

REQUISITES FOR RUNNING
IN AN ETERNAL RACE
AND GAINING AN ETERNAL PRIZE

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PREFACE

Some aspects of the Christian's spiritual race for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus parallel that of a natural race. To a point, we can compare notes with those of a well-trained runner and glean some interesting facts. Yet beyond the less significant races for which men and women train in this life is a far more complex race, a spiritual one, that must be run on a spiritual realm by sincere Christians. This race, which is set before each person at his or her spiritual birth, spans the individual's entire lifetime. Whether or not a person gains the eternal prize that is at the end of the race depends on how faithfully he or she observes the rules that God has given in His Word to help all runners run well.

Many beautiful truths in God's Word reveal the necessary requisites for running the race victoriously to the finish line. In order to hasten our steps in these last days, I have re-edited this article which appeared many years ago in the *Christ Gospel Messenger* and have made it into a handy little booklet for you to use in your personal spiritual race. May the revealed Word in this booklet become a continual guide to encourage you daily in your race for the eternal prize—the Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ!

—The Author

**REQUISITES FOR RUNNING
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Every little baby is born to be a racer. This innate urge to run begins to manifest itself before a child reaches school age. Any time two little boys get together, it is not long before one of them challenges the other to race to the back fence or to the corner. Games of speed are a regular part of the rivalry among high schools and colleges. The Olympic games, a revival of contests held by the ancient Greeks on the plains of Olympia, draw worldwide attention and support. Unfortunately all of the aforementioned forms of racing are done to obtain a corruptible crown of one kind or another.

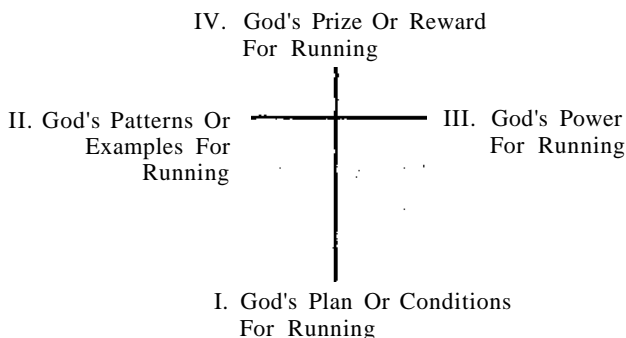
God did not give us the desire to run so that we could win a natural race. He gave it to us so that we could run and win the race called *life*. Instead of being a child's game, as many people suppose, running is the very business of life. All of this business is conducted, or run, upon one of three tracks: one track belongs to God; one track belongs to Self, or the flesh; and the other track belongs to the Devil. At the end of each of these tracks is a different reward.

After being born into this world, we have no choice about whether we run or not. We must run. However, we are not mindless robots. God created us as free moral agents with a will, or power of selection. Then He gave us the privilege of selecting the eternal reward we want to receive at the end of life's race. No other decision we make is ever so weighty as the one we make when choosing which of the three tracks to run upon.

Frustration, emptiness, disappointment, failure, death, hell, and the lake of fire wait to embrace those who run the full course on the fleshly race track and the Devil's track. But none of us have to waste our vote, as it were, in this manner. We can each choose to run life's race on God's track. The eternal reward at the end of this track is the greatest prize of all time and eternity. Christians who run this course to its full end will know the exquisite pleasure of being in the Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ.

The spiritual race, like a natural race, has some rules which must be observed by the runners. Let's look at the stature of truth that is found in God's Word concerning the spiritual race that is to be run on God's track of life.

We will see four great major truths laid out in the four points of the cross: 1) God's plan or conditions for running; 2) God's patterns or examples for running; 3) God's power for running, and 4) God's prize or reward for running.



Let us examine God's plan or conditions for running in the spiritual race He has set before us.

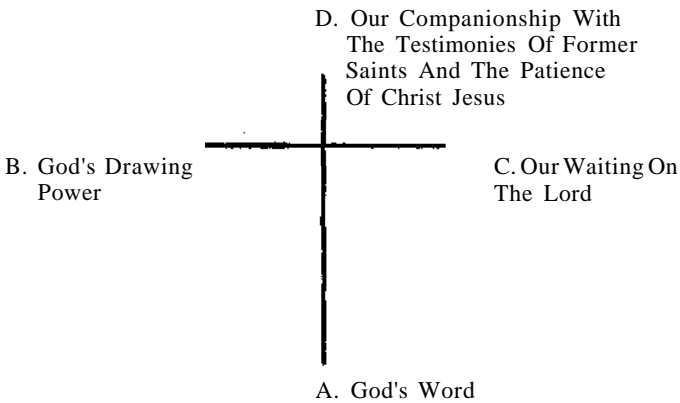
I. GOD'S PLAN OR CONDITIONS FOR RUNNING

The word *run* means to walk swiftly, to run, to rush. A spiritual runner is easy to identify; his behavior shows that he is in a hurry to get to his destination.

"What is the point of running?" some may ask. "Why get in a hurry if the race is going to last from the cradle to the grave?"

