



Amir Tsarfati Run the Race!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKGSML03E8I&t=9s>

07/08/2022

So, we are in Athens, Greece, and we are in one of the most ancient stadiums in the world.



This stadium is known as the Kallimarmaro. The Kallimarmaro means the “beautiful marble.” This is the only stadium in the world made of marble. This is something that goes back more than 2,000 years ago to the

time of the Greek Empire. This is a marvelous way of understanding the life of the athletes of those

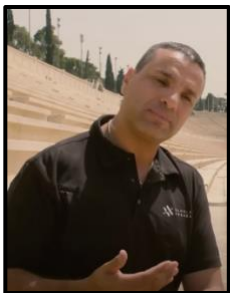


days. This particular stadium, it’s “stádio” in the Greek—by the way, that’s also how in the Hebrew we call it—is the way for people to run a race. And this is exactly what we’re going to talk about today: *Run the Race*.

The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12 something very significant regarding running a race. And the Bible says the following thing in regard to the race that we need to run. The Bible says in **Hebrews 12:1-2: “¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”** The Bible tells us that we need to run the race. The author of Hebrews is telling us of a race, but we know that Paul himself more than once talked about running the race and even completing the race.

Now we have to ask what type of race is Paul talking about? Definitely, definitely, is implying a physical race but actually talking about the race of life, the race of living life of the believers. I know that he's not talking about physical exercise—it's not about that—simply because when he wrote to Timothy, **1 Timothy 4:6-8**, Paul is writing the following thing, he says: **“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the word of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.”** He's speaking of exercise, but he says, “Exercise yourself toward godliness.” And then he says, **“⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”** So Paul is definitely aware of the fact that the race could be interpreted as a bodily or physical exercise. But he says physical exercise is okay, but it's only with a very small value compared to the exercise of living a godly life. Living a godly life is not easy, as much as starting a race is not easy. I know that I'm not a runner, but I do know that the times I do run, you know, you start with great enthusiasm, but after the first few minutes, you kind of understand that it's not easy. And in fact, it takes a lot to overcome the first obstacle, and then get to the point where things are better, and you can get used to the pace.

But ladies and gentlemen, running is not something easy. And the question that we need to ask ourselves is, how did Paul even think of a race and using the analogy of our life as believers as a race in a stadium? Paul was an Orthodox Jew. He was a Pharisee. He wasn't part of that life.



So where was Paul around the world that introduced him to the life of athletes running a race? Well definitely, we know that Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years, and Caesarea has a stadium, but there is no doubt one of the most important stadiums in Paul's understanding of that type of lifestyle, he

saw when he came to Athens. The Bible says in the book of Acts chapter 17 that Paul spent time here, and we know that part of the life of the Athenians was all about satisfying the body and looking good. The Greeks, by the way, introduced to the world the whole idea of weightlifting, and body treatments, and massages, and spa, and all those things; that came from the Greek period. The Greeks said, “Well, there is no one god, there are many gods.” And we need to remember that in part of the Greek ideas, man is also part of god. Therefore, we need to work on our education, we need to work on our beauty, we need to work on our health, and they were so much into that, that that became their own god. And godliness was not something that they exercised, but something completely different.

So as an Orthodox Jew, he was exposed to the stadium in Caesarea, to the stadium in Rome, but no doubt that the one that was the greatest of all was this stadium right here, the ancient stadium of Athens. We know that in **Acts 20:18-24**, the Bible tells us the following thing... Paul is writing or is saying to the people of Ephesus, and he’s telling them in verse 22, **“²² And see, now I go bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”** So we see that Paul understands that his life, not just as a believer, but as a minister of the Word, is the race. And he says, “I don’t care if they’re going to hurt me. I don’t care if they’re going to lock me up. I know one thing. All I want is to finish my race, and the ministry which I received from the Lord to testify to the gospel.”

By the way, make sure you understand, who runs the race? Who are the people that are eligible to be part of this race? The Bible says everyone. The Bible says anyone who accepts the

Lord is a runner in that race. There are no people that are exempt from the duty to testify of Jesus. There are none. The Bible says that you must tell the things of the glory of the One who brought you from darkness into His marvelous light. He says He took you out of that so you will testify, you will tell everyone of His glory. So that's a duty that we need to need to remember. The Bible tells us about all of these things, and we need to remember the believers are the runners of this race. At no point in the Bible does it say that some can, and some cannot run. If God is calling you to Him, God will equip you also to run the race. Running the race is living a life of godliness and fulfilling the ministry of testifying the gospel of Jesus to the people around the world. I don't think it's something that only few can do.

