



August 2024

Dear CWR Friend and Partner,

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 (Hebrews 12:1).

...The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong...but time and chance happen to them all (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

The eyes of the world will be focused on Paris, France this month and the Games of the twenty-eighth Summer Olympiad. The ability of the athletes to *persevere* through the intense pressure, the mental preparation, and the demanding “fine-tuning” regimens required in order to run, swim, cycle, and compete at the highest levels, will be a common story told over and over again for nearly two weeks.

Stories of setbacks overcome, hardships endured, injuries suffered, and rehabilitations completed will touch and inspire us. Stories of triumphs captured against all odds will move us and allow us to come to know much more about so many competitors. If we are lucky, we may even be able to see some of our own lives, our own stories, in theirs, and in what they have persevered through in order to succeed. It's not just the colorful fanfare and new world records we watch for, but what it can take to achieve such spectacular heights.

Perseverance. In many biblical translations, the synonymous term used is *long-suffering*. To live in our world today, with *any sense of peace within*, we must come to know and experience *perseverance*. As we face life's challenges and difficulties on every side, *perseverance* can see us through.

Perseverance is so rare, yet so necessary. It is so foreign to our own human nature, yet, it is demanded of us every day. To *persevere* is to endure with steadfast faith and patience. To *persevere*, to suffer long, is to receive and live by the gift of grace from above; for *perseverance* is a gift from God.

The Race Marked Out for Us

The author of the book of Hebrews writes in beautiful imagery of *the race marked out for us*. We know, as Christ-followers, that not all races *marked out* are the same. The obstacles we may face in our race may be quite different from what other Christ-followers face. In reading these words, I get a strong sense that each race run is quite *personal*. Each race, both the *marking out*, and the running thereof, is intimate and deeply connected to our personal relationship with Christ Jesus.

For the athletes who compete at the Olympic Games, *perseverance* is a physical practice. Each day, as an athlete trains, he or she learns how to endure through the resistance the body is going through in order to improve and achieve new personal bests. The daily practice is gradual and can take years to master. Only through surrendering to the work that must be done can the athlete excel.

As Christ-followers, we know that *perseverance* is both a physical practice and a spiritual gift from God. Christ in us is that gift and the source of our true ability to suffer-long and endure. Christ Jesus bears the fruit in us. He does so for his good pleasure.

Yet, we are invited to participate with him each day to yield and allow his work in us to be done. We accept, with a peaceful mindset of non-resistance, life as it comes to us. We accept the race that has been marked out for us, and we do so with a deep humility, faith and trust in him.

How Do We Persevere?

Simply stated, we *persevere* through Christ Jesus. We do so as we are reminded in an ancient poem of St. Patrick:

Christ with me; Christ before me;

Christ behind me; Christ in me;

Christ beneath me; Christ above me;

Christ on my right; Christ on my left;

Christ when I lie down; Christ when I rise up;

Christ in the heart of every man (The Breastplate of St. Patrick).

The imagery this ancient poem conjures for me is that of a man praying just before a battle. Lined up on his side of the field, asking God for protection and favor before a fight, his eyes and heart look to heaven for help. The imagery of the poem also conjures a runner just before a race.

As that runner stands behind a white starting line, ready to sprint off at the sound of a starter's gun, he or she offers a prayer for help. Both the runner and the warrior are surrendered to what is, and to what will come. Both look to their Lord and Savior for the ability to endure, to suffer-long, and to *persevere*. Neither knows what may come.

In my younger years, I would pray just before running a race. I remember being afraid. I knew the race to come would be long, and that it would be painful. No matter how much training I'd done leading up to that point in time, I knew to achieve a better result than I'd run before was going to hurt. I'd have to push harder and dig deeper than I ever had before. There would be a price to pay. At least, that's what my mind would tell me.

But then there were times when running the race felt quite different. I'd be well into a run and suddenly think, *wow, I feel great! I'm barely breathing heavily and my arms and legs aren't even tired*. I could have run all day.

To quote the Scottish Olympian from the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell, when I ran, I *felt his pleasure*. It may have been the perfect intersection of all the training with God's gift of grace pushing me along. Either way, I knew I was about to post a really good time. In those moments, the running was an easy joy. The race marked out for me felt effortless.

