

# RELIGION

## You are not running the race on your own

By **SCOTT CARR**  
Special to the News

I hear a lot about winning as it relates to the presidential primaries, the war in Iraq, a favorite baseball team, and the list goes on. I also hear about it in the church and in the Bible as it pertains to our life of faith and pilgrimage here, but how many of us are just so weary, battle fatigued, bruised, scarred, hurt, or just weighed down by the cares of this life?

In the fast-paced world in which we live, we are often prone to compromise or just plain give up because of the pressures and struggles we must endure. We sometimes just want to be able to make it over the finish line. Whether we finish well or not, we just want to be able to finish!

We live in a world with many stressors. Some are positive, while others are negative. Scientists use the term "faults" when they speak about earthquakes. They say that stress weakens a fault, which can lead to a catastrophic event. We can easily find examples in others and in ourselves of when stress is applied to our weak areas and the results which follow. The results, whether positive or negative, are determined by whether or not we allow Christ to be strong in these areas.

Scientists also use the term "metamorphic" to describe rocks that change characteristics with extreme heat and pressure. I have seen people who have changed in their personalities for the better as well as for the worse when they have faced extreme stress. It depended on where they placed their faith. If one places his faith in anyone or anything other than Jesus, he is in for a tragic fall when the storms of this life assail him.

We as humans need to remember that Jesus

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entered into this world clothed in flesh. He experienced firsthand every temptation, trial, and struggle that we suffer. He interacts with us and gives us what we need in order to endure and to live victoriously if we place our faith in Him moment by moment. He endured intense suffering in order to pay the price for our sin so we can be reconciled to God the Father and adopted as His sons and daughters. He not only suffered physically on the cross, but He also suffered in spirit as He bore the sins committed against the Father by the entire human race. There was also the horrific anguish of the temporary separation He experienced from His Father, which He had never experienced before in all of eternity past. He did all of this because of His great love for us and so that He might have a personal relationship with us who were made in His image!

He took our place in dying for our sins so that we won't have to. He came so we might have life in abundance, which includes the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, His peace and strength for everything we face in this temporary existence as preparation for all that is to come in the next life, and the assurance of life everlasting with Him in heaven where we will reign with Him forever.

Hebrews 12 reminds us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who have completed their races and that the Christian life is a long-distance run, not a short sprint. We are thus admonished to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked

out for us." We are reminded to unceasingly focus upon Jesus who is authoring and perfecting our faith. He endured the cross because He always kept the joy that was set before Him as His focus. We are encouraged to use Jesus as our daily example so we will not grow weary and give up.

Rest in the fact that He loves you and desires to be your personal savior and lord in all areas of your life. He has your best interests at heart and He will not betray you. Our lord is in the process of purifying you by taking out the impurities in order to conform you into His image, so that you can reflect His image to others in order to win other souls into the kingdom.

He wants us to share in His holiness. He longs for us to exchange the ashes of our futile attempts at living this life for the beauty He will freely give us as we place our lives in His hands and allow Him to mold, fashion, and shape us according to His great and grand design. He has prepared for each and every one of us who seek His face.

Small forces acting for a long time can produce sufficient changes in speed to boost a spacecraft. If you will only connect and be filled with God's Holy Spirit through the cross of Calvary and allow Him to use the "small forces" over time to make sufficient changes in your life for His glory, there is no telling what He will do with your life to enable you to be a blessing to others.

You will have the opportunities to display His workmanship in your life. By your example, He will use you to help others cross the finish line. And not only to cross the finish line, but to finish well! Be looking for those whom you can stop to help along the way. Work in unity with others in

the body of Christ. Live peacefully with others as much as it is within your power to do so. Be the person, who like a magnet, draws others into unity by taking our differences and blending them together and working for the common cause of Christ in this world.

Let us take time with our lord and wait on Him each day in Bible study, prayer, reflection, silence, and worship. As a result, we will be able to hear His still small voice and allow Him to renew our strength, so we can run without being weary and walk without fainting in our life of loving obedience to Him.

The apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians that our citizenship is not on this planet, but in heaven. As we remember this fact, let us have the same outlook he did when he said, "... I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me ... one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Keep running the race to finish well and to cross the finish line, my brothers and sisters. You are not running alone. It will be worth it all when we are before His throne united together as His children who have fought the good fight, who have kept the faith, who have not fainted, and who have not been weary in doing good! Keep pressing onward and upward!

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