overtake his opponent and win the race. Now, when the trophy is given at the winners stand, all the runners obtain the prize, not just the last runner, because the race is won or lost according to the total effort of each individual! Praise the Lord!

This is why we do not have any special advantage over the generations that have passed before this great day of revelation and anointing. Each age of God's plan of redemption ran the race with whatever strength and spiritual ability they had available to them. Some ran swiftly and excelled in their calling, others ran slower and lost ground. But the Lord has reserved a generation of ministry for the last leg of this race. They are overtaking death and corruption in their earth and will overtake the enemy and cross over the line that signifies the finish of mans order and bring an end to suffering for all creation! It is important to understand the corporate aspect of the relay and how this will affect the whole creation of God. Whatever generation wins the race, there will be an immediate cry of victory from every creature from Adam on down, because if one wins, all win! Oh, I pray the Spirit quickens this wonderful truth to you and you quit running for yourself and start running for creation. All it is going to take is someone to break the barrier of flesh and follow

Jesus into the holy of holies. Not in the form of knowledge that such a place exists, but in a 24 hour life. becoming like Enoch who walked into God until he broke the barrier and was not. I was shocked to learn a long time ago that my destiny wasn't to become something, but to become nothing! Just a little old not!

Another great thing about this truth involving the one individual that is to be the first to break through, (someone has to be first, but as the Bible declares, the first will be last and the last will be first, get it?), is this individual may be a woman, a man, a child, an American, an Asian, an Indian, an old man, a young man, a part of your fellowship, someone you never met, or it just may be you! Why should it matter who makes it first, so long as someone does make it through? My whole being says come Lord Jesus, in whatever vessel you choose because I know that the instant that someone crosses over, there will be a corporate redemption take place throughout the elect of God and we will possess the land from the least to the greatest!

So, the relay involves certain principles and rules that the sprint, which is strictly an individual race, does not. In fact, Jesus did not run an individual race as many in the Church world would make it sound. They declare that it is impossible for us to be like Him in this life, our only hope being to either fly or die! But the Scripture says this.

Romans 8:29 - For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (KJV)

The modern relay is run with an instrument that each runner must pass to the next runner. This object is called a baton. The purpose of the baton is to prove to the officials of the race that there was a continuity from the first runner to the last. This is also a vital aspect of our spiritual race. The baton is evidence that there was an exchange from the hands of one runner to the other runner and is required at the finish line to allow the prize to be given. Understand, a runner can finish the race in front of his opponent, but if he doesn't have the baton in hand when he does then the prize is given to his opponent. You would be surprised how many relays have been run with this sad scenario being repeated as the runner could not bring himself to go back and pick up a fallen baton and risk losing the race. So, he ran without the evidence of continuity just to prove that he could individually win the race. The fact is, that although winning this leg soothed his ego, he lost the race for his team members and as a result none of them received the prize. As I said before, the sprint is often won or lost at the start as the runner lunges out of the starting blocks, but the relay is often lost during the hand-off of the baton. Many today think they can run by themselves and actually prefer it that way because of the burden of bearing up the brethren who are weak and weary. All we that run in God, love to feel the spiritual wind of this Day blow against our face and see the ground gobbled up under us in great strides of revelation and personal blessing. However, how many times have we had our hearts tugged at by the Spirit of God concerning our brethren whom we see struggling in their infirmities and hear him say, ?I was in prison and you visited me not, I was naked and you didn't clothe me, I was hungry and you fed me not?? Believe me, we will not be judged by our speed of personal achievement, but on the overall shape of our fellow members.

Each runner is required to pass off the baton at a designated area with a limited length of track within which to complete the transfer. In a close race the actual handing off of the baton is a critical step and practiced repeatedly in the preparation of the race.

Remember, if the baton is dropped, the runner must go back and retrieve it before he can go on. The advancing runner must make sure the baton is firmly in the grasp of the next runner before letting go and the one he is passing to must make sure he doesn't yank it out of the hands of the former runner. For a split second both have possession of the baton and one must let go and the other hang on.

This transfer is relevant to us in our spiritual race as it signifies the transfer of glory from one age to the following age as seen throughout the Word of God. David and Saul had a particularly rough hand off as Saul was reluctant to let David inherit the baton of the kingship of Israel. Whereas John the Baptist readily recognized Jesus as the next leg of His race and the transfer was made in the middle of the Jordan River as John proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!". We also are going through an exchange of glory and transferring of power and authority in this day and we must be willing to clutch the baton that is passed to us in a fluid and corporate motion. Each runner that obtains the baton inherits from the former runner all that he has accomplished during his leg, both good and bad!

So, we must be prepared to use the good things that have been passed onto us and overcome the likewise inherited deficiencies in order to win the race. Many great men and women of God have given their lives for the Gospel and for the sakes of future believers and we have now entered into their labors, inheriting their faith and courage, their singleness of purpose and love of creation. Often when I read the 11th Chapter of Hebrews I find myself feeling unworthy to be included on the same team with these spiritual giants of faith, but I believe the same spirit that urged them on to exploits of faith is resident in me and also will quicken us that are in this present age and renew us with Life from the same river that they drank from which is even now bubbling up from our bellies, an endless source of glory and power.

