

2004 Olympic Edition

Chaplain's Notes

August 2004

"life is for us"

Run for the Prize!

The Olympics are upon us again, and athletes from all over the world are gathering in Athens not just to compete, but to win GOLD!

Arguably one of the most explosive and exciting events is the 100m sprint race. Some of my most outstanding memories have been of watching Carl Lewis in the 1980's power home over the last 40m to overtake his rivals and fly through to victory!

To achieve such a victory requires absolute dedication, and a body which is perfectly trained and fit. Anything less than this will not enable anyone to win the prize! I don't think I have the dedication, let alone the natural talent and body composition, to ever win the 100m at such an elite level!

But I am involved in another race. The prize is not Gold, and it doesn't depend on my natural talent and body make-up. I can be disqualified if I don't compete according to the rules, but I do have a coach who is always keeping a close watch on me!

And, if you didn't already realize it, you, too, are in this race with me!

What is it?

It is the race of life!

Yes, the Bible tells us that life is like a race, and the ultimate prize is heaven!¹ And how do we get it? What do we have to do to be able to win that ultimate prize which is worth so much more than Gold? The Bible tells us that we need to be holy. That means, we need to be pure and without sin. There is no other way to win the prize!

Yes, the race of life is the race to be holy, for "without holiness no one will see the Lord".²

How can you and I be holy? How can you and I be fit for heaven?

Well, if you are anything like me, there is not a hope in hell that I could ever get to heaven in my own strength. There's no way that I could be holy by my own effort. I would need to have a total character transformation, a total change of my heart before I could even hope to get close!

But praise God, He has done the impossible for me! He made it possible for me to get a new heart, to have a total change in my character, by sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sins, by raising Him from the dead, and by giving His Holy Spirit to me because I have confessed my sins, turned from them, and put my trust in Jesus.³



(1) 1Corinthians 9:24,25. (2) Hebrews 12:14. (3) Ezekiel 36:26,27; 1Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 2:37-39.

The same can happen to you, too. Yes, YOU, because Jesus died for you, too! If you confess your sins, turn from them, and put your trust in Jesus, He will also give you a new heart, filling you with a new Spirit so that you now have an inner motivation to do the right thing in life and be holy.⁴ Isn't that great!

However, that is just the beginning of the race. The Bible says we need to press on and *continue* to grow in holiness. That's why it is called a race. God wants us every day to grow to become more like Him in all our attitudes and behaviour.⁵

Now God doesn't just leave us alone to become more holy all by ourself! He has given us supports and helps to do it. For example, He wants us to be part of a local church to get mutual encouragement from others in the race.⁶ He wants us to listen to godly leaders who teach the Bible and can help you in aspects of weakness in your life.⁷ Above all, He has promised to always be with us Himself⁸ and give us encouragement, motivation, and desire from within to do what is right! He is with us and within us to guide us and discipline us - the perfect coach!⁹

But, there are still some things that only we can do, and that we must do, and that God expects us to do, in order to grow in holiness. Here are seven things:

1. Make a promise to run well.

Making a decision from our hearts that we want to be holy is a great first step. Committing ourselves to holiness helps

keep us from wavering. Let us therefore make a deeply personal vow with God, even writing it down and signing it, and then tell someone what you have done. Making a promise like this and then going public with it is a very powerful motivator in the race of life and helps keep us accountable.¹⁰

2. Go into strict training. We do have to learn to "beat our bodies" into submission. We must make the choice to not let our bodies do what they sinfully naturally want to do. I need to "make my body my slave" so that I will not be disqualified from the prize.¹¹

3. Feed your body well. Every elite athlete has a well controlled diet, and from a spiritual perspective, we also need to be feeding our souls well. Four essential ingredients for our 'soul diet' are: regularly meditating on the words of the Bible, praying, worshipping God, and serving others.¹²

4. Throw off things that hinder. Just like 100m sprint athletes strip down to only the bare necessities of clothing to be as light as possible, so we, too, need to get rid of sinful and superfluous activities or habits that will "weigh us down" and hinder us from being holy. For example, in the race to be holy, it could just be that a certain T.V. program you watch is always dragging you down!¹³

