

CALL TO DUTY

VOL. 3, ISSUE 2



THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

Run with endurance the race that is set before us.... Hebrews 12:1



While stationed at Fort Benning, GA I had a commander who had been in the Ranger Regiment. He was an outstanding leader and always liked to test our physical and mental toughness. He would lead unit runs, usually of four to five miles. One time, though, he really tested our endurance. We started off on the usual course but then diverted to an unfamiliar route. We passed the four mile mark, then the five mile and kept going. Most of the soldiers hung in at that point. Then we did something completely out of the ordinary. We crossed the bridge over the Chattahoochee River and kept going. As we crossed the bridge you could feel (and hear) the disbelief that we were still running. Several soldiers just gave up and fell out of the run. Although they were physically fit, they lacked mental endurance. The unfamiliar route and the unknown length of the run crushed their spirit.



As Christians we also have a race to run, and we are to complete it with physical and spiritual endurance. The Hebrews writer explains that we are to "Run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1, NKJV). We may face many trials and tribulations, but we are to be spiritually tough. We do not know where life will take us, but we are to persevere. How can we do that?

Know Jesus. Paul writes "For this reason, I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." (2 Tim 1:12)



Put your faith in Him. Hebrews 12:2 tells us to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith.

Keep your eyes on the prize. Again, Paul writes "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 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," (1 Tim 4:7-8).

No matter what life brings you, if you keep your faith in Jesus you will also receive a crown of righteousness. Run with spiritual endurance the race that is set before you.

~ Tony Turner



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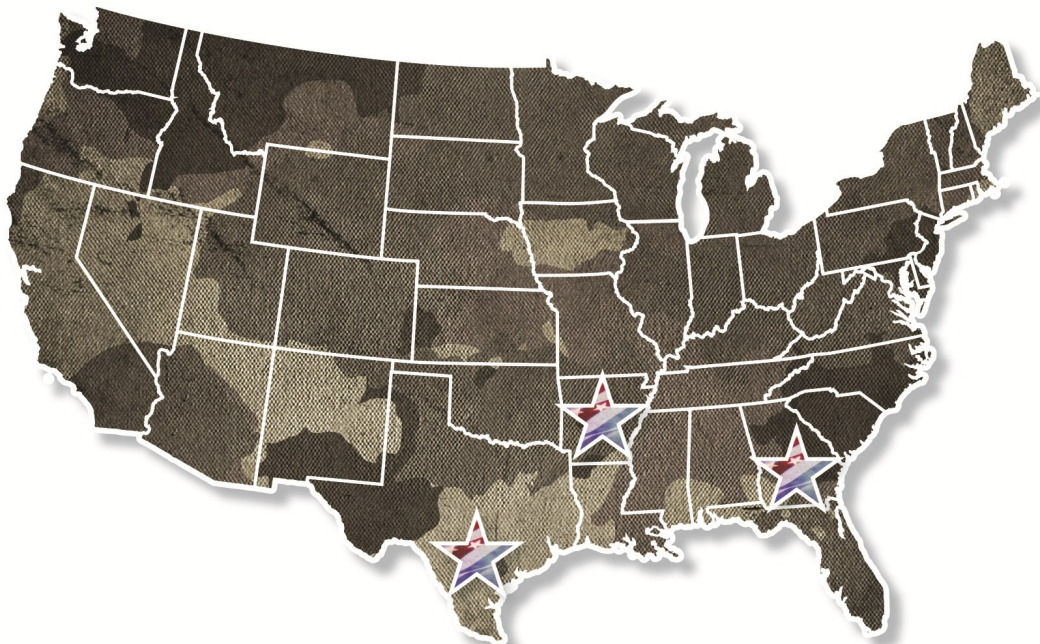
Deborah Rice, lovingly known as Ms. Deb, worked with House to House and Polishing the Pulpit for over 15 years. Her son is in the Army, and she was very patriotic. She loved America, and every year we celebrated Veterans Day and Memorial Day with her. In October 2021 she suffered a brain aneurysm. She fought for her life until February 4, 2022. To honor her, we have set up a donation fund to send out HTH to military bases in her honor. For every dollar given, at least three copies will be sent out around a military base, to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

You can donate here: housetohouse.com/mrs-deb-memorial-fund/.