The answer is simple. The journey to spiritual maturity, to perfection, is a long one. There are many attitudes and dispositions which God has to remove from our heart. There is much work to be done inside of us by God's Word and by His Spirit. The prize will go to only those who run all the way to the end. If we want to win, we must get in a hurry to let God condition us to be a racer. These conditions also follow the familiar pattern of the cross.

God's plan or condition for running the race that He has set before us as believers consists of four major requirements: His Word, His drawing, our waiting, and our mutual companionship with the testimonies of those who have already run the race and the patience of Christ Jesus. Our constant companionship with their testimonies will continually encourage us in our running in our race for the prize of the high calling.



A. GOD'S WORD

The first plan or condition that God has given us is to live in and by His Word. The Apostle Peter proclaimed that each beginning of a new level of truth starts with the sincere milk of the Word.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (I Peter 2:2).

God's Word exhorts us to assume the duty of maintaining a strong and constant desire for His beginning truth in the form of the sincere milk of the Word.

Continual new growth in the LORD Jesus Christ necessitates our receiving the fresh sincere milk of the Word daily. God always gives His sincere milk of truth to our fervent and frequent hunger for truth.

The Psalmist declared God's Word to be richer than gold and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10).

The spiritual riches of God's Word are superior to material wealth and riches. God's Word is the only means for obtaining true happiness and everlasting satisfaction. God's Word is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, producing joyful gratitude for and faithfulness to His Purposive Will.

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts (Jeremiah 15:16).

When Jeremiah found God's Word, it was pleasant food for his soul, and it produced joy and rejoicing in his heart.

King David also witnessed about the sweetness of God's Word.

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103).

David found the LORD's Word sweet, smooth, and agreeable to his heart and mind. As David made mental and spiritual

investigations into God's Word, he found it sweet, pleasant, and satisfying.

In order for us to run the race upward in the stature of Jesus Christ to full spiritual maturity, we must continually feed on God's Word and allow it full dominion and complete sovereignty in our hearts and lives.

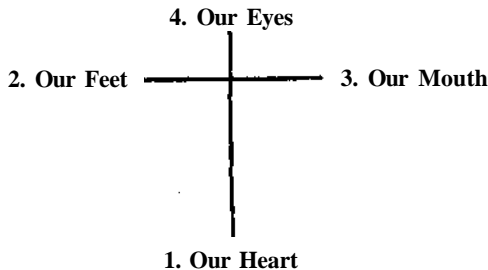
Reading, or even studying, God's written Word is not enough; the strength for running comes when we have an experience with the living, resurrected Christ.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word (Matthew 28.6-8).

The Word of the resurrected, living Christ is what puts the run in our feet. Without the resurrected Word to impart new life and strength to us, we could never run this spiritual race to its end.

As we earnestly and daily seek the LORD Jesus Christ in the pages of the written Word, He puts His glory on the portion of the Word that our souls need for the day. The living Word possesses the life, the resurrected glory, and the power that it takes to change our lives and to conform us into His own image.

Let us consider the stature of truth that shows how God's Word affects us in our spirit, soul, and body. God's Word works a change in our heart, our feet, our mouth, and our eyes.



1. Our Heart

The first point on the stature of truth of how God's Word affects us is in the heart. The ultimate goal of God's Word is to find lodging in man's heart. What good is theoretical right in man's head if it is controlled by the wrong in man's heart? God's Word is a powerful "Gardener" and "Husbandman" Who weeds out corruption in the garden of the heart and beautifies it with the flowers of grace. The heart that is renewed daily in Christ's divine grace, grows steadily in His likeness and image.

A cleansed, holy heart becomes a secret chamber for the heavenly Bridegroom, the LORD Jesus Christ. When God's Word fills the heart, the understanding is filled with crystal clear perception. The heart is the home of the will. Hence, when the heart is enlarged, it influences the will.

I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart (Psalm 119:32).

An enlarged heart runs after opportunities to fulfill God's Word and, thus, becomes a doer of His Word. An enlarged heart prays continually that no obstacle of the enemy will deter it or diminish its speed of passive and active obedience. Running in the way of the LORD commandments also gives us a present reward, since it leaves us a better person.

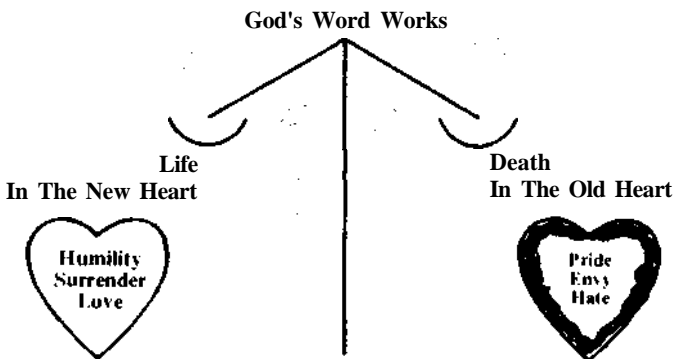
An enlarged heart is one with expansive, spacious, and extensive understanding. An enlarged heart understands clearly God's Master Plan and His obvious purpose in all His commands. Therefore, when one's understanding is increased, the heart becomes more attracted to God's commands and pursues them with even greater zeal and love. One of the great present-rewards for the obedient performance of God's commands is that the heart is irresistibly drawn toward another of His commands. Thus, since the scope of the heart's involvement with God's Word is perpetual, one certainly is left a better and broader person.

