

1-1-1988

Run with Your Eyes on Jesus

Dale R. Wells

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/restorationquarterly>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#), [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wells, Dale R. (1988) "Run with Your Eyes on Jesus," *Restoration Quarterly*: Vol. 30 : No. 1 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/restorationquarterly/vol30/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Restoration Quarterly by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ ACU.

Restoration Quarterly

- 1 Micah and the Task of Ministry
RICK MARRS
- 17 Restorationist Hermeneutics Among
the Churches of Christ: Why Are We at
an Impasse?
RUSS DUDREY
- 43 Discovery of the Earliest Extant Scottish
Restoration Congregation
LYNN A. McMILLON
- 53 Run with Your Eyes on Jesus
DALE R. WELLS
- 57 Book Reviews



SERMON

Run with Your Eyes on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-3

DALE R. WELLS
Dimmitt, Texas

Our family finally saw the highly acclaimed movie "Chariots of Fire" a few weeks ago. That was quite an experience. It is rare that something designed for entertainment conveys a worthwhile message, but "Chariots of Fire" is one movie that does.

The movie focuses on the real lives of two young Britons in the 1920s as they trained to run in the 1924 Olympics in France. One of the men, Harold Abrahams, was a Jew. He ran more than anything else to silence the anti-Semitism of his day. His race was first, his country second.

Eric Liddell was the other runner. He was the son of a Protestant minister and a missionary to China. Running was just a joyful diversion to him. And, as the movie develops, it becomes clear that, to Eric Liddell, his God was first and his country second.

Liddell ran against Abrahams only once, and he won. But that is not important to the moral of his life. Both represented Great Britain in the 1924 Olympics. When Liddell contemplated competing in the events, he had to weigh carefully whether he was shirking his obligations to God's work. Family and friends were divided over whether or not he should compete.

A superior in his denomination offered some advice. He said Eric's talent for running was a gift from God to be used for God's glory. His missionary work could stand the delay if he would use the competition to reach people. He summed up his advice: "Run to the glory of God."

And Liddell did. After months of training the team set off for France. En route he learned that the preliminary heat for his event was to be held on Sunday. But to Liddell, Sunday was a day of worship and meditation, not secular endeavors. He couldn't run on Sunday.

Even the ranking officials of his government couldn't dissuade him. They insisted that loyalty to the crown transcends loyalty to God, but he couldn't buy that. They were at an impasse. The stalemate was broken only when a teammate offered to exchange events so Liddell wouldn't have to run on Sunday.

Liddell accepted. He went to the blocks thinking: "Run to the glory of God." And he won. Newspapers all over the world headlined the story of this young man who refused to compromise his convictions. People everywhere knew that God came first in Eric Liddell's life because he ran to the glory of God.

Eric Liddell's story reminds me of Hebrews 12:1-3.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Pioneer 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.

A Gallery of Witnesses

Nothing is so disheartening as a lonely struggle when no one sees and no one cares. It is our nature to need and crave support. Moments before Eric Liddell ran, he saw his sister in the gallery. She had opposed his decision to run, thinking it showed a lesser devotion to God. She had vowed she wouldn't attend the race. But she changed her mind when she learned of his uncompromising stand. And there she was along with all his friends and a whole world who knew where Eric Liddell stood.

The writers to the Hebrews tell us that we have a gallery of spectators cheering us on to victory. They are the heroes of faith of chapter 11. They've run the race; they know the obstacles; they've endured. Now they are spectators. But they are not disinterested spectators, because we are on their team. They want us to win because they know that "God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect" (11:40).

A Race to Run

With a gallery of cheering spectators, it is important to run well. Athletic teams know there's something real about a home-field advantage. So the writer of Hebrews coaches us to give our best.

There is weight to be rid of. He writes: "Let us throw off everything that hinders" (12:1b). This weight (Gk. *ogkon*) can be the excess body weight shed in training. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:25: "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training." Or it could be weights worn in training to build up strength. But when time for competition comes, no respectable athlete will let anything weight him down. Greek athletes even ran naked so nothing would slow them down.

There are distractions to be eliminated, as well. There is sin that so easily entangles (12:1c). Sin, the writer says, trips us up and keeps us from running well. That's the significance of the word "entangling" (*euperistaton*).

But there's an alternative thought worth considering. Another early reading supplies "easily distracts" (*euperispaston*) in the place of "easily entangles." Distractions lose races, so the writer warns us to get rid of distracting sin and urges us to "fix our eyes on Jesus" (12:2).

Whether sin is regarded as something that trips us up or something that distracts our concentration, the message is the same: Sin results in poor performance and a lost race.

The writer goes on to urge that we "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (12:1d). It doesn't really matter who gets off the blocks first if the first man off the blocks doesn't win the race. It doesn't matter who leads into the first turn if the one leading doesn't win the race. Only one thing counts: who breaks the tape! Paul elsewhere writes: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize" (1 Cor. 9:24). It takes stamina; it takes determination; but most of all, it takes a will to win.

A Goal to Attain

What's at the end of the race? There are the cheers of the ones who have run the course before us (12:1). But more than that, there are the congratulations of "Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith" (12:2).

Maybe that's why the writer says: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus" (12:2). He is our model and our goal. The word he uses (*aphorōntes*) suggests looking away from everything else to fix a gaze on something. It contrasts well with the idea of sin's distraction. Moffatt suggests that we are to run the race "with no eyes for anyone or anything but Jesus."

Our goal is Jesus' winners' circle (12:2b). That is where he's gone and it is where his winners go when their race is done.

There is only one real danger for the Christian: dropping out of the race. The writer encourages us to consider Christ so that we "will not grow weary and lose heart" (12:3). The words he uses (*mē kamēte*) were used by Aristotle of athletes collapsing after the end of the race. That's a familiar sight to sports fans. But there's all the difference in the world in collapsing after you've crossed the finish line and collapsing before you've finished the race. In a word, the difference is "perseverance" (12:1d).

Run with perseverance! Run with your eyes on Jesus!