After the exchange of the baton is successfully accomplished, what happens to the runner that has passed off the baton? Well, there is first, a wonderful feeling of a job well done! You cannot imagine the joy of seeing the next runner taking off from the passing off area, baton in hand, looking so fresh and strong when the former runner was so winded and weary! The exchange was successful and you have the confidence of knowing that the coach has saved the best runner for the last. Prophets of old had glimpses of this last runner and wrote of his power and speed. They saw things in visions and dreams that convinced them that it was worth it to lose their lives in the midst of persecution and torture and to sing praises to God as flames licked at their bodies tied to stakes. Some were fed to lions to the enjoyment of evil rulers, and others were made to watch as their husbands and wives and children were slaughtered before their very eyes, all because they refused to drop out of the race. The baton was passed regardless of the price. And now, if you could look down into your spiritual hands, my friend, you would see a battered, bloody baton, touched by hands that haven't been written in books and movies were not made about them, their names aren't etched in stone, but they are those just men made perfect who are found in Mt. Zion, a general assembly, an innumerable company of messengers that kept the faith, fought the fight, and with faithful resolve, ran the Race! Now, these saints have taken up the cheer of creation, urging the new runner on toward the finish, instructing, counseling, petitioning them onward in their God, knowing this is that that the prophets saw from afar off, the composite runner of all that went before, the one that will allow them to take their place with him at the winners circle and triumphantly proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord of Lords and King of Kings, yesterday, today, and forevermore!

Not only is the baton passed by those that have gone to the invisible heavens in the Lord, but we who remain and are alive in God will also have to pass through the heavens. Each realm of glory that we pass through will have an area of transfer in it. The old must give way to the new, providing a constant state of change in the heavens. Throughout the plan of the ages there is a constant cycle of process, which involves birth, life, death, re-birth. Each leg of the race is run to its completion and then gives way to the next stage. So let us not drive our stakes down into the earth, but allow the Lord to renew us by His Word and let us pray for a refreshing from the presence of our God.

Naturally, what has happened in the past usually repeats itself throughout history. It is no different today. Many young ministry in this day feel the change at hand and in their youth and eagerness to see it brought to pass have cast aside the elders in the body. Once again my thoughts go to David and his ascension to the throne of Israel. Samuel comes seeking the next King that the Lord has shown him is of the house of Jesse. After viewing all the obvious sons of Jesse, all of which have the physical attributes but lacking the stuff that God demands, he asks if there isn't any more sons. Yes, but he is just a boy tending the sheep. Young David is summoned and Samuel drenches him with the anointing oil and proclaims him King of Israel. What a word he received! Just as many youthful ministry in our day have had prophets anoint them heirs of an order that is being passed to them by God. But David never let his ego get in the way of his love for Saul. Consequently, with several opportunities presenting themselves to David to hurry the process along, he refuses to put a hand to Saul, calling him the anointed of the Lord!

I am sure we all want the Lord to do what must be done quickly, but may I say that we must run at His pace and be patient. If we ever needed the voice of experience and age it is now. Instead of shoving aside those who have lived through the passing away of several ages because we think them to be "old order", let us give an ear to what they have learned as they traversed this perilous journey. I pray that respect for the Ministry that God has instituted in our midst would once again be found in the hearts of the people and not youthful jealousies or competitions.

At the same time, the ministry in our midst that have been Patriarchs to us in the Spirit and have been used in the past must realize the presence of a new order and administration of that order. Instead of fighting against the change that we all know is happening to each one of us, let us rest in God and find our place in the order. As anyone knows that have run any length at all, there is a period during the run when your body rebels against you and you are short of breath and weary of muscle. Every stride is a struggle and you are entertaining thoughts of stopping. But if one perseveres and refuses to give way to the rebellion and continues to run, the most amazing thing happens! Suddenly you feel a release go through your whole body and your lungs are once again full of air. The muscles in your body become relaxed and your stride is easy and fluid. This phenomenon is known as **the second wind**. The runner is raptured into a realm of mental and physical rest while he is still running at the same if not greater pace than when he was hurting. Science has discovered the body releases drug-like substances into the bloodstream and actually gives the runner a narcotic-like euphoria that is in itself addictive. I feel if we will just hold our ground and ignore all the complaining going on in the body of Christ we are all in store for a "second wind" of Christ that will take us to a realm where each man can rest in his calling. As a result, the needs of the body will be met more readily and we will see salvation and restoration on every realm.

In summary, this is not a time to sit down and drop out. It is a time to gird up our loins and run the race set before us. It must be run at God's pace and will be a mental as well as a spiritual contest. We must have the mind of the marathon runner, not the sprinter. Our goal is not physically seen yet, but we run with all that is within us, knowing if we do not cross the finish line our team-mate will and we will all win together. Do not drop the baton, but yield to the will of God and be assured of this one thing. Our forerunners have kept the faith, ran the course, went by another resurrection, having faith that God would raise up a generation that would not go by the grave but would be ordained to cross over from death to life and bring to completion every runners hope that ran before them. I can hear the groaning of creation as they cheer us on to the crown of life. Don't let the cares of this world and the selfish desires of your own flesh keep you from running. Shake yourself and may God give you a second wind and breathe His life into you. Many have been sitting so long doing nothing, they will have to start out again by walking, and then picking up the pace until they break into a jog and after a while you will once again be a contender for the prize! Run friend, run like your life depends on it because it does. Not only yours, but all of creation. The Race is on!

Written By Bob Torango