

7/31/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

She was tired, sore, and feeling more than a little discouraged. The years of training had taken their toll on her body, and her latest visit with the doctor resulted in the strong encouragement to take some time off so her body could heal.

Now the voice in her head telling her to just give up and withdraw from the competition was getting stronger. “It’s not worth it. The pain, the struggle...it’s too much. Besides, you’re never going to win. None of your times have been good enough. You simply set your goal too high. Why waste all this time trying to win a prize that you’re never going to get anyway?”

Have you ever heard voices like that—not about the urge to give up training for a race, but the temptation to give up on being a Christian? “It’s not worth it. The lifestyle, the ridicule...it’s too much. Besides, you’re not good enough. Look at all the mistakes you’ve made.”

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:14

If these thoughts, or any like them, have entered your mind, please recognize them for what they are: lies straight from the devil. The truth is that the prize of heaven has already been won for you by Jesus. It’s not a prize that you need to win by leading a certain kind of life. Jesus led that perfect life for you. Then he gave up his life, shed his

innocent blood and died as the price demanded for your sins. His resurrection from the grave guarantees that the prize of eternal life in heaven is yours.

Don't give up on following Jesus. Keep pressing on toward the goal of heaven. It's hard. The rest of the world will continue to ridicule you, and the devil will continue to whisper lies in your ear. But that's just what they are—lies. The truth is that the prize has already been won and given to you by your loving Savior, Jesus.

Rejoice in that unchangeable fact and make the apostle Paul's words your own. "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Prayer: *Jesus, my Savior, thank you for winning the eternal prize of heaven for me. Help me to keep my eyes focused on that prize and give me the strength to press on even when following you is a struggle. In your name I ask it. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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