

## Wendy's July Prayer Thoughts

Two important races took place this Spring. The first the London Marathon, and the second the Grater Manchester Race. It reminded me how athletes need to build up their strength to run both short and longer races. Pounding the feet on track, or on asphalt surfaces, can cause a variety of stress on muscles, the heart and lungs, and the vascular system. Runners need to keep their feet strong, and don comfortable footwear. Each foot has twenty six bones. Pain can occur on the ball of the foot, the top, and the arch. Ankle sprain. The Olympics bring together the best athletes from around the world, to compete for their countries, and the coveted medals. Sometimes the spot light falls on others who are not the victors. I share with you the amazing feat of two contestants who both reached the finishing line. Their achievements will remind us of how we as Christians are running the race that God has set before us

The sprinter Derek Redmond was competing in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, and had reached the semi finals. He had broken the British 400 metre record twenty times. Jetting off from the starting blocks he looked strong, and appeared to be in great form. Around the half way mark he felt his ham string snap. He grimaced in pain, grabbed hold of the back of his thigh and collapsed. Not only was the pain acute, but he was bitterly disappointed as he watched the rest of the pack pass him by. Redmond managed to get up, and began to hop forward on his left foot, taking care to keep in lane, and not to be disqualified. His father named Jim, saw hoe he was valiantly struggling to reach the finish. Wearing his cap embroidered with the words 'Just Do It', he leapt onto the track, pushing back the Olympic security officials, reached Derek and put his arm around his son's waist. Derek wept on his shoulder. They walked the last few metres together. The race had already been adjudicated, but the 65,000 strong crowd rose to their feet and cheered.

Derek Redmond exemplified the power of perseverance. Paul considered perseverance to be essential for building Christian character, and for facing difficulties along the way. To encourage the Christians in Rome he wrote, "We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope." Romans 5: 3b-4 NKJ. 'Tribulations' in other translations is replaced by 'sufferings, 'troubles.' The Greek word *thipsis* means 'to crush,' 'to press together,' 'to squash.' John MacArthur commented; "tribulation a word used for pressure like that of a press squeezing the fluid from olives or grapes. Here they are not the normal pressures of living, but the inevitable troubles that come to the followers of Christ because of their relationship to Him...Such difficulties produce rich spiritual benefits." Opposition, obstacles, difficulties do not crush Christians, or deter them from their journey of faith, because they have the Holy Spirit, and receive the staying power...

When you feel you are about to cave in, that's the time to surrender to God in prayer and unburden yourself before Him. Christ in His grace has the power to fellowship with you, bear the weight with you and see you through. Then as Paul prayed for others you also will "have the strength to stick it out over the long haul - not the grim strength of gritting your teeth, but the glory-strength God gives. It is a strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy (the fruit of the Spirit from abiding). Colossians 1:4. MSG Spend time meditating on lines from Henry White's hymn, Onward Christians onward go. 1. "Great your strength if great your need." 2. "Strengthened with the Bread of Life."

The Marathon for women was introduced in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Gabriela Andersen Schiess of Switzerland was one of the runners. The temperature was an unbearable 30C and there were only five water stations where refreshments could be taken. The heat radiating from the pavement overtook her, but she was determined she was not going to quit. Many times she almost collapsed, but with her indomitable courage she reached the track and the final lap. Her torso was twisted, and her forearm hung, her leg cramped. Medics rushed to meet her, but they were waved aside. 40,000 cheered her on. Gabriela fought with her last ounce. As she crossed the line, finishing 37th out of 44, she fell into the arms of the Medics.

Gabriela showed exceptional endurance in her determination to finish. There was no way she was going to give up, in spite of feelings of exhaustion. Paul, who had likely watched the Isthmian Games in Corinth, exhorted the Christians there "to run to win the imperishable crown". 1 Corinthians 9:24f. Writing his valedictory and knowing his death was imminent he stated. "I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day." 2 Timothy 4:7-8. A heavenly reward awaits you too, should you be determined to run the race to the end. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you endurance, and a vision of what awaits you. Also pray for forgiveness mentioning the time/s you've dropped out of the race. You had thought that you were not good enough to continue, Was it because you failed to take hold of the truths and promises in God's Word? Meditate on lines from J S B Monsell's hymn Fight the Good Fight 1. "Run the straight race through God's good grace." 2. "Christ is the path and Christ the prize." . . .