• Which race are you running?
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In Hebrews the Word of God speaks of a race that we Christians are supposed to run:

Hebrews 12:1-2

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The race of faith we are supposed to run is a race that we run with patience, looking unto Jesus. It is a race whose focus and end is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Christian race. Something else that we can extract from what Paul says is that not all of us that we call ourselves Christians are running this race. Otherwise why the exhortation “LET US run ….. the race”.

The question I have for us, today is what race are we running? Is there any other race?

The rats race

I found this term in a very fine Christian book I’m currently reading, called “Man in the mirror”. There is another race raging around us, the world’s race. In this race the final aim is not the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a race that is run focused on Him. Instead it is a race with various shallow “goals”. It is a race for financial success, job success, self-fulfilment, more materials, bigger and better homes, bigger income, more power and influence. It is a race for the “nice, beautiful and settled life”. It is this race billions of people are running every day, filling shopping malls, filling houses with things, things, and more unnecessary things. It is this race that people are running getting in debt to satisfy the dream of the “beautiful, nice and settled life”. A life of affluence, and “personal (self-centred) peace”. The end of it: emptiness, loss of orientation and stress. Shopping has become a familiar term among Christians. We are
going shopping and by this many times we do not mean to get the necessities but to get somehow a joy that supposedly exists in buying things.

There are therefore two races: the Christian race, the race of faith people run by looking unto Jesus. The race of living a life in obedience to God’s Word. This race stands in stark opposite to the race of materialism, consumerism and secularism, the race of the world. The thing is that despite the fact that we Christians should know better many times we fall prey to the race of secularism, materialism and consumerism. You see secularism, the religion of the godless humanists that have re-designed our values to no values, is the majority out there. And many of us are proselytised to their gospel. The TV cries out, the internet cries out, the news cry out, your colleagues cry out…. the gospel of consumerism, materialism and secularism. And many of us, Christians, buy it. To this has also contributed a deterioration of the message of the gospel, and a lowering of the price to be a Christian. For many of us that profess to be a Christian, the God we believe is simply not the God of the Bible. We believe in a God that is a gentle grandfather that spoils us with his gifts. We believe in a God that loves and gives but not in a holy God. Therefore God becomes the one from whom we expect to not only fulfil our needs – which is the right expectation – but to help us continue running the wrong race. We want both God and the world. But this is not possible. As James says:

James 4:4
“know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

It is not possible to run two races at the same time. It is not possible to serve two masters. It is not possible to be up in two horses. You have to choose one of the two and as first step you have to recognise which race are you running. Yes we go to church every Sunday. But this by itself says nothing. Many of us go to church, go through the motions, but by Monday evening they don’t remember what Sundays sermon was about. I believe the best indicator of the race that we are running is what our heart, or better the spirit of God in our heart, is saying. Do you feel full of the
power and life of God or empty and disorientated? Getting closer to God brings life. Getting closer to the world brings death. What is the God you are believing in? Is your God a gentle God that always will be spoiling you with gifts and blessings? What would you do if God does not match with your standards, if a prayer is not answered, if a desire is not met? Are you in debt, seeking out the monster of consumerism materialism and secularism? What would you do if to be a Christian became more expensive? If you had to stand for your faith at work or the society?

God is the only source of life. Jesus said, those that seek their life will lose it and those who will lose their lives will find it. Many of us try to save our lives. Our life, our self is the most important thing and the centre of our life trying to satisfy him in the shopping mall and in the things and riches we accumulate. Jesus’ way is to lose your life to God, submit yourself to God, look unto Jesus and then you will find what Jesus is, LIFE. The Lord said in Jeremiah that his people had forsaken Him the source of the living waters and had opened holes that were impossible to keep any water (Jeremiah 2:13). God is the only source of living waters. He is the only one from whom life and peace comes and those of us that at one time or another have been close to Him, know this very well. If God seems very remote could it be that we are running the wrong race? Could it be that we have bought the wrong gospel? Absolutely yes. The further we run in the wrong race the further from God we will be. But there is a path of return. As one of the prophets said “let’s examine ourselves and let’s return to the Lord”. As the prodigal son did, let’s come to ourselves and let’s return to the Father’s house. In the parable of the sower, 3 out of the four categories are professing Christians. However only one, the last one runs the right race. The other two are running wrong races. In the second category are those that are Christian only when the price is cheap. When the price goes up, when persecutions arise for the gospel, then they fall away. They are running the race of approval by the world. The other category is the one choked by the riches and the cares of this world. They are the “too busy” ones. They are out there to become rich and to leave a happy and beautiful life according to the world’s standards. This aim blurs their vision so much that at the end, they don’t produce any fruit. They are Christians, but worldly ones, running the race of the rats. None of these two categories produces fruit. It is only the last category that
does produce fruit and only this category is running the race of faith. We see it also in Paul’s epistles. Demas a guy that Paul mentioned many times in his letters at the end abandoned him and followed the world. Demas was still racing, but for the wrong cause. He was still running but in the race of the rats not in the race of Christ. In which race are YOU running? Millions of us run in the wrong race. Millions of us need to repent and return. For millions of us it is time to stop putting up with the internal emptiness and turn to the source of all life and true: to the living God as He is revealed by His Word, the Bible. Millions of us have bought the gospel of consumerism, materials and secularism and are running for the “beautiful, blessed, problem free life”. Millions of us have believed in a God that is not the God of the Bible but rather the gentle grandfather that sends blessing. Millions of us would have stopped following God if He didn’t answer a very important personal desire. When Jesus died the only property he had was the cloth the guards divided. Today millions of us would need a truck to carry our tons of weight of stuff. Which gospel are you believing? The gospel of Jesus Christ or the gospel of materialism, secularism and consumerism?

“let us examine ourselves and let us return to God”

“let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

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