



REFLECTIONS

March 9, 2014

**I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only
I may finish the race and complete the task
the Lord Jesus has given me —**

Acts 20:24

Finishing Strong

His family stood among a crowd of witnesses to cheer him on as he neared the finish line. It had been a grueling day, but no more punishing than the preparation for it.

Ironman is the name associated with triathlon competitions at locations all over the world. The participants meet demanding tests in competition with each other, but mostly they compete against themselves just to prove they can do it. The competition includes a 2.4 mile swim, followed by a bike ride in excess of 100 miles, and concludes with a marathon, all back to back to back. Winners typically finish in less than 8 ½ hours, but anyone who finishes at all has reason to feel pretty good about the accomplishment.

The training regimen is more exhaustive than the race. To build strength for such a race requires a disciplined, life consuming regimen over a period of months. But the training involves more than strength. The key to success lies in the discipline to pace one's self. The race is not a sprint. The event is one of measured endurance. It's admirable to finish first, but for most contestants the ultimate objective is to finish strong.

Preparation becomes life consuming and leaves little time to even think of anything else. The physical commitment is large, but conditioning addresses more than the physical. Managing the pace takes equal billing. The key is in finding a rhythm that preserves enough energy to take the final step.

God gave us a rhythm to pace our lives. When followed, it keeps us energized for a lifetime. He separated the night from the day to provide time for rest; and he commands us to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy, for it was on the seventh day that God did not work at all. Restoring and preserving energy is essential to finishing strong.

Finishing strong is the subject the author of Hebrews addressed when he wrote, "*Therefore... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*" (Hebrews 12:1-3)

To the cheers of his family, Al crossed the finish line that day. His *Ironman* performance had set no records for speed, but speed was never his objective. Al managed his pace throughout the race, and he did what he set out to do—

He finished strong.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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