



RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

Letters of Faith

November 2016

**“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,
let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us,
and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...”**

Hebrews 12:1 NASB

Dearly Beloved,

It was an exciting Olympic season full of thrills, spills, records, and heartbreaking disqualifications. Now we are experiencing another kind of race that is full of unique twists and turns not before seen in our political history. I'm not intending to comment on the political race for the soul of America, but I am freshly reminded that we are all in a serious race towards our personal finish line before the throne of our God, and are commended by the Holy Spirit in us to Go For The Gold.

We are all running a course set by a loving God.

We are all to be running by rules ordained by God.

We are all running with strength provided by God.

We are all running for the real “Gold”: the Glory of GOD!

Psalms 11:5 assures us, **“The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked...”** He never promised us saints a bed of roses, but He did promise that He would help us run victoriously through this life's “race” with His presence and His grace.

None of us knows how long our course is, or how much time He has allotted us to complete it. But we do know this, our course is personally designed by a loving God to make us a testimony of the grace of God. The Apostle Paul stated, **“...I found mercy, in order that in me...Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”** (1 Timothy 1:16)

In the process, we experience the promises in Proverbs 2:8: **“...He guards the course of the just...”** (NIV), and **“...He preserves the way of His godly ones.”** (NASB)

If we submit to the Holy Spirit as our divine coach, we will develop the spiritual muscles we need to climb to the higher levels of faith. Don't let anyone kid you...developing new spiritual muscles, growing up, and busting bondages can be painful!

We see new horizons to conquer when we break through old boundaries.

Paul warns us in 2 Timothy 2:5, **“...if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.”** If we ignore God's laws and map book, and strike out on our own, we would do well to remember Jonah! He relaxed in a sense of false peace in the bottom of the boat he chose (going in the wrong direction) until the storm hit, then he had his big fish ride, and then finally, in the fear of the Lord, he obeyed God's directions.

The Apostle Paul recognized that running the race to win takes self-control as well as perseverance: **“...everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things.”** (1 Corinthians 9:25a) Self-control is one of the rules of the race for Life, as well as being a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Another rule of our race is found in Hebrews 12:1&4 AMPC: **“...let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us...”** Most of us **“...have not yet struggled and fought agonizingly**

against sin, nor have [we] yet resisted and withstood to the point of pouring out [our] [own] blood” like Jesus did!

A few years ago, God gave Gretel and me a simple word, “disencumber,” accompanied with Isaiah 43:18-19: **“Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it?”** He gently began to show us that some of what we had received from Him early in our race, He gave us because it was our heart’s desire, but now were encumbrances in the course that He was requiring us to run.

For example, a wonderfully comfortable warm-up suit becomes a burden as the race heats up. We needed to seriously face His demand to lay aside all encumbrances to our running the race in righteousness, and especially to strip off, throw away, lay aside, and struggle against that sin which so easily, deftly, clings to us and entangles us. Nothing like Jesus endured on the cross—nor at all like Jesus’ travail in the garden! But real and personally painful to us, nonetheless!

Renouncing the familiar spirit that had controlled my eating habits since I was a kid is just one example of an encumbrance that had to go. It had been weighing (weighting) me down for years and it had to be laid aside so that I could run a swifter, longer race unencumbered by unnecessary poundage. Be kind—I’m still working on it!

The Holy Spirit comes alongside us to encourage and exhort us to press-on and to overcome! But the un-holy spirit comes too. He comes to coddle, to tempt us to want to be comfortable, to take the easy way, to lead us to choose compromise, not confrontation unto conformation! He attempts to overcome us with weariness, complacency, and compromise; but the Word of God calls us to endurance, not indolence nor indulgence, and to press-on to purity, not piety!

The rules of our race include God’s discipline to train and instruct us: **“...My Son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him...He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”** (Heb. 12:5,10-11)

The first discipline we learn from our natural parents contains the word “no.” Judson Cornwall wrote a great book called *What is There About No You Do Not Understand?* Be prepared to hear the Lord require you to do things you’d just as soon not do, or insist upon waiting for *His* right time to answer your prayers, or to even say “NO!”

The obstacles or degrees of difficulty in our course are designed to work maturity in us:

To learn how to forgive, we have to experience hurt.

To learn how to judge righteously, we have to observe some weird behavior.

To learn how to endure, there have to be long times of unrewarded perseverance.

To learn how to be faithful, we have to resist following advice to take a tempting shortcut.

To experience great victories in our life, we must fight great battles.

To have an exciting testimony, we have to pass, and sometimes survive, a test!

Not all of our experiences were in God’s original course design. He will use every one of our transgressions to further teach us the joy of knowing Him as the rescuer as well as the discipliner.

Sure, Satan would try to tempt us off-course. That is why Hebrews 12:2-3 was written: **“...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...”** we are to **“...consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that [we] may not grow weary and lose heart.”**

Jesus ran the course God gave Him to run without complaint! He ran it for the glory of God, His Father and, **“...God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.”** (Philippians 2:9-10)

We all must develop the guts to **“consider it all joy”** to be tested and tried as James wrote in James 1:2-4: **“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”**

The Lord delights in granting us the grace, His enabling power and strength, to finish our course! **“He will keep you strong and steady to the very end, making your character mature so that you will be found innocent on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is forever faithful and can be trusted to do this in you...”** (1 Corinthians 1:8-9 TPT).

The prize is worth it! **“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has passed the test, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”** (James 1:12)

Paul cried out in Philippians 3:12-14, **“...I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Hear that admonishment to not look back at the falls and failures and the sins and stains, but knowing that you are forgiven and reconciled with the Father, look forward and press on to the coveted prize of eternal life. **“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”** (John 17:3)

We are running with a golden goal before us and the eager expectation (hope) of being able to hear the most wonderful voice in eternity welcome us at the finish line with The Gold, *“Well done, My good and faithful servant, enter into My joy.”*

God willing, we will all finish well together.



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