As donations come in, we will send more HTH copies to additional bases across the continental United States (CONUS for military folks). As we send to new bases, we will add stars representing those areas.

"My parents we converted while serving in the USAF. Because of someone's diligence to spreading the gospel, my family are thankfully Christians. My parents both work for the church and I now work at House to House spreading the gospel."
—Ahren Steis

We are honored to have known Ms. Deb, and we are better for it.



The Ultimate Victory

There are several accounts of the origins of the marathon race. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Pheidippides, the Athenian courier, covered a distance of 150 miles in two days to request assistance against the Persian army. The next day, he ran approximately 25 miles to announce the victory over the Persians to the people of Athens, Greece. When he shouted the Greek word "Nikomen!" (translated as "We are the victors"), he is said to have collapsed and died. While these accounts have likely been embellished, historians agree there is some truth to the feat of Pheidippides. The modern marathon race of 26.2 miles is based on the distance Pheidippides ran from Marathon to Athens to announce the victory.



More than 500 years after Pheidippides' famous marathon, John the Apostle addressed the seven churches in Asia that were facing conflicts both internally and externally. The Greek word "Nikao" (translated as "overcomes" in the NASB) appears 17 times in the book of Revelation and serves as a key term. John encouraged each of the seven churches to hold fast to their faith so that they could overcome and receive the prize. John told the churches in Revelation that just as their persecution had been inaugurated, so had their victory in Christ. But they would need to endure to the end to gain the victory. *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."* Revelation 2:10-11

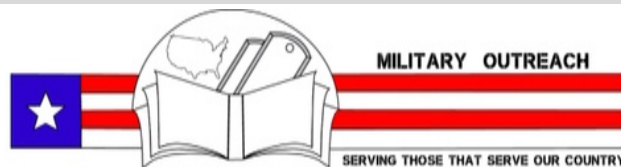
In Revelation, John explains how those who have already received their crown of life have triumphed. *"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death."* (Revelation 12:11) First, they overcame because of the blood of the Lamb. Jesus' sacrifice lifts the burden of sin from our shoulders and eases our path in this race. Secondly, they overcame because of the words of their testimony. Our Christian confession may lead to challenges in this life, but it earns us favor in the eyes of the Lord. God's favor grants us inner strength and endurance while we run the race. Finally, they triumphed because they did not

cherish their lives, even when confronted with death. Eternal life with God is the ultimate goal of this race. When we refuse to be swayed from this goal, even in the face of death, our ultimate victory is guaranteed when we cross the finish line.

Pheidippides' noble feat earned him glory throughout the ages. However, there is an even greater reward for those who run the Christian race with endurance. Paul wrote, *"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."* (1 Corinthians 9:25) Therefore, let each of us learn from those who have gone before us (Hebrews 12:1), who ran the race with endurance and gained the crown of life (2 Timothy 4:8). As each of us crosses the finish line, may we cry out to our Lord and Savior, "Nikomen!" – We have overcome!



Mike Green currently serves as the Dean of Students at the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in Knoxville, TN. He has spent the last two decades serving the church in various capacities to include church planting, preaching and youth ministry. Mike holds a B.B.S degree in Bible and an M.A in New Testament. Prior to entering ministry full-time Mike served five-years as a U.S. Army Ranger with the 75th Ranger Regiment. He and his wife Natalie have been married twenty-four years and have six children. They are members of the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville.



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Press On

I suppose there are few who did not race as a child. We raced routinely to see who was fastest. We raced for other reasons, too. We raced to see who would represent our class at our school's "field day" races. We raced to see who would make the first pick when selecting a team for playground sports, or who would be first in line for some event. We raced continuously! But those were always sprints.



The race illustration was one of Paul's favorites. At least six times Paul uses a race illustration in his writings, and I think it was partly because he understood that anyone could identify with it.

It remains so today. As our selected theme, Paul's instruction is to "run with endurance the race set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

What race and who set it before us? Paul's admonition follows Hebrews chapter 11, reminding us of the wondrous faith of several of God's people of old. A quick glance and we notice flawed people (Moses, Rahab, David, etc.), people who sinned but endured in faithfulness and were included because of their unwavering faith.

