

FINISHING WELL

HEBREWS 12:1-3



INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite stories of a race happened a number of years ago. I asked a newly recommitted young man to come in for an appointment. Kevin Brearley, who is now one of our associate pastors, accepted. When he got to my office, I told him I wanted to go to a race--my son's. With young men I'm interested in discipling, I often take them to an event or a meeting because it is easier to converse.

We were watching the events and I was casually talking with Kevin, when my son, Shaun, came to the starting line. I began to get a little nervous. When the gun went off, my son exploded off the line and I went crazy. I was on top of the bench screaming and waving my hands for the whole 100 yards. Kevin wasn't watching the race, however, he was watching me. His stereotype of a pastor was being challenged.

Shaun easily won the race, and I jumped around and made a fool of myself.

That picture of Kevin, Shaun and me comes to mind because I want to ask and answer the question for all of us, "how can we finish well"?

- A. The reason for the question is, I want to renew my energy and focus on finishing well the race set out before me.
 1. I'm also a wildly enthusiastic fan, who is watching you run your race, too.
 - a. I believe you can win. (I'll define winning toward the end of this session.)
 - b. In the process of cheering for you, I may draw attention to myself and others in the stands, but don't get distracted.
 - c. Let's all keep our eyes on the finish and determine to win the race God has set before us.
 2. For many of my reflections and inspiration on how to finish well, I'm indebted to the Scripture, Bobby Clinton, Howard Hendricks, a number of biographies, mentors, friends and family members.

B. Supplemental to the main focus of finishing well will be these related questions:

1. Who did not finish well?
2. Why did they not finish well? Let's begin there.
 - a. I'm surprised by the large number of those who begin following Christ, intent on faithfulness and fruitfulness, and yet do not finish well.

Quote: I was amazed to hear Howard Hendricks, at Promise Keepers '95 in Seattle say, that the bulk of the people who failed to finish well in Scripture, failed in the last half of their lives.

Why? The reasons vary. But at the core:

- b. Something caused a lack of zeal, resolve and love for Christ.
 - 1) Bobby Clinton in his book, Connecting says: "For some it was a clear point of decision or an experience that became a fork in the road...and they did not choose the correct fork," e.g., Judas.
 - 2) For others it was an accumulation of little choices that moved them further away from being Christ's disciple, e.g., Demas--II Tim. 4:10.

Illustration: Recently I read a couple of short biographies about athletes: Eric Liddell, of "Chariots of Fire" fame, and C.T. Studd. I'll look at Eric Liddell's biography in a moment. Who was C.T. Studd? He was a brilliant athlete, highly acclaimed as a cricket star in England, but it seems he had a hard time submitting to authority. As a missionary, he saw thousands of people come to know the Lord in Africa, but he ended his life with his organization in tension. He also fired his daughter and son-in-law and was addicted to and abused a prescription drug.

Summary: This doesn't mean C.T. Studd didn't have a number of wonderful things happen in his life. He exerted a tremendous amount of influence. But he didn't end well. His propensity to fight authority and demand his own way finally caught up with him?

What does Scripture say about the subject? Let's view specifically:

I. THE CALL TO END WELL.

As we look at Scripture, it's obvious:

A. The apostle Paul was obsessed with finishing well.

1. He saw life as a race.
 - a. When meeting with the Ephesian elders for the last time, he said: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace"--Acts 20:24.

-
- b. Paul was so motivated to finish well, that he challenged the Corinthian believers to "run (the race) in such a way as to get the prize...not...running aimlessly"--I Cor. 9:24-26.

In that passage he describes his disciplined training. He says:

2. He disciplined his body to make it do what it must, not what it wanted to, so that "having preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize"--v. 27.

Then he came to the end of the race.

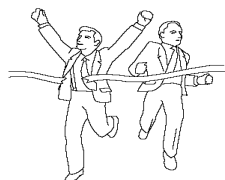
3. What joy filled his heart as he testified at the end of his life: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"--II Tim. 4:7.