5. Run with perseverance. In the race to be holy, we must continue to press on and not give up.¹⁴ Sometimes we might feel like giving up, especially when we see so many other people enjoying life for a while doing the wrong thing! But the Bible says that the Day of Judgement will

(4) Philippians 2:13. (5) 2Corinthians 13:7-11. (6) Hebrews 10:25. (7) Hebrews 13:7,17. (8) Matthew 28:20. (9) John 14:15-17; Hebrews 12:10-13. (10) Psalm 119:106; 76:11a; 56:12; Numbers 30:1-2; cf Acts 18:18. (11) 1Corinthians 9:25,27. (12) Matthew 4:4; Ephesians 6:18; Acts 2:42-47. (13) Hebrews 12:1a. (14) Hebrews 12:1b.

certainly reveal that doing wrong never pays in the long run.¹⁵

6. Don't look back at past mistakes.

The race to be holy is exactly that - a growing process. It is NOT one in which you are expected to be 100% holy from day one and maintain that for the rest of life. The Bible never says that. So don't get hung up over mistakes! With God's help, pick yourself up, confess any wrong doing, learn from it, and keep on going! God loves you, and is encouraging you all the way, so press on! He only gets disappointed when you "sit in the mistake".¹⁶

7. Fix your eyes on Jesus. We have a role model whom we can emulate in this race to be holy, and His name is Jesus! He is our perfect example, and as we study His life, and keep our eyes fixed on Him, we, too, will become more and more like Him in all our thoughts, words, and actions.¹⁷

Where are you in the race? Have you received the Holy Spirit to enable you to be holy? Are you running together

Remember, the Bible says "run in such a way as to get the prize".¹⁸ The prize is heaven - a crown that will last forever. And unlike Gold medals which are normally only for one winner, this prize is for everyone who runs the race well!

Let us pray:

Dear God,

Thank you that you love me and that You want me to go to heaven!

Thank you for sending Jesus so that I could have a new heart, to make it possible for me to get there.

Help me to continue to grow in holiness.

Thank you that my winning the prize of heaven is not based on me being perfect, but based on me growing in perfection, and that my accepting of Jesus as my Saviour and Lord has already got me to "first base", and heading the right direction!

Help me to continue to go that right way!

Thank you, Lord,

Amen.

(15) Psalm 73; Hebrews 11:24-27.

(16) Philippians 3:13b-14; 1John 1:5 - 2:2.

(17) Hebrews 12:2,3. (18) 1Corinthians 9:24b.

If you can't do great things, do small things in a great way!

with other Christians and attending church for mutual encouragement and teaching? Are you fulfilling your responsibilities and persevering in the race, growing in holiness?

(1) 1Corinthians 9:24,25. (2) Hebrews 12:14. (3) Ezekiel 36:26,27; 1Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 2:37-39.

Jesus Loves YOU

(A summary from last month's Community Church Service)

- ◆ "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16)
- ◆ "Jesus loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood" (Revelation 1:5)
- ◆ "Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39)
- ◆ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" - Jesus (John 15:9)

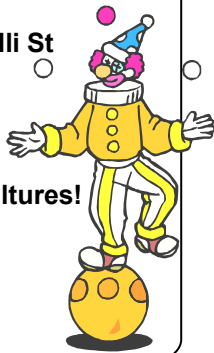
Neighbourhood Festival Day

Saturday, 18th September
10am – 2pm

Darebin Community Health Centre,
Cnr Blake & Crevelli St

Lots of stalls,
entertainment,
information,
sharing of local cultures!

More information
coming soon!



News & Events

You're invited to our next

CELEBRATION SUNDAY

*a Community Church
Service for everyone!!*

Topic:

Life is precious



With special guest:

Dr Mathew Piercy
Intensive Care Unit,
St Vincents Hospital

• **Sunday August 15th**
(the 3rd Sunday of the month)

• **5pm - 6.15pm**
(followed by supper!)



• **Preston Nth East
Primary School Hall**

Bring your whole family!



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A ministry supported by Regent Baptist Church
and LinC Northern Region