

“2 Runners & A 5K!”

I. INTRO:

- A. Communion:
- B. Pray for Teachers/Educators: (Elem/Jr.H./H.S./Jr.College/Univ.) Public; Private; Home school.
- C. **Story:** Hours behind the runner in front of him, the **last marathoner** finally entered the Olympic stadium. By that time, the drama of the day's events was almost over and most of the spectators had gone home. This athlete's story, however, was still being played out. Limping into the arena, the **Tanzanian** runner grimaced with every step, his knee bleeding and bandaged from an earlier fall. His ragged appearance immediately caught the attention of the remaining crowd, who cheered him on to the finish line. **Why did he stay in the race? What made him endure his injuries to the end?** When asked these questions later, he replied, *"My country did not send me 7,000 miles away to **start** the race. They sent me 7,000 miles **to finish it.**"*
1. I think **we** could say the same about finishing our Christian Race!
- D. **Outline: 2 RUNNERS & A 5K!**
1. **The Christian Life** is a Race to be Run. **So let's meet 2 Runners.**
 2. **Runner #1 Ahimaaz; Runner #2 The Cushite.**
 3. John in his Revelation, pictures **the life of the saint** as one who clashes with conflict.
 - a) He gives us a glimpse of **Who** have won; he tells us they came out of great tribulation.
 - b) He tells us **How** they won; their victory was due to the fact that they did not count their lives as dear unto themselves.
- E. We left off w/David in Mahanaim, **waiting a word from messengers** regarding the outcome of the battle(civil war), **& especially the fate of Absalom** his son.

II. 2 RUNNERS & A 5K!

- A. **RUNNER #1, AHIMAAZ!** (19-30)
- B. Let me Run now...Please let me also Run...Let me Run!
1. It was a **3 mile run** from where they were to Mahanaim, a **5k**.
 2. I guess you call this a **Fun Run!** (as he didn't have a purpose)
 - a) That's what Kelly told me when we were dating. **It's only a 5k.** It's a Fun Run!
 - (1) **The year 1979.** I dawned my my blue /white dolphin shorts, **&** my red/white Nike waffle running shoes!
 - (a) **IT WASN'T FUN!** Especially when you come in **behind** your girlfriend!

(2) I agree with **Neil Armstrong's** philosophy "I believe that the Good Lord gave us a finite number of heartbeats and I'll be darned if I'm going to use up mine running up and down a street."

(3) Or, Will Rogers, "We can't all be heroes, someone has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by."

3. Ahimaaz was Running without a Message. **Why? For who?**

a) "I ran for myself, not Finland." Paavo Nurmi

(1) I guess Ahimaaz would have said the same thing. "I ran for myself, not for **Israel**, not for **David**, & not with a Message."

4. Paul said, **that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain.**

5. **Weary of his pleading, Joab gives him permission.**

a) God forbid when God does the same for us!

C. **A Runner shouldn't Run Ahead of the Lord!**

1. (22) "Why will you run, my son, if you have **no news ready?**"

2. 2 Jn1:9 **Anyone who runs ahead & does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father & the Son.**

3. **Running is not everything.** That's like trying to fulfill the Great Commission, by just **going...but** forgetting to take **the Gospel** with you.

4. **Some people just want to look important** but don't have much to say.

a) Oh to have my 10 minutes of fame: *It twas I who brought the news from the forest of Ephraim To Mahanaim!*

b) He ends up **standing aside** & watching the Cushite deliver the rt message in the rt way.

D. **Straight Forward makes the Best Runner!**

1. **Ahimaaz** took the **long, easy route** to Mahanaim through the valley, **while The Cushite** took the **short, direct route** over the difficult terrain. (www)

E. **Being a Fast Runner doesn't make you a Good Messenger!**

1. **Find your Race!**

a) Don't try to run someone else's race. **Let God give you the race you are to run.**

b) Heb.12:2 **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.**

c) Ahimaaz had **ambition & ability**, but he lacked the **maturity** needed to minister to the king. **Before you start to run, be sure you are the right person to deliver the message.**

2. **Find your Pace!**

a) Don't try to run someone else's pace. **Let Christ set your pace.**

- b) Gal. 5:25 says, *Since we live by the Spirit, let us **keep in step** with the Spirit.*
- c) 1st Pet. 2:21 says, *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should **follow in his steps**.*
 - (1) That should be our goal, to **keep in step & follow in His steps!**
 - (2) I'm sure the "extra time" it took the Cushite was well spent in prayer figuring out what to say!