Summary Question: What moved the apostle Paul to press on, to go all the way to the finish line?

Whatever it was,

B. Daniel was inspired and committed to finishing well, too!

1. Recently when I started a study of the book of Daniel, I began in chapter 6, at the end of Daniel's life.
2. I saw how he finished; I saw his resolve, even in the face of a lion's den.
3. Then I asked the question, "what got him to the place of uncompromising faith"?
4. With that question in mind, I then began at the beginning of the book.
 - a. There I saw the initial commitments of Daniel and his three buddies, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
 - b. It was because they started right and maintained that initial commitment, that they ended well.
5. From the example of Daniel, the call is to determine how each of us wants to end up.
 - a. We can then back up from that point and determine what we need to do, what character we need to develop, what prayers we need to pray, what disciplines we need to establish in order to finish well.
 - b. That remains a challenge to us all, no matter how old or young we might be.



C. What about George Mueller? What enabled him to finish well?

Note: After establishing an orphanage for 2,050 children, he continued to raise all the support for the orphanages, even while traveling 200,000 miles. The day before he died at age 93, he was still handling orphanage correspondence and protesting that he felt fine.

D. What about Oswald Chambers?

Note: Up to the end of his 43 years of life, he served the Lord in Egypt ministering to British soldiers. Oswald often said, "I don't care what God does, it's what God is that I care about." His journals and sermons even after his death, continue to bless people around the world. My Utmost for His Highest, continues to sell well even today.

E. What about John Sung?

Note: A brilliant Chinese student with a Ph.D. in Chemistry. After several years at Union Theological Seminary where his faith was tested, and 6 months of forced confinement in psychiatric wards, he was released to return to China for 15 years, a highly effective, but exhaustive ministry. Thousands were converted and revival broke out wherever he spoke.

All of these people provide a call to end well. What is it that enabled these people to finish their courses, in spite of their lack of perfection? Observe:

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WHO FINISH WELL--Heb. 12:1-3;

- Heb. 12:1-3--"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2] Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3] Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."
- From this passage and the words of authors like:
--Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton, I have observed 6 characteristics in people who finished well.



- Here's the list as a preview.
- We'll view all but the last one.

- A. They had a network of meaningful relationships with peers and those they disciplined, as well as several important mentors during their lifetime--Heb. 12:1a.
- B. They all had a weight problem and were clumsy, but they were constantly working at it--Heb. 12:1b. Stated another way: They all needed to be honest and confessional about their weaknesses and sins.
- C. They persevered in difficult times and were disciplined in important areas of their lives--Heb. 12:1c.
- D. They had perspective that enabled them to focus--Heb. 12:2.
- E. They enjoyed intimacy with Christ and experienced repeated times of inner renewal--Heb. 12:3.
- F. They maintained a positive learning attitude and life-style all their lives, and were committed to the Lord and His Word as the main source of that learning --II Tim. 3:16; Matt. 11:28.

Note: This last characteristic, is seen best in a complete study of the life Daniel. He models for us how to maintain a learning and praying posture our whole life.

Let's begin with the characteristics of those who finished well.

- A. **They had a network of meaningful relationships with peers and those they disciplined, as well as several important mentors and examples during their lifetime.** Heb. 12:1--

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses..."

1. The context for this verse, and the explanation of who the "cloud of witnesses" are is found in chapter 11.
 - a. Those in the stands at the race track are those listed and others whose names are not listed: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses' parents, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets, etc.
 - b. Each believer has these O.T. saints as examples to inspire us to have faith and keep moving forward in the race.