Running in the way of God's commandments depends on the enlargement of our heart, just as natural running depends on the increased activity of the heart. When the physical heart beats faster, it is able to supply the body with additional oxygen so the runner can run faster. Likewise, when the spiritual heart is enlarged, it can accommodate greater portions of living truth, thereby enabling the spiritual runner to run faster in the way of the LORD's commandments. When God has given new depths and heights and length and breadth to the heart, it has new vigor and fresh strength to run firmly in the paths of His commandments.

Running is an indication of the heart's pleasurable eagerness to obey God's Words of truth. We should be fleet as an hart and swift as a gazelle to do God's Purposive Will as it is revealed in His commandments. We should run to do even the smallest of God's commandments.

Real running to be a doer of God's Word involves more than merely reading His Word. Many people read the Bible without allowing God to enlarge their hearts in any appreciable measure. The enlargement of heart comes to Christians who not only read God's Word but also run to their prayer closet with it in order to water the precious seed of truth with tears of intercession and travail.

The Word works crucifixion and death to the carnal heart, and it feeds the spiritual heart with life, causing it to grow and increase daily.



It is this continual increasing growth of truth that strengthens us and empowers us to run the way of the LORD's commandments.

The commandments relate particularly to God's governmental bread of strength, pictured by the Table of Shewbread in the Old Testament Tabernacle. During the Old Testament dispensation, the holy Shewbread was reserved especially for the priests who were prepared by the sanctifying blood, fire, and water in the Courtyard to enter into God's Holy Place. The average Israelite did not have the privilege of going into the Holy Place to eat the holy, governmental bread of strength.

In like manner, God's governmental Bread of holiness is too strong for the hearts of spiritual babes today until they allow Christ Jesus to sanctify their hearts with His whole burnt offering blood and peace offering blood, the Holy Ghost to purge and sanctify their hearts with His holy fire, and Christ Jesus to sanctify and cleanse their hearts with the holy, obedient waters of His Name, death, and life.

After spiritual babes have been sanctified and have fed on Christ's humility truth in their hearts from the Courtyard, they are ready to enter the Holy Place by growth and feed on Christ's governmental bread of strength so they can run in the way of His commandments.

The two rows of governmental bread on the Table of Shewbread in the Mosaic Tabernacle were crowned with two cups of frankincense and fire, picturing Christ's governmental strength that is crowned with faith and fiery zeal. Likewise, when we feed on Christ's governmental bread of strength in His Word, He crowns it with faith and fiery zeal so we can run with pleasurable eagerness to be a doer of His Word and His Purposive Will.

It takes hearts that have been strengthened by the humility truth of Christ's governmental bread to bear the frankincense of faith and the fiery zeal that burns upon this portion of God's Word. It takes hearts that have been enlarged by the governmental bread to support the fragrance of faith and the fire of zeal. Without Christ's bread of strength in our hearts, our faith will soon weaken and our

fire will soon become a cold clinker.

2. Our Feet

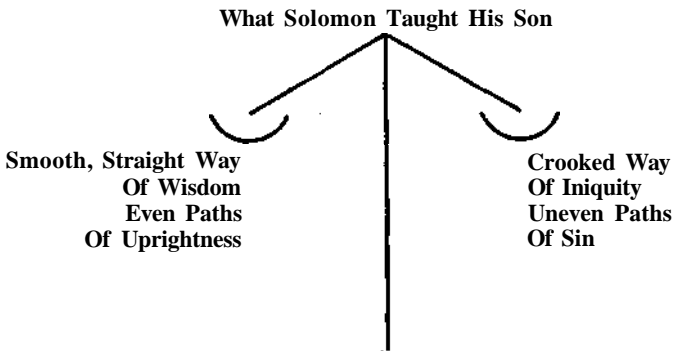
The second point on the stature of truth of how God's Word affects us is the feet.

The firm establishment and the standing ability of the whole physical stature of man's body depend on the feet. Jesus taught and demonstrated the necessity of cleansing the feet from all defilement that is encountered in one's daily walk. The washing of one's spiritual feet was pictured in the Old Testament by the continual washing of the priests' feet at the Laver; it was demonstrated by Christ Himself when He washed the disciples' feet. If one is to run in the holy way of God's will, he must have clean feet.

God removes all stumbling stones for the clean feet that run in the way of His wisdom.

I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble (Proverbs 4:11,12).

King Solomon taught his son the difference between the smooth, straight way of wisdom and the even paths of uprightness and the crooked, uneven way of iniquity and the uneven paths of sin.



The way of wisdom goes straightly and unswervingly toward the end, the prize, the mark of God's moral high calling, the Bride of Christ. The way of iniquity is crooked, devious, intricate, and wanders from the true goal of God's moral high calling, the Bride of Christ. Lucifer's crooked way is a long, up and down road that is a wearisome way, a tiring road. Wisdom's way is straight and level, and it steadily approaches its goal.

The path of sin is an easily accessible path to the wrong choice of the will. But the straight, even path of uprightness always leads to the prize, the Bride of Christ.

The way of wisdom is the way of the humble mind of Christ, the humility of the living Word of God.