F. A Runner shouldn't **make up his Own Message!**

- 1. **"All is well!"** (*Shalom* in Heb.) - **Really?** The Kings son is dead!!!
 - a) How would you like **your doctor** giving you *good news...when it really isn't?*
- 2. Good ol' **J.Vernon McGee** said, "There are many messengers running about today telling the human family that God says all is well - **but all is not well!**"

G. Be a Runner that **isn't concerned with other runners**, but in running his **own** race!

- 1. **Yes run to win!**...But to **win your race...not** to beat other Christians!
- 2. There are a lot of Christians *pretty impressed with themselves* that they have **Outran other Cushite Christians!**
- 3. Paul said, **run in such a way that you may win** (1 Cor.9:24) [win, not salv, but rewards]
 - a) You've heard, **Champions aren't born, they're made!**
 - (1) Made via discipline, right training, desire & motivation, & realistic goals.
 - b) **And everyone who competes for the prize is to exercise control in all things!**
 - (1) "to exercise Self-control" means to have "strength within".
 - (a) It carries the idea of *mastering yourself* instead of giving in to impulse or overindulgence.

H. **RUNNER #2, THE CUSHITE!** (21,31-33)

- l. (21) **Cushite** - This is not a proper name, but signifies that he was *an Ethiopian*.

J. Be a Runner that **Bows & Runs!**

- 1. **He bowed...& ran** - when your leader gives you your orders...bow & run!
- 2. When **the Scriptures** gives you instructions/commands/orders...**bow & run!**
- 3. When **the Holy Spirit** prompts you...**bow & run!**
- 4. A Runner that **Bows & Runs**, shows Humility & Obedience.

K. Be a **Faithful** Runner!

- 1. Prov.25:13 **Like the cold of snow in time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters.**
- 2. A Runner that is **Faithful**, is conscience of refreshing others souls.

L. Be a Runner that **Has Something to Say!**

1. He is able to deliver the message w/compassion & skill.
2. He can deliver the **right message the right way!**
3. A Runner that Has *Something to Say*, is thus Purposeful & Intentional.

M. Be a Runner that **Has Tact!**

1. I've had to have been the bearer of bad news, many times. (Hardest involved a fatal car accident on the 15 frwy many years ago w/a family from our fellowship. I recall praying, pondering, how to tell 1st the husband & then the children, that their mom/wife had died, right in the middle of a busy ER at Inland Hospital)
2. I was a very young pastor, but I knew it needed much **tact & tenderness**.
 - a) Someone defined "tact" as "the knack of *making a point w/o making an enemy.*"
 - b) The Cushite had tact!

N. **David's Response!** (33)

O. David tasted once again the pain of *forgiven* sin.

P. **If only I had died in your place!**

1. A common statement of **any parent** that has lost a child.
2. The pain unbearable. The grief overwhelming.
3. Spurgeon said, "*It would be wise to sympathize as far as we can, than to sit in judgment upon a case which has never been our own.*"
4. **If only I had died in your place** was also *the very plea of Jesus* to His Father, before His Incarnation! (and so He did...He died in **our** place!!!)

Q. **Application:**

1. **What type of runner are you?** Are you vying for the the **long easy route** through the smooth valley? **Or**, the the **short direct route** over the difficult terrain.
2. Today, are you a Ahimaaz, **or** a Cushite?
3. As Paul sat in the Isthmian games, I'm sure he noted how the runners had their eyes absolutely fixed on their goal - a square pillar at the end of the stadium.(Swindoll)
 - a) As we run our race may we **fix our eyes on Jesus, the author & finisher** (or, the originator & perfecter) **of our faith!**

R. **Inspiration:**

1. What would this look like if we as Christians ran **our own** race?
2. What would this look like to the world, if churches **stopped competing** against each other?

3. What would this look like if we simply heard, bowed, & ran?
4. Columnist **Herb Caen** wrote in the San Francisco Chronicle: "Every morning in Africa, **a gazelle wakes up**. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning **a lion wakes up**. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a **lion** or a **gazelle**; when the sun comes up, **you'd better be running!**"