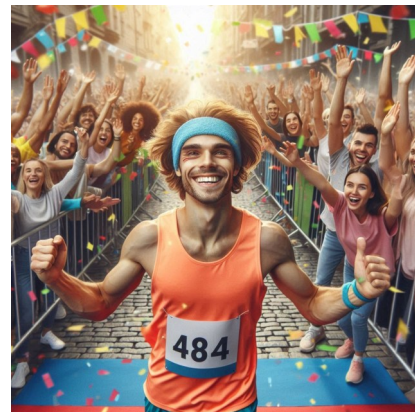
The lives of those great people of faith are like witnesses to us running the same race: "the race that is set before us" (NKJV). Our children, extended family, neighbors, co-workers, and others are all witnesses to how we run the race as Christians.

A "marathon" is synonymous with endurance and length, and not just in racing. Have you heard someone say something like, "Life is a marathon, not a sprint?" That is Paul's perspective. Adopting that view leads us to some necessary realizations concerning our lives as Christians. Marathon runners frequently experience trouble along the way: blisters, stomach pains, a fall, cramps, etc. Successful runners persevere and endure in spite of the troubles or setbacks. They understand that there will be issues, trials, and difficulties in a long race.

Paul wanted the Hebrew Christians to remember that their new lives in Christ would not be without impediments, challenges, and even failures. He used those familiar spiritual ancestors in

chapter 11 to remind us. Those faithful ones did not allow temporary failure condemn them or deter them from their journey doing God's will. Even Paul's horrible past did not prevent him from pressing on to fight the good fight (2 Tim 4:7).

Our race as Christians is the one God put us in. He set the rules, and His word encourages us to be persistent and finish the course. A runner can't carry baggage and win the race. We can't carry the burden of sin and successfully finish the Christian's marathon. Not coincidentally, Paul made no mistake when he admonished the Hebrews to endure the challenges, difficulties, and burdens because he believed the truth of the words of our Lord Jesus, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt 11:30) Jesus came and died that we might run the race successfully.



Conrad Slate enlisted in the Army Reserve while in college and later transferred to the Air National Guard. He went to Officer Training School and completed 31 years of service retiring as a colonel. He served a variety of positions starting as a Military Policeman. He served in the Security Police, in Public Affairs, in NBC warfare training, and a variety of staff positions, retiring as Deputy Chief of Staff for Support Services. He is a member of the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, TN where he is active in jail ministry.

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” Hebrews 12:1

To run a race, we need to be as light as possible. We need to put away or get rid of the worldly baggage holding us down or even stopping us during our race to the finish line. It's a long hard race to run and we have many obstacles on the path. Those obstacles are temptations we face every day. We are all tempted by the same temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13) but allow ourselves to fall easily into certain temptations.



We must be more cautious of those temptations and have a “plan of escape” ready. We are warriors in the Army of God. We must have plans prepared and ready to be executed when the temptation is about to attack us. Remember, temptation is not the sin. Giving in to the temptation is sin.



Let us all be encouraged by Paul when he wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4 “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 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.” 2 Timothy 4:7, 8 NKJV.



Let us all remember those before us and have a battle plan ready to keep us running the race set before us.

~~ Greg

Greg James grew up in the Air Force and lived in Utah, Louisiana, and South Dakota before entering the active-duty Air Force in 1991. He transferred to the Reserves as an Air Reserve Technician in 2001. Greg was in air operations with heavy and fighter aircraft deploying to Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan among other deployments and TDY's. He met and married his wife Tammy while she was active-duty Air Force, and she got out when their son was born. Greg retired from the Air Force Reserves in 2017 after 26 years of total service and graduated from Brown Trail School of preaching in 2016. Greg served as the associate minister for the Greenmount Rd congregation in Belleville, IL and served as the pulpit minister for the Briar congregation in Briar, Texas before relocating to Jackson, Tennessee. They are members of the Crosswinds church of Christ.

