

Dec. "Pass the Faith"

How is Your Race?

By James F. Palmer

The year was 1992. Derrick Redmond of Great Britain was favored to win the 400-meter race during the summer Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain. He was ahead of the others, well on his way to winning the gold medal. With only one lap to go, Derrick fell to the ground in agonizing pain. His hamstring muscle had snapped! He could only painfully watch as the others raced past him. Derrick's parents and friends sat in the stands, stunned by what they saw. After years of training and striving to reach his goal, Derrick lay in a pitiful heap on the track. Hundreds of people viewed this spectacle and thought how sad it was for this young man to have to face such a devastating turn of events.

But, then, with great effort and obviously wracked with pain, Derrick rose from the track and began hopping on one leg toward the finish line. Stragglers in the race continued to pass him, but Derrick stayed the course. He only had 100 yards left before he would reach the finish line. Some on the sidelines yelled for him to quit running and to give up.

Suddenly from the stands, a figure was running and jumping over people and chairs, pushing past security guards and hurdling over the retaining wall. It was Derrick's father, Jim Redmond, rushing to his son's side. Jim placed his arm around Derrick's waist and Derrick threw his arm over his dad's shoulder, and together the two of them half bounced, half ran all the way to the finish line. The crowd was on its feet, shouting for Derrick and giving him a thunderous round of applause.

What a momentous occasion! What a marvelous example of love and support. As we look back on the event, we are in awe of the determination of this young man, but we are even more amazed at this father who refused to let anything stand in the way of his son's reaching his goal.

The question to consider is how are we holding up in our Spiritual race? The writer of Hebrews reminds us, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12: 1-2).

Many times, as we race through life, we are in front, confident of a victory, when the unexpected occurs. An event or circumstance we could never have predicted shocks us and tests our faith. What once was a bright outlook becomes dim - overshadowed by hardships. We become down trodden, full of pain, despairing, and disappointed. We think our life's dreams are shattered in that brief moment and we think all is lost. Rather than offering us help and encouragement, the crowd yells for us to give up and stop trying.

Job's friends said as much to him, but Job's response was, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15).

Is our faith like Job's? Do we trust our Father?

If we will stay the course, an amazing thing will happen. Our heavenly Father will pick us up, lift us high above the pain, and carry us all the way to the finish line. God will give us the strength and courage to keep on. Psalm 46:1 tells us "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." In his final words of encouragement to the children of Israel, Moses said, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

God never remains in the stands. He is with us in the good times and the bad. Nothing is too big or too hard for God to handle. We can be confident knowing that His love will never fail us.

My prayer is that if you have been struggling in your Spiritual race that you will begin to feel more confident. Regardless of what life throws in front of you to impede your crossing the finish line, God is able to deliver us. May we say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day" (II Timothy 4:7-8)

Begin to live your life calling to remembrance daily the words of comfort our Father would have us to know. Then live your faith. And pass it on.

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