

The Old Paths

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“You’re In A Marathon, Not A Sprint”

Jarrod Jacobs

A marathon is defined as, “any long distance race ... a foot race on a course measuring 26 miles, 385 yards.”

(Webster’s). In defining the word “sprint,” we learn that it is, “to race or move at full speed, esp. for a short distance, as in running, rowing, etc.” (ibid.). Just as the definitions for these words are different, so also is the training for each respective sport. In sprinting, one wishes to get from point A to point B in the quickest time, expending all energy to get there before one’s competitors. In the case of a marathon, one wishes to get from point A to point B as quickly as possible, but must also realize that he cannot expend all energy in the beginning, or he will not even finish the race! In a marathon, one tries to build up to a certain speed, and then, maintain this speed consistently for the rest of the race. If a sprinter and a marathoner were to race one another, a sprinter may beat the marathon runner initially; but after a short distance, the sprinter is winded, while the marathon runner is just “hitting his stride”, ready to run the rest of the race.

Why are we making this contrast? It is because such an illustration fits the lives of many Christians. It is an unfortunate fact that some new Christians “burn out” rather quickly after becoming a Christian. These

Christians are excited about having a new relationship with Christ and with brethren, and wish to learn more and more. In fact, they are sincere in their desire to want to do all that they can for Christ. However, after a few months, they become tired (“winded”?) and realize that this particular course is longer than they thought, because it is to last for the rest of their lives. It is not possible to run for a time, and then “coast” on our momentum. We must keep moving, but they have already become “winded” and tired and then wish to give up.

Why does this happen? There might be several contributing factors, but ultimately, I believe a fact forgotten by many is that living as a Christian is a marathon, and not a sprint! Hebrews 12:1 compares the life of a Christian to a race. There, we read, “*Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*”. Notice that we are to run this race of life “*with endurance*.” This race is not something that will be completed in a day or a week, but it demands that we endure for the rest of our lives! Are we conditioned and trained in the right way? We need to be if we are to make this commitment to Christ. Furthermore, we read in II Timothy 4:7 the apostle Paul’s words that he has “*finished the race*.” When did his “race” end? It ended at his death. He realized he was soon to die, and understood that

his “marathon” was quickly coming to a close. Yet, he also understood that he could not be lax nor let up in his running. This is because he knew that if he had preached the truth to others, but did not himself obey it, he would be “*disqualified*” (I Cor. 9:24-27). These are but a few of the passages which compare a man’s life to a race that is completed at death. Yes friends, let us appreciate the fact that the life of a Christian is a marathon which demands our endurance, faithfulness, and stamina if we will see Heaven! Living as a Christian is a marathon, not a sprint.

As Christians, why don’t we take the time to examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5) and make sure we are still running the race as we ought? Perhaps you have become “winded”, downtrodden, and just want to give up. Take this opportunity to return to the Lord and renew your commitment to the race that leads us from earth to Heaven. Remember, that there are folks who are cheering you on in this marathon (Heb. 12:1). They want you to succeed, but they cannot run the race for you! We all have a race to run, so let us do so with patience, zeal, and a firm resolve that we will not allow temptation, and the allure of this world to trip us up! Let us keep our eyes on the goal of Heaven (Col. 3:1-2), and “look to Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) as we press “*on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:14)!

Thought:

A mule can’t pull while kicking; and cannot kick while pulling! The same thing goes for people. Are you a “puller” or a “kicker”?

Word Received, Saved, Before Baptism

Larry Ray Hafley, Cookeville, TN

It has been argued that since one receives the word of God before he is baptized that he is saved before baptism. What shall we say to this idea?

First, it is true that sinners "received the word of God." There are those who receive it in "an honest and good heart" and who "keep it" and are saved by it (Lk. 8:15; Acts 2:41; 1 Thess. 2:13).

However, is it true that people are saved before baptism because they "gladly received (the) word" prior to being baptized (Acts 2:41)? If so, then men are saved before they believe, because the noble men of Berea "received the word with all readiness of mind" before they believed (Acts 17:11, 12). Thus, if "receiving" the word of God before baptism proves one is saved before he is baptized, then the Bereans were saved before they believed, since they are said to have "received" the word before they believed.

Cornelius had the mind-set to receive the word of God before he heard it (Acts 10:33). Did his receptive disposition save him before he heard the word of God? No, of course not (Acts 11:14).

Too, if one's receiving the word of God proves he is saved before he is baptized, it also causes problems for the "once in grace, always in grace" advocates. Jesus spoke of those who "receive the word with joy" (Lk. 8:13). Now, according to the claim above, those who "receive the word" are saved, thus, these whom Jesus said had received the word of God

were saved. Next, note what Jesus said of these saved ones - "and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Lk. 8:13). These who received the word, believed, and were saved, what do they do? They, "in time of temptation fall away"!

Many who say we are saved when we "receive the word" do not believe a saved one can "fall away" and be lost, but Jesus said some do. It will not do to say they "never were truly saved," for the Lord said they not only had received the word, but they had also believed it. According to the argument with which we began, and according to Protestant churches, that means they were saved. Now, Jesus says, they "fall away."

So, in trying to show that one is saved before baptism when he receives the word of God, they have, in Hamanic fashion, hanged themselves on their own gallows.

"A pessimist is someone who complains about the noise when opportunity knocks."
- Leslie E. Sloan

Below is the front page of an old tract that was recently sent to me. Read it carefully, and study this good Bible teaching (Acts 17:11). -JJ

The Church of Christ

By J. C. ROADY, Evangelist
Sullivan, Indiana

It was built by divine authority, Christ is the builder. Matt. 16: 13-20. He had all authority. Matt. 28: 18-19. It was given Him because of His obedience to the Father. Phil. 2: 8-11.

It wears a Scriptural name. Rom. 16: 16. 1 Tim. 3: 15. Heb. 12: 22-23.

It has an infallible head. Col. 1: 18. Eph. 1: 22-23. Eph. 5-23.

It has a sure foundation. Eph. 2: 19-22. Acts 4: 11-12. 2 Tim. 2: 19.

It has a complete organization. Col. 2: 9-10. Eph. 3: 10-21.

It has an open door. John 10: 9. John 14:6. Rev. 3: 7.

It has a living Advocate. 1 John 2: 1. Rom. 8: 34. Heb. 7: 25.

It has a perfect guide. THE BIBLE. The reason they take no other guide is because the Bible reveals the mind of God. Its doctrine is holy. Its precepts are binding. It gives light to guide you. It gives food to support you. It gives comfort to all that obey it. It will lead you safely through life and will stand by you in death. Ps. 23. It is given us in life and will be opened at the judgment. Rev. 20: 12. It will make us free. John 8: 32. It will sanctify. John 17: 17. It will give us a home. Acts 20: 32. It is inspired. 2 Tim. 3: 16-17.

If you read it believe it and obey it you will be wise, safe and happy.

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