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BORN AGAIN TO RUN

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” (Hebrew 12:1)

The life of Christian endurance is like a long-distance race. The raced picture in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 5:7; Philippians 2:116; 2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1-3) is telling us two things first, that perseverance is the only path to the prize of final glory, and second, that what perseverance requires is a sustained exertion of concentrated effort day in and day out – a single-minded, wholehearted, self-denying, flat-out commitment to praising and pleasing the Father through the Son as long as life lasts.

As successful competitors in cross-country races, marathons, and triathlons pace themselves into a winning rhythm so it is meant to be with Christians. As some athletes were, as we say, born to run, so all who are born again are called to run, in the sense of putting all their energy into steady godliness as their life strategy. Keeping up the winning rhythm in the Christian life, as in the Boston Marathon, is constantly demanding and sometimes agonizing. But the very meaning of perseverance and patient endurance is that you do it anyway, because you are God’s child running on what, in the profoundest sense, is for you the home stretch.

This sustained inward effort, raised to the limit of what you can do with the brains, gifts, and energy God has given you, is one central aspect of Christian holiness, one without which a person’s supposed holiness would degenerate into self-indulgent softness. But true holiness is neither self-indulgent nor soft. It is tough. It is virile. It has backbone and guts, and a face set like flint. It is fueled by a heart of joy as the winning post appears ahead. Real Jesus-likeness means this – nothing less – and real holiness means real Jesus-likeness. AMEN.

~Dr. J.I. Packer

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:18 – 20