Why running, by the way? Why running? Why not walking? Running is something that is challenging. Running is something that takes a lot of effort. Running is something that that requires from you some skills. And running is something that often is describing how we flee from the things of the world. We must run; run away from things. So that's the way we need to remember that. The Bible tells us in **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** how we should run: **“²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”** Paul is telling us when you enter that racetrack, you're not to run in a way that you know you're going to lose from very beginning. In other words, you can't just walk and stroll through that race. You have to run and run in a way that you will win because only one gets the prize. Now of course, he's saying, “Look, you're a winner if you run the race no matter what,

because our crown is not the perishable one, it's the imperishable one. We're not running to get the wreath. We're not running to somehow get the fame of this world. We're running to get something that is far above and far beyond." And that's that prize, that crown that Paul described that is reserved for him, and not only for him, but also to all those who love the appearing of Jesus.

The Bible says that we should run with endurance, that we should have self-discipline. How can we do that? Well, I can tell you one thing, the reason why he's telling us to run with endurance is because everything that is going on around the world, all the troubles, and all the sin that ensnares us from all around, and all the hypocrisy, and all the bad things that are happening all around us, they can easily bring us down, or they can easily also tire us. Also, let's face it, many people are asking themselves, "When will the Rapture take place? I cannot wait to be with Jesus. I need to be with—" The Bible says, we should run with endurance. We should be patient. We should run, and the only way to do that is not set your eyes on the things of the world. The Bible says, **(Hebrews 12:2) "Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith."** In other words, as we run, unlike the worldly runners that are running looking at the finish line [looking straight ahead], we run like that [Amir: looking up]. It says the following thing: **"¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."** **(Philippians 2:12-16)** You see? The perseverance and the endurance are so important. And again, the things that will bring us all the way down are the things around

us, the crooked generation that we're surrounded by, but we must run with that endurance so we will not run, or we will not labor in vain.

And that brings me to the question of how *not* to run? How not to run? And where is the finish line and the destination? When the Bible tells us to run looking at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, so what is the destination? Because the Bible in Colossians chapter 3 tells us that He's seated at the right hand of the Father right now. That means He's not here. He's up there. That means the finish line of the believer is not here, it's up there. When we reach His presence, when we make it to Heaven, that is the finish line and until then we must run the race. Our destination is Heaven. We are Heaven-bound runners, and this is where we can say that we're done. And, by the way, the finish line can either be if you die while you are a believer and you're going to Heaven, or if you are alive during the Rapture and you will be there, but that's the finish line. Nothing before. And when Paul felt that his life was coming to an end, and only then, is when he



said, "I have finished the race, I've run the race, and I'm going to get that crown." The Bible says that the finish line of Paul as he described in **2 Timothy 4:7-8**, he said this: **"⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."** So, you see that the finish line is where you also get the crown, and that is, of course, when we get it in Heaven.

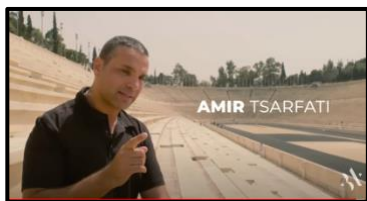
Now my question to you is, can we run this race in vain? Well, the Bible says in **Galatians 2:1-2**, regarding running the race, it says the following thing: **"¹ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but**

privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.”

The only way you can run in vain is if you are not communicating the gospel, to either to reputable people privately, or to common people openly. But you must never forsake your first duty to talk about the Lord, and to communicate the gospel. In other words, Paul was concerned that he might run this race in vain. In fact, in Philippians 2:16, Paul says the following thing regarding running in vain, **Philippians 2:16: “...holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”** So, we see that the Word of life, that Word that gives us life is the thing we need to hold onto. And we need to not only hold onto it but share it so others will have it so we will not run in vain. So, this is an important thing.

What is the prize... what is the prize? What are we getting? That cloud of witnesses that we're talking about in **Hebrews 12:1-2**, the Bible says: **“¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author in the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”** This is the prize, to be with Him, and to have eternal life with Him.

So, I will conclude with this: The life of the believer is a race. The race, by definition, includes sharing the gospel. Living the life of the believer without communicating the gospel is running in vain. Running that race requires perseverance and endurance. The crooked, sinful

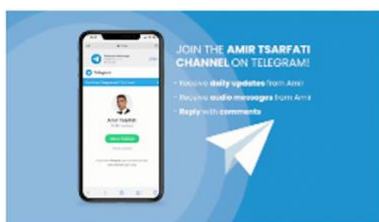


generation we're surrounded by will always cause us anguish, pain, and disappointment. But we have to always remember to set our eyes, not on the things of this world, but on Him who for the joy that was set before Him, suffered everything, and secured that crown of righteousness for us. The

race begins the moment you accept the Lord, and the finish line is right there when you get back to His presence. Run the race. Fight the fight. And finish well. Remember, it doesn't matter how you started, it matters how you finish. It doesn't matter where you come from. It matters where you go to.

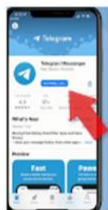
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** Scripture is taken from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.*

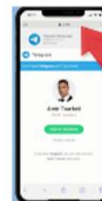


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