Christ's straight, smooth way of wisdom or way of obedience and surrender led Him to crucifixion on Calvary's Cross and down into death, hell, and the grave for us. Christ's even paths of uprightness and resurrection lead us to the right hand of God, the place of all power and authority.

The LORD Jesus Christ has provided His blood, fire, and water to cleanse and sanctify our feet so we can walk in the wisdom of the obedience and surrender of His crucifixion and in the understanding and knowledge of the almighty power of His resurrection.

King Solomon taught his son in the way of wisdom. The Hebrew word for *wisdom* is *yaw-raw*, meaning to flow as water (i.e. to rain), to lay or throw an arrow (i.e. to shoot), to point out (as if by aiming the finger), to teach, archer, cast, direct, inform, instruct, shew, shoot, through.

King Solomon used every situation and circumstance of life as an opportunity to instruct his son in how to humble himself. Solomon's wisdom or humility words were an overflowing stream upon his son's heart and soul. Solomon's words of wisdom flowed as water; they fell upon his son as rain. Solomon stood as an archer shooting at a mark, always sending forth his words of wisdom which pointed his son to the way of humility. These direct instructions from the father enabled the son to discern easily between the true

humility of Christ and the false humility of the flesh which is fostered by inferiority pride.

Knowing that his son had been shot through, as it were, with God's humility Word, Solomon prophesied that his son would not stumble when he ran. Solomon knew that his son would not trip or miss his step if he ran with clean feet in the way of humility.

Those who run with dirty feet in their own iniquitous ways and sinful paths do so in an unsteady, awkward manner of weakness and uncertainty. Those who run in the way of pride proceed in a confused, blundering, stumbling manner. Thus, they always encounter obstacles, hindrances, and depressive difficulties. But how satisfying it is to the heart and soul to run with pleasurable eagerness in the way of humility.

The Hebrew word for *way* is *deh-rek*, meaning a road (as trodden), a course of life or mode of action. Beloved, there is no reason for us to fear the way of wisdom, the way of crucifixion of the flesh, the way of humility truth. Christ has run this way before us. He personally trod this road of humility, and He left it clean and free of all the stones of pride. He sanctified it so that we could run along behind Him without stumbling or losing our way. Just as Solomon taught his son the way of wisdom by being a living example before his face, so does the life of Jesus Christ serve as a living example that points out the way of humility for us.

3. Our Mouth

The third point on the stature of truth of how God's Word affects us is the mouth.

The heart is for understanding, knowing, and feeling. The feet are for going forward toward the goal. The mouth is for giving an audible witness of the truth that is in the heart. The mouth is for chewing and tasting food in both the natural realm and in the spiritual realm.

Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them (Isaiah 33:1-4).

The Prophet Isaiah turned away from Sennacherib, the invader, and turned toward heaven, opening his mouth to express in prayer his heart's confidence in God's almighty power. God's Word affected the prophet's mouth; therefore, he declared that Sennacherib, who had sown treacherous dealings, would reap treacherous dealings. Isaiah's mouth continued to chew and feed on the truth that God was Israel's defense, arm, and salvation in the time of trouble. Isaiah fed on the truth of God's invincible might.

The caterpillar is the larva or pupa state of the locust. After the caterpillar feeds and consumes vegetation, leaving nothing behind, it transforms itself into a locust. Likewise, when God feeds Himself on the prayers and praises of truth from His people, He transforms Himself, as it were, into a locust who runs to devour the enemies of His people. God's Word affects both God's mouth and the mouths of His people.

Thus, God's Word produces such a strong effect on our heart that it evokes a strong reaction in our mouth, our sense of taste. However, when we first begin running to God's Word, we are picky spiritual eaters. We refuse most of God's Word that is beyond our immature doctrines and "baby" ideas and opinions. The taste of God's mature Word is strange to our carnal palate. Hence, we deceitfully imagine that God's Word must have a pleasing taste to our fleshly palate. To a carnally minded Christian, humility,

crucified Word tastes bitter. Therefore, it is cast aside as some strange doctrine to be avoided as one would avoid a plague, and the exalted, resurrected truth tastes like a wild visionary fancy.

Spiritual immaturity prevents us from eating all of God's Word that He has hidden in the low place. Spiritual immaturity also prevents us from partaking of the truth that the LORD has reserved for those who move higher in God. If we want to continue growing spiritually, we must allow the LORD to change our taste to that of a locust's mouth. The locust has a taste for all living green substance on a tree. A locust runs to and from (a picture of the horizontal, surrendered will of God), feeding on the juicy green leaves in the low place, devouring God's humble life in the low place. Although the locust finds the food on the low branches of the tree satisfying and pleasant to his taste, he does not remain forever on the low branches of the tree. He uses his wings to ascend to the top of the tree according to God's appointed time for him to feed upon His exalted life on the higher branches.

God's Word is also like a locust because it has devouring power. If we allow God's humility Word and exalted Word to abide in our hearts, it will devour all of our fleshly, carnal desires that oppose His Master Plan and Purposive Will. Then, in turn, our heart will become like a locust that will devour all of the Word of God from all the branches (low and high) from the Tree of Life. Thus, God's Word becomes both our life and the maintainer of our life. Then our heart is filled with pleasurable surrender and delight which we can offer up in the form of praise to the LORD Jesus Christ, our Governor and Guide.