*...Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...
(Heb. 12.1)*

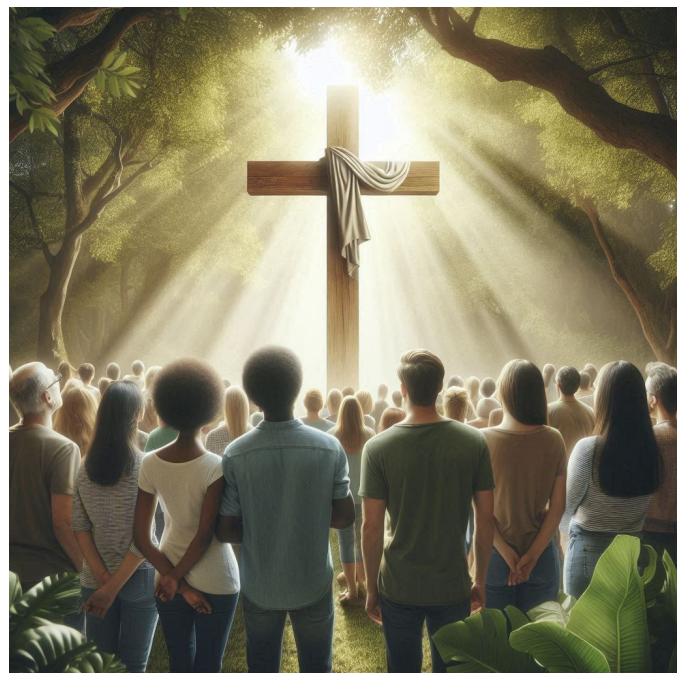
In the Bible, the New Testament book of Hebrews deals with the very specific problem of the Hebrew (Jewish) Christians wanting to leave Christianity and returning to Judaism. In the last half of the first century A.D. and beyond, the Biblically stated cause of this problem was the constantly increasing persecutions inflicted upon those Christians by Imperial Rome (Heb. 6:1-8; 10:26-31). The persecutions had not yet reached a point of death (Heb. 10:32-39; 12:1-11), but those Christians were in a physical and temporal war with Imperial Rome for their lives and a spiritual and eternal war with God for their souls. These wars were primarily centered around whom all the Christians of the time considered to be their true Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). Was it Jesus Christ or the Roman Caesar(s)?

The political, geographical, and religious environs existing at the estimated time Hebrews was written (prior to A.D. 70) reflected two truths. Jerusalem was becoming the religious capital of the world (Christianity and Judaism) while Rome was becoming the military capital of the world. Christians willingly and enthusiastically confessed Jesus Christ as their true (spiritual and eternal) King, Lord and Savior. Since they no longer confessed the reigning Caesar(s) as their king(s) and lord(s), Imperial Rome began persecuting them. Many Jewish Christians then reverted back to Judaism.

Faith in Jesus Christ was at the center of all this, although He was not present in person at the time of the Holy Spirit-inspired writing of Hebrews (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Imperial Rome thought Him to be dead and gone forever because Rome (along with the false testimonial help of the corrupt Judaizers in power at the time) persecuted and crucified Him. Now thinking Christ dead and gone, Imperial Rome (a) saw Him in person no more, (b) turned all of its attention and persecution towards the complete elimination of all of His faithful Christian followers who could be seen in person, and (c) unwittingly assisted Satan in his continual failed attempts to destroy the church on earth and to prevent God's promised second coming of Christ (Matt. 18; 1 Thess. 4-5; Rev. 20-22).

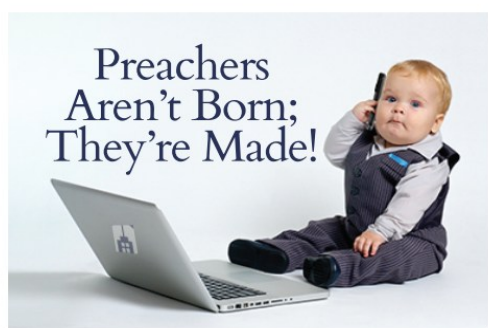
In lieu of this, the Hebrews author wrote what he did in Heb. 12:1, *"Therefore, since we have so*

great a cloud of witnesses surrounding (encircling) us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance (burden) and the sin (offense) which so easily entangles (ensnares) us, and let us run (hasten) with endurance (patience) the race that is set before us..." (NASU). Hence, the true message the writer gave to those early Christians was to remain with Christianity and never return to Judaism or any other worldly religions. If they ever did leave Christianity, they may have saved their physical and temporal lives for a bit longer while forfeiting their spiritual souls for all eternity. The same still holds true for all of Christians today.



