**The Greatest Race of All Time!**

**Hebrews 12**

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** *24Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.26Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

**Paul describes the Christian life as a RACE. Three questions concerning this race:**

* How do we enter this race?
* What should we expect to encounter during this race?
* How do we run to win the prize—known as THE Victor’s Crown?

**HOW DOES ONE ENTER THIS RACE?**

**Matthew 7:13-14** *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road the leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it*.”

1. **What does Jesus mean?** He is explaining that there are only two paths, two races, if you will, in this life. One is the race that leads to eternal destruction in hell; the other race leads to eternal life in heaven.
2. Jesus is the **forerunner** of every single person who is running the race on the narrow road towards Heaven.
3. How do you enter through the narrow gate?

**John 1:12** *Yet to all* ***who received*** *him, to those* ***who believed*** *in his name, he gave the right to be children of God*.

**WHAT SHOULD WE, AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS, EXPECT TO ENCOUNTER ALONG THE WAY TOWARDS THE FINISH LINE? Hebrews 12:1-3**

The writer of Hebrews gives us **three commands**, which all begin with the phrase, ‘Let us!’

1. Let us **throw off** any weight, or encumbrance, and any sin that has entangled us.

**Colossians 3:5-10** ***Put to death****, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8* ***But now you must rid yourselves of all such things*** *as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and* ***filthy language*** *from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being* ***renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator*.**

1. **Persevere** (endure) all the way to the finish line.
2. Always, always, … **keep your eyes on Jesus**.

**WHAT SHOULD WE EXPEXCT TO ENDURE DURING THIS RACE?** **Hebrews 12:4-13**

* Persecution…**Discipline**…training… and correction by our Heavenly Father.
* What does this discipline entail?
1. As believers, we must **train**. It requires **discipline**. We must SPEND DAILY TIME in prayer and God’s Word.
2. As believers, we should expect God to **punish us**, to **correct u**s, when we get out of line. This part can be very painful. God’s corrective actions can be quite severe.

• **Egregious sins** can bring about extreme guilt and shame. These are **God’s pruning shears** to move us to repentance, so that we turn away from our sin and discover life again.

**Philippians 1:6** *Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*.

**Philippians 3:13-14** *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

**HOW DO WE RUN THIS RACE TO WIN THE PRIZE—THE VICTOR’S CROWN? Hebrews 12:14-29**

My plan consists of **SIX ACTION** steps:

1. I plan to live the rest of my life, **as holy as I can,** in the power of the Holy Spiritwho lives in me. You may say, “Russ, it is impossible in this sinful world in which we live!” To that I say, all things are possible with Christ—even a holy life.

In **1 Peter 1:14-15**, Peter writes,

*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy*.”

1. I plan to live my life with a **healthy fear** of God.
2. I have a number of very close Christian brothers who have permission to **hold me accountable**.
3. I plan to always be **involved in a Bible study** like this one, so I can grow in my faith and become stronger in my walk with God.
4. I will remain **committed to, an involved in, my local church**.
5. Finally, I will live with a **heavenly mind-set** knowing that this world is not my home, and knowing that one day I will have to stand before God and give an account of my life. “For our God is a consuming fire” and one day, all the world will see this.