There is great joy when He feeds us with the humility Word of the Crucified Christ, and there is exceeding great delight when He serves us a portion of the exalted Word of the Resurrected Christ. It is all God's Word; therefore, we love the whole Tree of Life. God's Word produces complete satisfaction to our heart and soul.

4. Our Eyes

The fourth point on the stature of truth of how God's Word affects us is the eyes.

The eye is the outward portal that introduces passions, appetites, and inclinations to the soul within. The eyes are common thoroughfares which allow our affections to traffic in and out of the soul. The feelings of love, anger, pride, and avarice all move visibly in the little orbs called "eyes."

The glance of the eye is more powerful than speech. When the heart is filled with the Word of God, the eyes speak with an eloquence and truthfulness that surpasses speeches. Sanctified eyes are windows out of which wise thoughts can fly on the Dove's wings, influencing those who are near and far. Sanctified eyes are small microscopic mirrors that reflect the clear, crystal perception of the heart and soul.

The eyes have to be separated unto God and to His moral high calling if we expect to obtain the prize. Therefore, when our eyes are gazing on sinful objects, we are out of our calling and out of God's keeping. Wanton eyes are Satan's messengers from an unclean heart. The visible eyes are governed in their sight by the invisible eye of the imagination in the soul. Our visible sight is reinforced by the invisible sight of the soul, either for good or for evil.

The eyes are like bold lions; they rove, run, and leap on whatever pleases the imagination of the soul. The eyes do not need an introduction. The unsanctified eye has no respect for the poor, the rich, for a man, for a woman, for virtue, or for God's commands. One cannot run the spiritual race for the prize until one allows the LORD to sanctify ones eyes. A heart and soul cannot run until they can see and understanding God's Word.

And the LORD answered me, and said. Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it (Habakkuk 2:2).

People cannot run without a vision of the goal. Habakkuk the prophet humbly purposed to put his attention upon God. He resolved to watch, to look with his inner eyes, within, and to look outside, to look up, and to look round about in order not to miss what the LORD had to say to him.

When God gave Habakkuk a vision, He commanded him to write it plainly and legibly. It was necessary for Habakkuk to write the vision so it would be clearly imprinted on his own heart and mind, so it would be preserved safe and pure, and so it could be transmitted to others in future ages.

Even now, many generations after Habakkuk penned his vision, all those who see and read can be inspired to run the race of life in God's Purposive Will. That is why God gave Habakkuk a vision and told him to write it down so that others could see it plainly and read it clearly and, thus, possess the same vision.

It is not easy to take a vision or a revelation *of* truth from God's Word and bring it out from the invisible realm into the visible realm. The truth that is clear as the noonday sun to us may be shrouded in a dark cloud of mystery to our brother. Instead of viewing a clear picture, he may feel as though he is looking at the confusing swirls *of* a child's finger painting. The light of truth that we see so plainly may not be evident to him.

This explains why God told Habakkuk to write the vision. The prophet was charged with the spiritual responsibility of making it sufficiently plain that others could see and understanding it as clearly as he saw and understood it. In order to do this, Habakkuk had to go into detail, explaining and describing in writing the thing that had been revealed to him from God's Word.

Writing the vision served a definite twofold purpose. First, the stylus pen which Habakkuk used to transcribe words onto polished tablets of clay also became the engraving tool, as it were, to imprint God's vision deeper into his own heart and mind. Thus, Habakkuk's personal vision of the living Word increased and became more real to him as he worked with natural words, patiently describing his spiritual experience with God's Word in a way that could be clearly

seen and understood by others.

Secondly, God's perfect will was for others to be inspired by reading the vision. Since people read volumes of words without ever being motivated to run toward God, toward His holy Word, and toward His prize, there had to be something very special about these words.

What made the words of Habakkuk's written vision so different from words written by countless other men of his day? Beloved, Habakkuk's visible written words were from God and, therefore, were anointed with the power of God's Spirit; they also were filled with Habakkuk's personal experience of his invisible excitement, zeal, thrill, and love for God's Word. It was this anointing of God's Spirit and Habakkuk's spirit that gave Habakkuk's written words the power to impart to others a portion of the prophet's own desire to run with the truth. As people read and accept Habakkuk's anointed words, they, in turn, begin to run and to share the vision with others also.

Thus, we have seen the first small point of truth under the first major point of God's Plan or Conditions for Running, which is how God's Word affects the heart, the feet, the mouth, and the eyes.

This brings us to the second point of truth under God's plan or conditions for running, which is God's drawing power.

B. GOD'S DRAWING POWER

The Bride in the Song of Solomon besought the LORD, the Bridegroom, to draw her nearer to Himself and to the prize of being His Bride, His Spouse.

Draw me, we will run after thee...(Song of Solomon 1:4)

The Hebrew root word for *draw* is *maw-shak*, meaning to draw along, to draw out, to sow, to sound, to prolong, to develop, to

march, to remove, to delay, to be tall, to continue, to defer, extend, forbear, give, handle, make long, prolong, stretch out. The entire definition has the connotation of dragging seed along for the purpose of it being drawn out by the sower for sowing.