2. In addition, we have the stands full of our contemporaries, our mentors, our disciples, our peers, who have left their mark on us in a continued fashion.

a. Myself, I hear the cheers in the stands of:

- 1) my parents, grandparents
- 2) my wife
- 3) my family
- 4) my father and mother-in-law
- 5) John Clement, a former pastor of mine
- 6) Clyde Ballard, my youth pastor (and now majority leader of the senate)
- 7) Dorothy and Norm Van Patton, family friends
- 8) June Acton, a family friend
- 9) Hillcrest family, staff and elders
- 10) Ray Stedman, one of my mentors
- 11) Jerry Cook, another mentor
- 12) Al Munger, the first pastor and mentor I worked with
- 12) those I have discipled
- 13) many peers, like Wayne Hathaway, Barry Buzza, George Johnson
- 14) my close friends

b. What an honor to have so many in the stands as witnesses to my race.

c. I believe each of us has the list of witnesses from Heb. 11, as well as our unique number of witnesses in the stands.

3. Those mentors and friends, family members and peers, help and encourage us with all the other aspects of this race described in Heb. 12:1-3.

4. For example, consider the impact of the following people on a very famous person. You have probably never heard of:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Evangelist Mordecai Hamb. Reese Brown, an African-American foremanc. Grady Wilson, a best friendd. Wendell Phillips, a roommate and confidantee. Dean John R. Minder, a spiritual advisor and preaching coachf. Professor V. Raymond Edmang. Ruth Bellh. Tory Johnson |
|---|
-

- 1) Who are these people?
- 2) Who did they influence? Whose peers, friends, mentors are they?
 - a) They are people who influenced Billy Graham in a number of specific ways.
 - b) We know Billy Graham, but in the stands are all these witnesses.
 - c) They are standing and cheering, wildly enthusiastic about their friend, Billy.
- 3) What has been the impact? Billy is finishing well.

Summary: Billy didn't become the humble, godly man you see overnight. It has taken a lifetime of running the race, with the help of those who coached and cheered him on.

Heb. 12:1b gives us another characteristic of those who finish well. It's the one quality that is obviously not good for runners.

B. They all had a weight problem and were clumsy, but they were constantly working on it. Stated another way: **They all needed to be honest and confessional about their weaknesses and sins.** Heb. 12:1b--"*let us throw off everything that hinders (KJV--"every weight") and the sin that so easily entangles.*"

1. To finish well does not mean to reach perfection any time during the race, but like Paul, the finisher, keeps pressing on toward it--Phil. 3:10-15a.

Using again the language of a runner, the apostle Paul says:

Phil. 3:10-15a--"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11] and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12] Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13] Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14] I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15] All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you."



-
2. To finish well means we lay aside the weights and sins that so easily entangle us, or they will trip us up.

Here are some examples of problems/sins/weights that might trip some up:

- a. C.T. Studd died with a morphine addiction.
- b. Mueller was a man of faith, but may have been a little ornery, too.
- c. John Sung was a great Chinese Evangelist, but he may have been a bit of a sensationalist and excessively critical of Westerners.
- d. Billy Sunday, a famous American evangelist, may have been a little too angry in the pulpit. His sermons were long and he drove his staff too hard.
- e. Dwight L. Moody was a famous evangelist, had several personality traits that genuinely hampered his ministry. He was headstrong, impatient and perhaps overly sensitive to criticism.

Summary: To finish well means we have to deal with those weaknesses and sins that tangle us up.

- In each of the biographies I read, there were decisive moments of confession and repentance that took place sometime after they had walked with the Lord for many years.
- It wasn't always pretty or easy, but the sins that entangled the feet had to be dealt with.

The third characteristic of those who finished well:

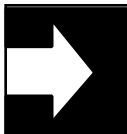
- C. **They persevered in difficult times and were disciplined in important areas of their lives.** Heb. 12:1c--"*...and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*"

1. **Perseverance:** finishers are "hupomone" people
 - a. They had strength under control.
 - b. They were tough when things were tough.
 - c. They endured even though they were sick, persecuted, frail.
2. **A synonym of this word "persevere" is discipline.**

Definition: Discipline is training that develops self-control, character, orderliness & efficiency.

