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This morning I'd like to speak to you on the subject of the Christian's race. The NT uses the figure of a race a number of times. I'd like to look at three verses as we begin in which that figure is used. The first is Gal.5:7, "You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?" 1 Cor.9:24, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize. Run in such a way as to get the prize." In Heb. 12:1, "Therefore seeing we are surrounded with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Thus in these 3 passages we find the Christian life compared to a race. Racing is a sport that has been practiced probably as long as man has been upon earth. It is a sport that can be practiced with very little paraphernalia, and with no need of making any rules. Today to quite an extent attention has been turned to games such as football and baseball in which there is much paraphernalia and a complicated set of rules but which are much more easily shown on TV than a race is.

I remember hearing some time ago that a horse race is the only way you could really show speed on TV. One time Geo. Burns was on TV saying, "Here's the way to make a story interesting" and he showed some people having conversations; then he would switch to horses running along; then he'd switch to people talking, and then to horses running along. It had no connection to what he was giving but it brought out the point very clearly. That you can see speed on TV, you can feel it with horses, not so well with people, not near so well with swimming.

Football and baseball get much more attention especially as you are thoroughly familiar with the rules and you are supporting a whole team rather than a group of individuals. But in Roman days the race was certainly one of the favorite sports. The Apostle refers to it here and compares the Christian life to it. "You were running well. What happened to you? that you were cut off?" "Everyone who runs must run so as to win the prize. You must put effort and energy into it."

I can imagine someone saying, Yes, but the very heart of the Christian message is that there is nothing we can do for our salvation. Jesus Christ has done it all! We simply by faith receive what he has done. If we don't have that essential truth we can run forever and we will accomplish nothing. That's the vital starting point of the Christian life. We're justified by faith in Christ and nothing else. No works we can do can add to our justification. It's tremendously important we realize that, but if we're truly saved we go on to other steps. These other steps are what Paul calls the race.

However, let's for a moment note the fact that the foundation principle of the Christian life as we rest in Christ for our justification is a principle that is helpful all through life. The runner who is most effective is probably not tense all over.