Some days of our lives can feel this way—just effortless. Some days of our lives can feel quite the opposite—like everything hurts, and the work we need to do just seems like nothing but an uphill battle. We *step to the line of life* each day knowing both our personal practices and the grace of God's gift within us. Yet, the outcome of any given day may never be the same. We trust and suffer-long. We look to heaven in faith and *persevere*.

At times, the race marked out for us can lead us to feel as if we are alone. We can feel as though no one else understands what we are suffering through and enduring. Perhaps what we are enduring is loneliness itself. We can wonder where Christ Jesus is when the battle or the race seems to be too long.

Humanly, we can so easily forget the cloud of cheering and supportive witnesses that surround us on every side. We can be readily hindered by unrelenting doubt and fear. Never-mind setting new personal bests; we are just trying to get through our day. The running of the race marked out for us may at times feel too dark, too lonely, and too hard for us to continue.

As the poem, *The Breastplate of St. Patrick* reminds and encourages us, Christ is on our every side. Christ Jesus is before and behind us. He is above and beneath us. Christ Jesus is on our right side and on our left; he is there when we go to sleep at night, and he is there when we wake in the morning. Most importantly, Christ Jesus is with us and for us, and in the hearts of all of us. We rest in this. We take comfort in, have hope in and trust in him.

As we watch the stories unfold during the two weeks of the summer Olympic Games, we can remember. We remember that our life's race is both physical and spiritual. We remember that *the race marked out for us* is deeply personal, and we do not run alone.

We are called to *persevere*, to suffer-long in this life, yet, Jesus Christ *perseveres* and suffers-long with us.

Jesus ran his race victoriously during his human lifetime here on earth. As our risen Lord and Master, he has won the race for us all. As such, we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, those cheering and supporting us, who have gone before.

In an arena and spiritual community such as this, with Christ Jesus at its center, how can we not succeed? We have succeeded already in him.

In his victorious name we *persevere* together,



Ed Dunn

Vice President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. We share this letter of thanks from a friend in Virginia, and **THANK YOU** for all you do to support this ongoing ministry!

Thank you to each and every person involved with CWR/PTM. Thank you for this most uplifting work! I pray for you all and for all of God's children around the world. May God bless us and keep us always and forever. My love and prayers are for each and every one of you. Keep up the great work!

CWR/PTM Prayer List—August 2024

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please pray for my brother who is mentally ill and addicted to drugs and gambling.—Massachusetts

Please pray for my safe travels during an upcoming trip. Thank you for all you do!—Idaho

Please pray for the success and safety of my daughter who is in college and working part-time.—Arizona

My prayers and love are always with you and for you at CWR/PTM and for all around the world.—Virginia

Please pray for my health, especially relief from the pain in my knees. Thank you!—California

Please pray for peace in Ukraine and Palestine. It breaks my heart. May God's will be done on earth!—Louisiana

Please continue to pray for my health issues, especially with my heart.—New York

Please pray for me, as my husband died recently. I'm struggling with grief, loss and loneliness.—Missouri

Please pray for many of my friends who are battling cancer at this time.—Oregon

Please pray for me, as I am starting a new treatment to slow down my Alzheimer's progression.—Canada

I pray for all those who are suffering from effects of recent floods, fires, storms and natural disasters.—Texas

Please pray for my wife, as she is suffering with heart problems.—Oklahoma

Please pray for my younger brother who is unable to sleep due to back pain.—Washington

Please pray for my struggle with anxiety. It has gotten a lot worse since my husband died not too long ago. Thank you for your prayers.—Massachusetts

I lived with my mom until she passed away a few months ago. Now I'm struggling to make ends meet and to deal with the loneliness. Please pray for me.—Ohio

Please pray for me and my wife, as we are on a fixed income and it's really getting to be a struggle.—Georgia

Please pray for my battle with depression and my mental health in general.—New York

Please pray for my family to come to know and have a close relationship with Jesus.—Kentucky

Please pray for my nephew who has lung disease and needs a care center that can give him proper care.—Kansas

Please remember my friend in your prayers. Her daughter has been diagnosed with cancer and they both need your prayers.—Michigan

Please pray for us all to put our faith in God and have a deeper relationship with him.—Louisiana

Please pray for my friend who is dealing with cancer. She has been on some experimental treatments but she can't eat and has lost an unhealthy amount of weight.—Wisconsin

I'm eighty-eight years old and I'm getting slower and slower. Please pray that I can get caught up with everything that I need to do. Thank you for all you do and all the uplifting materials you send me.—Texas

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.