 - a. In a study of hundreds of those who finished well in Scripture, and those who lived after the biblical era, Stanley and Clinton discovered discipline was not demonstrated in all areas by those who finished well, but definitely in the important areas, and even these varied.
 - 1) Stanley says: "some were disciplined in their prayer and Bible study, but not in their diet." He continues, "some were disciplined in their schedule, but not in their organization and so it went on...but each had established discipline in important areas."

-
- 2) Examples of disciplines I saw in the biographies I read were: journal writing, devotional studies, language studies, letter writing, study, etc.
 - 3) Examples of perseverance in the face of hardship was also seen in every case.
- b. In addition, I believe it is important to make clear: In order to finish "the race marked out for us," gifts, skills, disciplines and perseverance must be developed in keeping with the unique race that we are running.
- 1) Each race is different.
 - 2) Each person will need to develop these areas and the perseverance critical to their particular race.
- c. In Scripture, one section is very helpful: I Cor. 9:19-27.
- 1) This Scripture is often used when missionaries go to another culture to reach the lost. Here Paul emphasizes this goal: "to win as many as possible." So he became, "all things to all people"--the legalists, weak, strong, whoever. He did this all "for the sake of the gospel."
 - 2) Paul also stresses the importance of perseverance with discipline--vv. 25,27. "To win the contest (race) you must deny yourself many things that would keep you from doing your best...like an athlete, I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to do what it should not what it wants to"--T.L.B.
- d. Likewise, in our race we must determine what is critical to win:



- 1) Not discipline for disciple's sake, for that will soon turn to legalism and hardness.
- 2) Rather discipline for intimacy sake...for the race's sake...for growth sake, for ministry's sake...for Christ's sake.

Summary: Discipline and perseverance in the right areas for the right reasons will sustain growth and set us up to respond to God's grace, Spirit and the challenges of the race.

A fourth characteristic of those who finished well is:

D. They had a perspective that enabled them to focus. Heb. 12:2--"*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"

1. Perspective stands out as a characteristic of every good leader and finisher.

- a. It enables seeing the present circumstances in relationship to a long-range view.
 - 1) People who finished well kept their eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of their faith.
 - 2) People who finished well focused on the areas He's concerned about and sustained that focus.
-

- b. It is obvious:
- if we focus on Him we don't get off on tangents;
 - if we focus on Him we are not tripped up by inconsistencies in others;
 - if we are focused on Him we are not looking only at the difficulty of the race, we are looking at the One who authored the race and finished the race--"who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
- c. To "*fix our eyes on Jesus*," e.g., (aphorontes) indicates the action of one who, aware of rival attractions, deliberately looks away from those distracting things.
- 1) In other words, "the runner must keep his eyes fixed on Jesus, not only at the first moment of the race, but constantly during the whole struggle."
 - 2) The runner who finishes well, "...knows Christ is always near and in sight."
(Raymond Brown, The Message of Hebrew, IVP, p. 228.)
- d. In addition, if we fix our eyes on Jesus, we see He is seated in the heavens "*who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"
- 1) This means His saving work is complete. "*...He endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down.*"
 - 2) This means, then, we can always receive the cleansing and forgiveness we need.
 - 3) This means, likewise, He waits for the end of the age, when from the right hand of the throne of God, He will see "every knee bow and every tongue confess His lordship."

What else will perspective do for us?

2. **Perspective allows us to see beyond what others might do to us, and how Christ might use it to help advance the race.**

Phil. 1:12-19--"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13] As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14] Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. 15] It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16] The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17] The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18] But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19] for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance..

- a. Paul learned in that passage that some people were happy he was in jail and were preaching Christ with motives of rivalry, evil and ambition.
- b. But Paul had perspective; he said their preaching is just another way to bring people to Christ, so he wasn't upset, even though their motives weren't the best.

Perspective helps us to see beyond what others might do to us. Another benefit is:

3. **Perspective--seeing the end of the race enables a person not to be discouraged when he sees an evil person prosper.** Ps. 73:16-17--"When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me 17] till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."

How do we get this perspective?