The Bridegroom's espoused Bride longed to be drawn by Him until she was planted in His throne room as His Spouse or Wife. She desired for the Bridegroom to assist her in the race *for* spiritual maturity with His drawing, dragging power so she could obtain the prize of becoming His Spouse-wife.

If we plan to finish our race to spiritual maturity, we must allow Him to draw us and drag us when our carnal flesh refuses to cooperate in the race.

At times in the life of every believer, the carnal flesh rises up like a huge, overpowering serpent, infiltrating the mind and will with its poison by saying, "Well, that does it. I've had it. I'm going to forget about running, forget about the prize, forget about everything. I'm tired of denying myself; I'm going to do what I want to do." Then is when we need to call upon God's drawing power to drag us on in the race in spite of our carnal flesh.

As far as the fleshly man is concerned, he is never interested in running on in the spiritual race for God. Consequently, in order for us to continue on in the race to spiritual maturity, we must get acquainted with the drawing, dragging power of God's Word and God's Spirit. Although a Christian who has a real vision of the prize at the end of the way may experience his fleshly man saying that he is not going to run, God's drawing, dragging power will rise up to come to the spiritual man's rescue. Therefore, it will not be long before the spiritual man feels the strong constraining power of God's Word and Spirit dragging him back into the race.

The drawing, dragging power of God's Word and Spirit uses the cords of His mercy and His love to drag and to remove the stubborn, carnal flesh from his stool of rebellion so the spiritual man can continue running in the race for the prize of being in the Bride of Jesus Christ. Every Christian who gains the prize at the end of the race will shout praises to God throughout eternity for His

drawing, dragging power which was sufficiently strong to pull their rebellious, carnal flesh along in the race until the LORD worked the crucifixion of Christ in their will and in their heart. After God has worked Christ's crucifixion in one's will and one's heart, that person will run in the race without opposition, and he will run out of pure love for the Bridegroom.

However, in the beginning of the race, when we are lifted up in the Spirit and experience a measure of running on for the LORD, we can pray, "Jesus, draw me, drag me, we will run after thee." In answer to our prayer, God will take care of us when our carnal flesh decides to rise up or to sit down by some worldly wayside stop.

The LORD will come along with His dragging power, crucifying and sanctifying our carnal will in us until the desire to run again is worked into our will and heart. Praise the LORD for His faithfulness that pulls and draws us with His infinite force and divine effort until we reach His appointed goal for us. Without the drawing, dragging power of God's Word, we would never finish our spiritual race.

This brings us to the third point of truth under the first major point of God's plan or conditions for running, which is our waiting on the LORD.

C. OUR WAITING ON THE LORD

We cannot continue to run for the prize in the spiritual race without learning to wait on the LORD for renewed strength. We must learn to remain in the Word and prayer with anticipation of a renewal of strength from the LORD.

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

In order for us to complete our journey to spiritual Mount Zion, we must have three basic experiences: 1) fly, 2) run, and 3)

walk. We, like Israel, must learn to fly on Eagle's wings in order to soar upward in a lofty ascent to God's moral high calling and to surmount the acute dangers involved in escaping the slavery and bondage of this present evil world. When our strength is renewed, we can also run through opposing troops and serpent powers without growing weary or faint. If we learn to fly and to run in our spiritual education, we can also learn to walk in our moral development. Flying and running in our spiritual education prepares us for the walking experience in our moral development.

Our problem is not always rebellion. Sometimes we still desire to run, but our strength is exhausted. Therefore, we are too weary and faint to continue in the race. When we have run as far as possible on our last revelation from the LORD's Word, we must wait on the LORD for new, fresh revelation of His truth which will renew our strength. We cannot keep running on the strength of last week's revelation of God's Word.

There is a time for us to run and to use the spiritual strength and energy that we have obtained from God's revealed Word. However, there is also a time for us to sit down and learn how to wait on the LORD the Self-existent One Who reveals Himself until He renews our strength.

The Hebrew word for *wait* is *kaw-vaw*, meaning to bind together by twisting, to collect, to expect, gather together, look, patiently, tarry, wait for, wait upon. This definitely is an active form of waiting, rather than the passive, indifferent attitude assumed by some Christians when they find that their running strength is gone.

The writer of the Book of Proverbs knew something about the right way to wait on the LORD.

The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe (Proverbs 18:10).

When the righteous wait on the LORD, they run into the tower of the LORD's Name which is a sure refuge. The Name of the LORD is a strong tower that is set on high; thus, it is inaccessible to

all the evil dangers that threaten from below.

It is impossible for us to run into a portion of the LORD's Name or nature which we have not yet received. Our tower of safety and protection today is formed by whatever portion of the LORD's Name or nature that we have laid hold of in our yesterdays.

When our strength is gone and when it looks as though we are at the mercy of the evil dangers which threaten us below, we can begin a fresh, new waiting upon the LORD that will bring us new resurrection strength from Christ Jesus. When we wait upon the LORD, we can, by faith, bind our hearts up in a spiritual cocoon of Christ's humility truth, just as a little caterpillar wraps himself in his cocoon, and wait for a new birth of strength to come to our heart and will. As we carefully collect and deliberately gather every Word of past revelation of God's faithfulness, of God's goodness, of God's mercy, we soon find ourselves surrounded by a great and strong cocoon of humility Word that is like an infinite tower of protection. The winds of the world, the flesh, and the Devil may blow, but they cannot touch the heart that is hidden within Christ's cocoon of humility truth and protected by the strong tower of His Name.

