

The Christian Life is a Marathon**1) That Requires Focus****2) That Requires Discipline***Olympic Marathon Running*

- This coming July/Aug, summer of 2020, in Tokyo JP, the world witness another installment Summer Olympics. Officially: “Games of 32nd Olympiad.” Greatest athletes in world gather in Tokyo (w/ whole world watching) to compete all kinds events: bball, vball; biking, swimming; gymnastics & perhaps most ancient form of athletic comp there is: foot racing, running events. Concept of footrace is simple: you run, faster everyone else; get to finish line first; win – simple as that (cert not easy do). Diff types running events: sprints, run fast as can short dist (100m dash); few secs. And long dist races, like 5k, 10k, where have pace self, so have energy to run long distance. But longest race for runners in Olympics: called marathon – a grueling 26.2 mile footrace that takes even best of runners over 2 hrs finish. Now, you don’t have to be in Olympics to run marathon. Held across country, like Boston. Stickers on cars, 26.2 (they ran). Maybe you’ve run marathon; maybe you enjoy running. I for one, never much runner; I’ve done before; my run: horiz collapse – not pretty sight. But some love run, even those 26.2 mile marathons.
- Christian life, marathon (CLM). Not saying have be runner to be Xian. But saying: living Xian life, following J as Savior, as Xian, is like running marathon. Long dist race, not sprint. Takes long time, lot endurance. You aren’t competing vs other runners, but are fighting vs fatigue and pushing self to make to finish line. That’s your goal. CLM: requires focus, discipline.

The Christian Life is a Marathon

- That’s what writer to Hebs says in Heb 12. **Vs. 1c**. That race is our Xian life of faith in J. And there are lot ways that living Xian life is like running marathon.
 - **Vs. 1b (throw off...)**. If running race, not: big steel-toe boots, thick winter jacket, backpack filled heavy books. If running race, carry as little weight as poss; wear sleek clothing, good running shoes so that nothing can slow you down. In Xian race, we need throw off everything that hinders/slows down – “**sin... entangles.**” Reminds: net. In football (switching sports), agility drill where players high-step thru ropes course – net. Imagine running race thru that net / ropes course – tangled up, fall to ground right away! Sins in our lives like nets under feet: trip/trap us. You’ve got get your sin out your life, if going run this Xian marathon; otherwise, going fall to ground, lose race. You’ve got **vs. 1b**.
 - **Vs. 1a**. Go Olympics, any sporting event, you’ll find fans in stands, watching, cheering on athletes. And if you’re one of athletes, very encg have people cheering you on. In ch just before this reading (in Heb 11): famous “heroes of faith” chapter of Bible – talks re people like Noah, Abraham, Moses, whole list of God’s faithful people who make up this “**great cloud of witnesses.**” It’s like they’re cheering us on as we run this Xian race. “Keep up good work” they say; “we’ve run this race; finished our marathon; and you can, too.” And we can finish this race, by God’s grace, since **vs. 1a**, cheering us on as we run.
 - **Vs. 1c (perseverance)** – endurance. Need stamina to go distance; can’t get fatigued too fast. I can’t imagine how people run 26.2 miles. But Xian life is long race, too, w/ obstacles that wear us down, make us want quit. When tragedy takes place in your life, some disaster, you may ask: why keep running; what’s point?! Xian life is difficult, grueling marathon. Must fight fatigue, run w/ perseverance.
 - Lesson calls it “**race marked out for us.**” When town like Burl does 5k through city, they’ve got mark path carefully. If you need runners turn left, better put good sign there (left), otherwise runners get off course. God has marked out our course for us. Knows plans he has for us; directs our lives with his love. But smtms don’t like his path. We want turn right when he: left. We want follow our path instead following his path, bec we think ours is better. But God’s path leads us to heaven; that’s what’s on other side of finish line. So we want be sure follow God’s path, correct course, “**race marked out for us,**” by God himself. CLM.

It Requires Focus

- But most imp way CLM: running this race requires focus. **Vs. 1c-2a**. We must always focus on J, fix our eyes on J, as we run this race. If you’re running in track meet, you’re never going win race if look around as run. Can’t look back (beating); into stands (friends). If you want win, got look straight ahead, focus on

finish line. Same is true in Xian marth: got look straight ahead, focus on finish line – bec that’s where J is. J is at finish line, waiting for you there. And you’ve got to focus on him as you run.

- He is vs. **2b (PP)**. Pioneer – does something first; perfecter – completes/finishes task. So J: first/last; alpha/omega; beg/end. J started race first, finished first; now waiting at finish line for you finish your race. His race was grueling marathon, too! **“Endured cross, scorning shame.”** Crucifxn was shameful, terrible way to die. But J endured cross, ran that race, for us, to save us, bec loves us. Then **“sat down... throne God,”** in heaven, where we too will go, bec of J, when we finish our race. And so, vs. **3**. IOW, think re J so you don’t get tired. When you run a race, you get tired. When run Xian race, you get tired. But when you focus on J, fix eyes on J, trust in J, think re J, he helps you not **“grow weary, lose heart.”** CLM, requires focus.

It Requires Discipline

- Also requires discipline. Notice: whole 2nd part this reading compares how God discns us to way father discpns his children. Vs. **7**. Now, I know: some bad dads out there, who not good at this, who over/under-discpn children. But even though some kids have bad exprnc w/ dad, we still recognize imp of fatherly discpn. Ever happen when you growing up, naughty, mom: don’t make me call father. My mom said; Sarah says. I wonder: what makes me bad guy? Smtms all I do as father, give look: tight lips, chin down, furrowed brows – the stern, parent look – smtms all it takes to lay down law. That’s discpn as punishment.
- Here, when says vs. **10**, that’s not talking re punishment so much as talking re (to use athletic analogy) coaching. God coaches us, for our good, like fathers coach children. And if CL really is M that requires discpn, then we need coach help us stay discpned! And that’s what Lord does for us, thru his word.
 - Thru law, God challenges us, rebukes our sinfulness – like angry coach yelling at us from sidelines: “What doing; hustle up; run the play; move ball.” In our Xian race, when we start veer out our lane on the race track, when start follow temptn that gets us off course, God’s law jolts us back on track, gets back in lane, rebukes our sins. Vs. **11a**. An angry coach is frightening; so is an angry God!
 - But thru gospel, God also comforts us; forgives, encourages us – like coach cheering us on, clapping for us, encouraging us: “Good job, great play, keep it up, you’re gonna make it.” J coaches us: “Stay strong; I’m with you always; I forgive your past mistakes; keep going, you’re almost there; there’s a crown for you when finish.” That’s J, our encouraging coach, whose discpn/coaching vs. **11b**.

So Run Your Race!

- CLM. In 1 Cor, Ap Paul: **“Do 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. Everyone 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” (9:24-25)**. J is at the finish line, ready to give you your crown. So run your race! Run the marathon of your Xian life: with focus (fix eyes on J) and with discipline – as Paul says in Php 3, **“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, [press] on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called [you] heavenward in Christ Jesus” (3:13b-14)**.

Hebrews 12:1-11

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” ⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.