

### Isaiah 40.28-31

The Bible tells us some basic principles about our life in God. In this talk we're going to relate the Bible to the Olympics and other similar athletic and sporting occasions.

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

### The Race

A thorough study done by the BBC and others in 2012 researched the claims of a number of sports drinks and companies producing running and sporting trainers / sneakers. The researchers found that many of the claims made by the different companies didn't seem to add up to the sporting improvement claims made in many areas.

BBC Link – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-18863293> (checked May 2019)

A Panorama (documentary) programme called "The Truth About Sports Products" was originally broadcast on July 19 2012 and featured some of this information. Currently available (checked May 2019) at – <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xsmj6e>

We can be so quick to give in to the marketing claims made about sport products.. We buy all the right brands, the best football boots, the right clothing, the best shoes, the right drinks... But we find that many of these products have claims that don't stack up. We also may not find it helps our performance in sport. And it isn't long before we forget about how much we 'needed' a certain product and find it doesn't really bring us any satisfaction.

The guy who wrote a lot of the Bible called Paul. He was like a coach to many other guys and people. Except he wasn't a sporting coach, he was more of a spiritual coach. He wrote to a young and upcoming star called Timothy to advise him that (like sports products and clothes and brands and more), physical training is good, but it isn't the most important thing in life:

1 Timothy 4:7-8 – Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

You see, we can spend a lot of time working on our body and this is a good thing!

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

But coach Paul tells us that actually training ourselves to be Godly is more important. Why? Well, we're all on a journey towards the end of our life (sorry to be depressing!!) What you look like and what you wear are temporary. When you die you can't take it with you. But whatever we do for God and as we grow in being Godly (doing God-things, obeying him and loving him and others) then this lasts for eternity. It's the best investment you can make – much better than exercise (which is also important) and better than buying gold! Or even winning gold at the Olympics!

How do we live Godly lives and why should we even do this? Again, coach Paul has an answer:

1 Corinthians 9:22-27- To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. 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. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2 Timothy 2:5 – Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

In the Olympics, people will do everything they can to make sure they win. But they also know that they don't want to do anything that will harm their chances of winning. So if they take a performance enhancing drug they can be disqualified. In fact, taking the wrong kind of painkiller accidentally can have consequences. On the track, if a runner has a false start after another one has already had a false start, they can be disqualified.

In the 2008 Olympics, the US and the British 4x100m relay teams didn't make the final because both teams dropped their baton in the semi-finals.

There are many things that can knock us off course as Christians. Let's make sure we don't do anything to get off God's plan and equally make sure we do everything to make sure we do everything we can in a positive way!! We want to run the race God has for each of us and we want to win. This doesn't mean winning as the world knows it, it just means staying true to God's plan and call for your life and not falling away from him. At the end, you'll get far more than a gold medal. You'll have a reward that will go beyond anything you can possibly imagine, dream, think or believe!!

# Back to the Beginning of the Race

Well, back to the start of the talk anyway and Isaiah 40.31...

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

So what is the race worth running? The race of faith in Jesus.

How do we win this race? We put our hope in the Lord and trust / obey him completely.

What is the result? We soar like eagles; we run and don't get weary; we walk and don't get faint.

Now that is a medal worth winning. And we don't run with an Olympic flame, we carry the flame of God (the Holy Spirit) in our hearts, lives and actions. This is a flame that is more pure, more powerful and more awesome than any man-made flame.

And remember, we don't hold this flame like an Olympic flame. Instead, he (the Holy Spirit) holds us!