The world looks at this cocoon and this tower and calls them death and destruction. They say, "You will die if you continue waiting in that cocoon and in that tower. Why don't you come out and *do* something?" They speak just a half truth. It is true that our carnal flesh will die in Christ's cocoon of humility and in the tower of His Name, but we will come forth with new resurrection life, strength, and glory to continue running on in our spiritual race.

While we wait on the LORD, our fleshly discouragements die, our love for the ministry dies, as well as many other things that vie for first place in our affections. But the heart that has waited long enough in the cocoon and in the tower will become acquainted with the true nature of the cocoon and the tower by experiencing the complete metamorphosis of the character of the flesh. Hence, we are able to testify that, instead of Christ's humility being a cocoon of death, it is in reality a womb of resurrection glory and power where new revelations and new strength are born.

When we are abiding in the cocoon of humility and in the tower of His Name, the LORD Jesus Christ reveals to us that He, Himself, is the Source of all strength and the Source of all satisfying life and love. Once this revelation is ours, we run on in the race with renewed vigor, realizing that we know the origin of an endless supply of strength—the strength of Christ's humility.

This brings us to the fourth point of truth under the first major point of God's plan or condition for running which is our companionship with the testimonies of former saints and the patience of Christ Jesus.

D. OUR COMPANIONSHIP WITH THE TESTIMONIES OF FORMER SAINTS AND THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST JESUS

We cannot continue our race to spiritual maturity and for the prize without the accompaniment of the testimonies of the Old Testament saints and the patience of Christ Jesus in our souls.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

New Testament Christians are compassed about with the overcoming saints from the Old Testament dispensation who were brought up from death and the grave when Jesus Christ arose from the dead. Their overcoming and glorious resurrection are constant reminders to us that we, too, can finish our race. Their testimonies of attainment are a constant source of strength to us in our race. Every Christian has a race set before him. If we hope to reach the appointed goal of our race, we must lay aside every weight of inordinate affections for this present world and the sin of our disposition that does so easily beset us. We must run the race with

patience because we will encounter much service, much suffering, and many duties requiring active and passive obedience.

The Greek definition of the word for *patience* is cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy, enduring, patient continuance (waiting). It is derived from a word that means to stay under (behind), remain, to undergo, i.e. bear trials, have fortitude, persevere, abide, endure, take patiently, suffer, tarry behind.

We can never finish the race toward spiritual maturity unless we also take the patience of Christ Jesus along as our running companion. Every day brings new testings, temptations, and trials. When faced with obstacles and delays, the flesh is tempted to do one of two things: either to quit running, or to run ahead of God.

Discouragement and despondency counsel us to drop out of the race rather than suffer one more problem or bear one more trial. If Christ's patience is our companion, He will begin to anoint our minds with His cheerful, hopeful thoughts that fill the will with a flaming and burning desire to endure running on to the end of the race. We will hear Christ's patience saying, "You can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you." Christ's patience always reminds us of the truth.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Corinthians 10:13).

It is not pleasing to God for us to despair in the midst of temptations and sufferings because our trials, testings, and temptations are always proportioned according to Christ's strength and patience. God is faithful to not allow our present sufferings to exceed our present possessions of Christ's strength and patience. The way of escape is the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us go to Christ's Cross and death, leaving all the inimical thoughts and ideas to be crucified and buried

so that we might escape through the door of His resurrection glory and power.

By the help of Christ's patience, we can find God's provided way of escape. Thus, we can continue running on in our spiritual race. However, sometimes our fleshly zeal prods us to try to run faster than God has ordained *for us to run*, or to run in the way of our own will instead of running in the way of the humble footprints of Jesus Christ. This is when Christ's patience ministers His restraining reminder: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.... The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:..." (Proverbs 14:12,14).

Christ's patience reminds us that the heart of the deceived man always imagines that it is pursuing a straight path that will lead him to his desired goal of spiritual happiness and material success. But the deceived man discovers, too late, that he has been led to an early death and destruction. "The ways of death" indicate the many by-paths which lead man's deceived heart out of the race and away from the one straight, high road that leads to the prize, the Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ. The deceived, backslidden heart becomes so filled with his own ways that he feels no fear for defecting from the true spiritual race.

Christ's patience is a constant, restraining reminder to us of the death and destruction that await us when we either run ahead of the LORD or lag behind to take our own way. Consequently, it is not long before we start confessing the truth: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). By illuminating our minds afresh and anew concerning our inability to direct our own steps, this icy humility truth chills our burning desire to run ahead of God. Hence, the LORD again fills our hearts with a surrender and contentment to remain under His headship, to remain behind Him as the Governor and Guide, and to run in the right direction that He has set before us.