Tom Wright served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War Era. Following his military discharge, Tom graduated college and worked in Design Engineering for over two decades. In his middle forties, he left secular work and entered fulltime ministry. He holds degrees of Bachelor of Theology, Master of Biblical Studies, and Doctor of Ministry. Tom has spent about the past twenty-five years serving God as an evangelist, preacher, and teacher. He and his wife Carla live in the Colorado Springs area and worship with the Calhan

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Romans 10:14

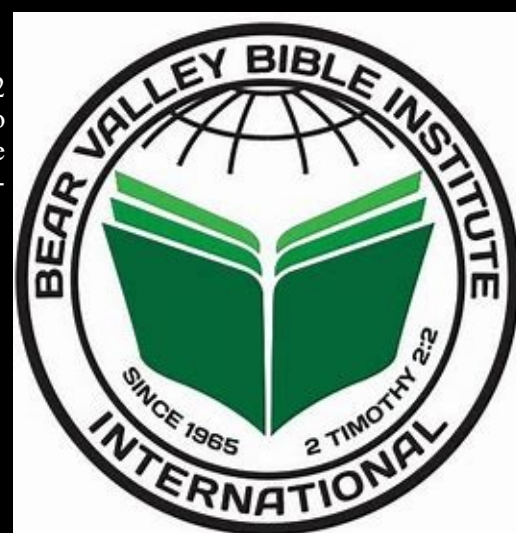
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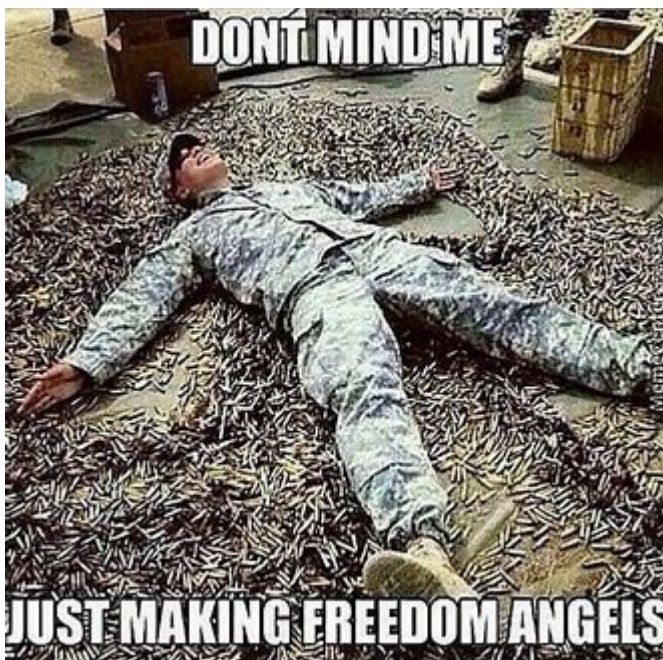
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"The Christian Soldier's Creed" (adapted from "The Soldier's Creed")

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HEAR the word of God: Romans 10:9-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Revelation 2:7; 22:18-19

BELIEVE in Jesus as Savior of world: John 3:16; 14:6; 14:23

REPENT of your sins: Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; Revelation 2:5, 16, 21,22; 3:3, 19

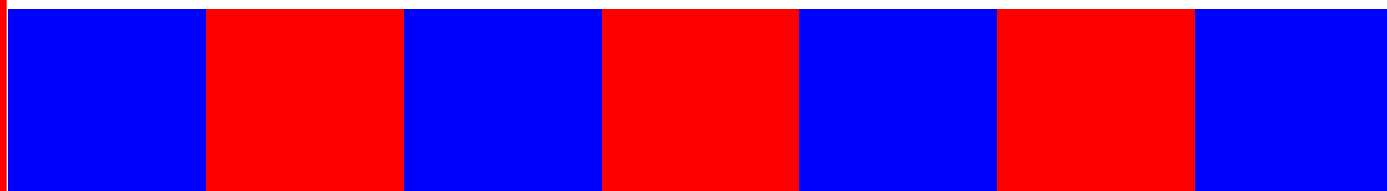
CONFESS Jesus before others: Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:8-11

BE IMMERSSED into Christ for forgiveness of your sins: Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-47; 22:16; Romans 6:3-11; 1 Peter 3:18-22

CONTINUE to live faithful to God until you die or Christ comes again: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Revelation 2:10

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