4. **Perspective develops as we understand the priority of the Author and Founder of the race, and then try to personalize that priority**, e.g., make the Lord's priority our own.
5. Therefore we need to find out from God what the joy is (the prize at the end of the race); and then we will receive from Him all the perspective we need.

For example, here is a man who fixed his eyes on Jesus:

Biography

John Clement, born July 16, 1905 in the village of Pontelaive near the city of Swansea, South Wales. He traveled to London to attend Bible School,

While there he attended Spurgeon's Temple, where Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones was his pastor.

He was a missionary to Japan before and after WWII.

After WWII he was commissioned to return to Japan to reestablish the Japanese A/G.

Returned to the U.S. in 1959 and pastored in Sunnyside and Wenatchee.

-- In Wenatchee he was my pastor.

-- It was John Clement who modeled for me expositional preaching, but it took 20 years to realize the impact of his ministry upon my life.

Soon after he left Wenatchee he attempted to retire. (He gave me all his books.)

Unretired: Associate Pastor at Westminster Assembly until his death.

I listened to a cassette of his funeral. On the cassette was an excerpt of the last service he attended before he died. The pastor asked him to come forward, say a few words and close the service. Pastor Clement was dying of cancer, experiencing a great deal of pain. So he slowly walked to the front.

He began talking quite haltingly, but soon the pace picked up and in his Welch accent, he began to talk about heaven. He wondered out loud, "I wonder what I'll be doing in heaven." He then talked about Jesus. He related his friendship with the Lord and how he talked to him in the night and in times of pain. He shared how much he loved the Lord. Then he quoted from Heb. 12:2--"Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith..." It was the last passage Pastor Clement quoted. I was encouraged by that.

He then asked everyone to stand and sing. In his booming baritone voice he led the congregation in, "All Hail King Jesus, All Hail Immanuel, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, bright morning star... and throughout eternity, I'm going to praise Him, and I'll reign with Him throughout eternity."

Summary: John Clement finished well, with a mature perspective. His eyes were fixed on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

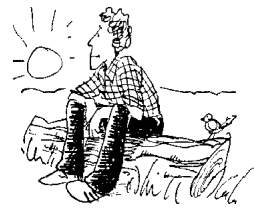
How do we maintain this perspective? That leads to the reason for the perspective.

A fifth characteristic of those who finish well is:

E. They experienced intimacy with Christ, and repeated times of inner renewal. Heb. 12:3
--" Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

As John Clement also exemplified:

1. **Intimacy with Christ is at the core of those who finish well.**



a. **What happens if we only focus on the human witnesses in the stands?**

- 1) One of my mentors, Ray Stedman said of the witnesses in Heb. 12:1, "they can inspire...challenge us to mobilize our resources, clench our fists, set our jaws and determine that we shall be men and women of faith in the 20th century.
- 2) But if that is our only motivation, we shall soon run out of gas.
- 3) It all begins to fade, and after a few weeks, we are right back in the same old rut"--
Ray Stedman, How to Live What You Believe, Regal Books, 1974, p. 164.

b. **What will enable us to keep going in the race?**

"Consider him who endured such opposition..."

Def. of consider: means to think over, reflect upon, meditate on.

Description: consider the conditions our Lord faced in His earthly ministry:

- 1) He had to constantly endure stubborn people, who refused to believe what He said.
- 2) It was true even of His disciples.
- 3) That is what the Christian life will be like.
- 4) If you reflect on Christ, His attitude, His strength, His love, his patience, His words; there will be a fantastic effect.

c. **What will be the result?** "...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart..."

Here is the promise: "...so that..."

