

Winning the Race of Life

We've been on the road the past three weeks, mostly staying as guests in the homes of friends. As we settled in for the nights, most places had a TV set which we turned on to catch up on the news of the day. Of course the big news since 08/08/08 has been centered on the 2008 Olympic Games from China. It seems that everyone in the country has been interested in what is happening with our athletes on the other side of the world. Even on Main Street in Sturgis this year, many people were talking about a different kind of "rice burner."

The world I live in is full of last minute decisions and "see what happens" results. We aren't able to make long range plans because we live day to day - in the short range. The world of the Olympic athlete is all about long range. Some of these athletes have been training for years for the chance to participate for a few minutes in their specialized event. They endure years of agonizing training so that they can compete before an impartial clock or international judges against other finely-tuned athletes for a medal of gold, silver, or bronze. It's not even chrome! In one race, an American swimmer lost her chance for a gold medal by seven one-hundredths of a second. That's losing by less than the blink of an eye after four long 20 years of preparation and expectations of winning. Another athlete, who had been capable of near perfection after years of training, experienced a momentary bobble on the parallel bars, which cost him a chance at individual gold. Another gymnast inadvertently stepped over a line and all his sought-after success melted away in an instant. I watched some of these "mistakes," and they didn't seem to be that bad to me. In fact, to the observer of some of these contests, there was really no way to tell the difference between the winners and the losers. The outcome will be left up to the clock, the judges, the lines, the targets, and, of course, the rules. And then, some will do their absolute best and still come up short of victory.

In our world of instant decisions and short term plans, it is even more difficult for us to figure out who wins and who loses. We don't like to think about the clock which is running out on all of us . . . tick, tock, tick, tock. We don't want to think that all of us are going to stand before a judge someday, when it will be determined whether we are winners or losers. We know that we have not been staying in bounds, or following the rules, or hitting the target. Most of us know that we have made a mess of our lives, and are hoping that there isn't a God to answer to. We hope that there is nobody keep



ing score, or that we will be graded on a curve. In contrast to the Games, we have spent little or no time preparing for a life of many years and an eternal existence when this life is done. We figure that we have plenty of time left to make amends and get ready for whatever comes next. We must take a lesson from our athletes, and prepare while there is still time. Read what King Solomon wrote about this race of life:

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them. Ecclesiastes 9:11, 12.

Solomon's statement reflects the worldliness of our age and the idea that time and chance have a way of determining the outcomes of life. Life, after all, is just the product of a big, random bang, not the design of a loving Creator. If we assume that life is a gamble, we leave ourselves at the mercy of time and chance, rather than falling on the mercy of God. God knows that our ways are wayward, and that our lives are not perfect. Therefore, He has provided us with a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both perfect and the perfecter of those who trust in Him. If we will repent of our sin and turn to God, He will save us from ourselves, and show us how to prepare for the challenges of real life. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, and arose victoriously from the grave. The Apostle Paul said, ". . . thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57

Victory and success in this life and the next is not a matter of chance. Neither is it dependent upon your own best efforts, since no one consistently even does his best.

We've missed our chance to be perfect, but Jesus stands ready to include you in the victory He has already won. Time is running out, but there is still time for you to come to Jesus today. You can still be a winner along with Him.

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