- 1) We won't grow weary in the race.
 - 2) We won't lose heart in the race.
 - 3) We won't lose integrity or perspective.
--that is a key to finishing well or finishing at all.
 - 4) We must "consider Him."
-

- d. **How do we maintain that consideration, reflection, and meditation on Christ?**
- 1) A growing intimacy and relationship with Him takes place only in our inner life.
 - 2) It's spending time with Jesus and seeking to obey and join Him as He ministers to His sheep. That enables us not to grow weary and lose heart--John 21:15-17; Matt. 25:40.
- e. **How important is this?**
- 1) According to Paul Stanley and Bobby Clinton in their book, as well as my own observation, almost every leader/follower of Christ who doesn't finish well, will fail in their inner life.
 - 2) A believer not focused on or meditating on Christ will eventually see a breach of integrity and failure in their outer life, a clear symptom of a lack of intimacy in their inner life.

I have seen this over and over:

2. **Intimacy with Christ is a consistent characteristic of the biographies I have read over the last several months.**

Example: For example, it had a powerful effect on Eric Liddell.

Biography of Eric Liddell

Thanks to the 1981 film, "Chariots of Fire," the account of Eric Liddell, the Olympic runner who won a bronze medal for the 200 meter, and a gold for the 400 meter race is well known. Eric Liddell the man, however, is not well known.

1902-- Born to missionary parents in Tientsin, China.

1923-- He joined the Glasgow, Scotland Students' Evangelistic Union, a fellowship of university students dedicated to reaching Scotland for Christ.

1924-- Literally, his most famous decision was at the Paris Olympics when he refused to compete in the 100 meter race because the event was held on Sunday; even though the 100 was thought to be his best chance for the gold.

- he was accused of being unpatriotic and legalistic

- but in the day that followed, he won the gold in the 400 rather than the 100.

1925-- The following year Liddell left Scotland to begin teaching in Tientsin.

1934-- Married Florence Machenz in Tientsin.

1937-- Began mission work based in Siochang

- During this time he wrote, "Ask yourself: if I know something to be true, am I prepared to follow it, even though it is contrary to what I want, or to what I previously held to be true? Will I follow it if it means being laughed at, if it means personal financial loss, or some kind of hardship"? His life answered those questions with a resounding, "Yes"!

1943-- Imprisoned at Weihsien Internment Camp by the Japanese.
1945-- Died of a brain tumor at Weihsien.

Summary: There is much between the lines about his life, but I think you get the idea. Here is a person who had repeated times of renewal with Christ and it showed in his actions. His biography said of him, "He was a completely dedicated disciple of Jesus Christ, and a man who could not rest short of nothing but the introduction of those brought under his influence to the Savior and Master who had come to mean so much to him."

Question: What motivated him? His Savior and Master--the one who had come to mean so much to him.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the writer of Hebrews is in effect saying, "Don't give up too soon; don't relax before the tape; don't stay down if you fall; get up, refocus your attention on the Author and Finisher of the race, and finish the race."

The Race
by D.H. Groberg

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!" They shout at me and plead.
"There's just too much against you now. This time you can't succeed!"
And as I start to hang my head in front of failure's face,
My downward fall is broken by the memory of a race.
And hope refills my weakened will as I recall that scene;
For just the thought of that short race rejuvenates my being.

A children's race--young boys, young men how I remember well.
Excitement, sure! But also fear; It wasn't hard to tell.
They all lined up so full of hope; each thought to win that race.
Or tie for first, or if not that, At least take second place.

And fathers watched from off the side, each cheering for his son.
And each boy hoped to show his dad that he would be the one.
The whistle blew and off they went! Young hearts and hopes afire.
To win and be the hero there was each young boy's desire.

And one boy in particular whose dad was in the crowd,
Was running near the lead and thought, "My dad will be so proud!"
But as they speeded down the field across a shallow dip,
The little boy who thought to win lost his step and slipped.

Trying hard to catch himself his hands flew out to brace,
And mid the laughter of the crowd he fell flat on his face.
So down he fell and with him hope he couldn't win it now--
Embarrassed, sad, he only wished to disappear somehow.

But as he fell his dad stood up and showed his anxious face,
Which to the boy so clearly said: "Get up and win the race."
He quickly rose, no damage done. Behind a bit, that's all--
And ran with all his mind and might to make up for his fall.

So anxious to restore himself to catch up and to win--
His mind went faster than his legs; he slipped and fell again!
He wished then he had quit before with only one disgrace.
"I'm hopeless as a runner now; I shouldn't try to race."

But in the laughing crowd he searched and found his father's face.
That steady look which said again: "Get up and win the race!"
So up he jumped to try again ten yards behind the last--
"If I'm to gain those yards," he thought, "I've got to move real fast."

Exerting everything he had he gained eight or ten
But trying so hard to catch the lead he slipped and fell again!
Defeat! He lay there silently a tear dropped from his eye--
"There's no sense running any more; three strike: I'm out! Why try?"

The will to rise had disappeared all hope had fled away;
So far behind, so error prone; a loser all the way.
"I've lost, so what's the use," he thought. "I'll live with my disgrace."
But then he thought about his dad who soon he'd have to face.

"Get up," an echo sounded low. "Get up and take your place;
You were not meant for failure here. Get up and win the race."
"With borrowed will, get up," it said, "You haven't lost at all,
For winning is no more than this: to rise each time you fall.

So up he rose to run once more, and with a new commit
He resolved that win or lose at least he wouldn't quit.
So far behind the others now, the most he'd ever been--
Still he gave it all he had and ran as though to win.

Three times he'd fallen, stumbling; three times he rose again;
Too far behind to hope to win he still ran to the end.
They cheered the winning runner as he crossed the line first place,
Head high, and proud, and happy; no falling, no disgrace.

But when the fallen youngster crossed the line last place,
The crowd gave him the greater cheer for finishing the race.
And even though he came in last with head bowed low, unproud,
You would have thought he'd won the race to listen to the crowd.

And to his dad he sadly said, "I didn't do so well."
"To me, you won," his father said. "You rose each time you fell."

And now when things seem dark and hard and difficult to face,
The memory of that little boy helps me in my own race.
For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all.
And all you have to do to win, is rise each time you fall.

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!" They still shout in my face.
But another voice within me says: "GET UP AND WIN THE RACE!"

Final Reflection: That is a wonderful description of those who finish well.

- * Perfect people will not make it.
--Eventually they will fall, and their perfection may keep them from getting up.
- * Christianity, however, is for those who stumble, fall, and sometimes are weak.
- * "For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all.
And all you have to do to win, **is rise each time you fall.**"

Do you want to finish well? **GET UP AND WIN THE RACE!!**

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WHO FINISH WELL--HEB. 12:1-3



- A. They had a network of meaningful relationships with peers and those they disciplined, as well as several important mentors during their lifetime --Heb. 12:1a.
- B. They all had a weight problem and were clumsy, but they were constantly working at it--Heb. 12:1b. Stated another way: They all needed to be honest and confessional about their weaknesses and sins.
- C. They persevered in difficult times and were disciplined in important areas of their lives--Heb. 12:1c.
- D. They had perspective that enabled them to focus --Heb. 12:2.
- E. They enjoyed intimacy with Christ and experienced repeated times of inner renewal--Heb. 12:3.
- F. They maintained a positive learning attitude and lifestyle all their lives, and were committed to the Lord and His Word as the main sources of that learning--II Tim. 3:16; Matt. 11:28.

BIOGRAPHY: JOHN CLEMENT



- * John Clement, born July 16, 1905, South Wales
- * Bible School in London
- * Attended Spurgeon's Temple, where Martyn Lloyd Jones was his pastor
- * Missionary to Japan before and after WWII
- * After WWII he was commissioned to reestablish the Japanese A/G
- * Returned to the U.S. in 1959 and pastored in Sunnyside and Wenatchee
- * Attempted to retire
- * Unretired: Associate Pastor at Westminster Assembly, Seattle until his death

BIOGRAPHY: ERIC LIDDELL



- *1902--Born to missionary parents in Tientsin, China.
- *1923--He joined the Glasgow, Scotland Students' Evangelistic Union.
- *1924--Literally, his most famous decision was at the Paris Olympics when he refused to compete in the 100 meter race because the event was held on Sunday- but in the day that followed, he won the gold in the 400 meter race.
- *1925--The following year Liddell left Scotland to begin teaching in Tientsin, China.
- *1934--Married Florence Machenz in Tientsin.
- *1937--Began mission work based in Siochang, China.
- *1943--Imprisoned at Weihsien Internment Camp by the Japanese.
- *1945--Died of a brain tumor at Weihsien.
- *1981 film, "Chariots of Fire," is the account of Eric Liddell's early life.



THE RACE BY D.H. GROBERG

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!" They shout at me and plead.
"There's just too much against you now. This time you can't succeed!"
And as I start to hang my head in front of failure's face,
My downward fall is broken by the memory of a race.
And hope refills my weakened will as I recall that scene;
For just the thought of that short race rejuvenates my being.

A children's race--young boys, young men how I remember well.
Excitement, sure! But also fear; It wasn't hard to tell.
They all lined up so full of hope; each thought to win that race.
Or tie for first, or if not that, At least take second place.

And fathers watched from off the side, each cheering for his son.
And each boy hoped to show his dad that he would be the one.
The whistle blew and off they went! Young hearts and hopes afire.
To win and be the hero there was each young boy's desire.

And one boy in particular whose dad was in the crowd,
Was running near the lead and thought, "My dad will be so proud!"
But as they speeded down the field across a shallow dip,
The little boy who thought to win lost his step and slipped.

Trying hard to catch himself his hands flew out to brace,
And mid the laughter of the crowd he fell flat on his face.
So down he fell and with him hope he couldn't win it now--
Embarrassed, sad, he only wished to disappear somehow.

But as he fell his dad stood up and showed his anxious face,
Which to the boy so clearly said: "Get up and win the race."
He quickly rose, no damage done. Behind a bit, that's all--
And ran with all his mind and might to make up for his fall.

So anxious to restore himself to catch up and to win--
His mind went faster than his legs; he slipped and fell again!
He wished then he had quit before with only one disgrace.
"I'm hopeless as a runner now; I shouldn't try to race."

But in the laughing crowd he searched and found his father's face.
That steady look which said again: "Get up and win the race!"
So up he jumped to try again ten yards behind the last--
"If I'm to gain those yards," he thought, "I've got to move real fast."

Exerting everything he had he gained eight or ten
But trying so hard to catch the lead he slipped and fell again!
Defeat! He lay there silently a tear dropped from his eye--
"There's no sense running any more; three strike: I'm out! Why try?"

The will to rise had disappeared all hope had fled away;
So far behind, so error prone; a loser all the way.
"I've lost, so what's the use," he thought. "I'll live with my disgrace."
But then he thought about his dad who soon he'd have to face.

"Get up," an echo sounded low. "Get up and take your place;
You were not meant for failure here. Get up and win the race."
"With borrowed will, get up," it said, "You haven't lost at all,
For winning is no more than this: to rise each time you fall.

So up he rose to run once more, and with a new commit
He resolved that win or lose at least he wouldn't quit.
So far behind the others now, the most he'd ever been--
Still he gave it all he had and ran as though to win.

Three times he'd fallen, stumbling; three times he rose again;
Too far behind to hope to win he still ran to the end.
They cheered the winning runner as he crossed the line first place,
Head high, and proud, and happy; no falling, no disgrace.

But when the fallen youngster crossed the line last place,
The crowd gave him the greater cheer for finishing the race.
And even though he came in last with head bowed low, unproud,
You would have thought he'd won the race to listen to the crowd.

And to his dad he sadly said, "I didn't do so well."
"To me, you won," his father said. "You rose each time you fell."

And now when things seem dark and hard and difficult to face,
The memory of that little boy helps me in my own race.
For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all.
And all you have to do to win, is rise each time you fall.

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!" They still shout in my face.
But another voice within me says: "GET UP AND WIN THE RACE!"