Although the course may seem to be the long way around, and we may be forced to move at what appears to be a snail's pace, our

traveling companions (the testimonies of saints and Christ's patience) will be right there to impart to us strength, fortitude, and perseverance. Thus, with patience, we can endure whatever burden God puts upon us, and with patience, we can continue to bear it for as long as He sees fit to leave it there. Our burdens, our trials, our temptations cannot knock us out of the race if we have the right companions running with us.

We have seen God's plan or conditions for running: A.) We must let the Word of God enlarge our hearts; direct our feet to run in the way of humility; change our mouth or appetite so that we can eat humility truth or exaltation truth with equal delight; and anoint our eyes with a clear vision of the prize. B.) We must become acquainted with the infinite drawing (dragging) power of God's Word and Spirit. His mercy and love will pull us along in spite of our rebellious, self-willed flesh. C.) We must learn how to run into the tower of the LORD's humility Name that has already been revealed to us and wait for Him to renew our strength. Whenever the LORD reveals Himself to us in a greater way, we always receive the portion of strength that goes along with that particular revelation. D.) We must choose the right running companions. If we take the testimonies of former saints and Christ's patience with us, they will encourage us when our inferiority pride would cause us to stop, and they will remind us of the truth when our superiority pride would take us out of the way of humility. Praise God for giving us exactly what we need to run and win this spiritual race.

The brings us to the second point of truth on our main stature of truth concerning running.

II. GOD'S PATTERNS OR EXAMPLES FOR RUNNING

God's patterns for running are as follows: A.) run like the sun; B.) run like water out of the Rock; C.) run like springs in the valleys; D.) run like rivers of oil; E.) run like the bridal army; F.) run like the Word of God; G.) run looking for the Crucified Christ.

A pattern is a proposed model or prepared imitation to give

one a picture of the real counterpart. A pattern reveals that which is to be copied or imitated. A pattern is an example to be followed or imitated. God desires that we follow the patterns or examples of truth which He has revealed in His Word so we can become like the LORD Jesus Christ, the one true image. Then we, too, can become patterns of every virtue and every grace for others to follow. If we follow God's supreme, excellent patterns of truth, we, too, can become a fit example which will serve as a model pattern for others.

Patterns are a part of our daily lives. The clothes we wear, the car we drive, the home in which we live, and the store in which we shop all once were patterns on a drawing board. Every wise builder knows that a good blueprint is an absolute necessity. The reason this is true is that our sense of sight takes in 84 percent of our perception; we work better when we can *see* what should be done.

God is aware that our need to see goes beyond the natural realm, and that is why He provided us with a sevenfold pattern of how to run spiritually. The first pattern for running that God gives to us is to run like the sun.

A. RUN LIKE THE SUN

The sun is faithful to run the daily race that his Creator sets before him. If the sun failed in his faithfulness to run continually in his appointed race, the earth would be left in darkness and death.

Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for *the sun*, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof (Psalm 19:4-6).

In the natural realm, man uses a plumb line to insure accuracy of construction. In the spiritual realm, God has used His divine plumb line to insure the perfection of His celestial structure which is

stretched out to the very ends of the earth. The precision of His work is visible and evident to all observers over all the earth.

God's heavenly luminaries control, set boundaries, and fix limitations for the development of every existing thing on earth. The heavenly luminaries speak loudly and eloquently *of* God's great wisdom and the great precision of His work.

God has pitched the tent of the sun in the sky and encased it in a protective cloak and shield which filters out the undesirable elements of the sun's rays. Otherwise, the earth and its inhabitants would soon be burned to a crisp.

The sun is like a handsome bridegroom coming forth from his bridal chamber. Just as everyone comes out to greet a natural bridegroom when he appears, so does all creation joyfully await the rising of the light of the sun afresh and anew. A bridegroom who has left his bridal chamber yearns and longs to return to it as soon as possible. Similarly, the sun rises up from his tent beneath the horizon in the morning, and he eagerly returns to sink beneath the horizon at the close of his daily journey. The sun humbly runs his daily course, leaving all the governmental control of his light and powerful radiant rays to his Creator. The sun runs his daily race according to God's Purposive Will, not in proud display of his own power which could quickly destroy all created life on earth. Nevertheless, the sun runs and rejoices like a mighty warrior at the opportunity to go out to war against the darkness, for he has confidence in his God-given strength that he can run his course with no interference.

The natural sun's journey through the sky takes the form of a circle, which is a fitting picture of God's will. Since God is an eternal being (He has always been, and He shall always exist). His divine will has neither beginning nor end.

What is the sun's attitude as he comes out of his chamber every morning to run in the circle of God's will? We do not hear the sun saying, "O God, not another dreary day! I wish I didn't have to get up. I don't know why You even bothered to create me, God. All I ever do is run around the same old circle and shine down on the

same old world. I never get to explore any of Your other universes. God, I'm so bored. Surely You can give me a new circle in which to run." Neither does the sun say, "God, I wouldn't mind traveling in that circuit today if I just didn't have to share myself with that miserable bunch of people down there on that planet called earth. Just look at how most of them are living. They don't deserve to have even the smallest ray of my light, or heat, or energy shine down on them."

Indeed, the sun does not behave rebelliously against his Creator's Master Plan for him. Every morning the sun rises just as clearly and brightly as he did the morning before. The natural sun shines down on the thistles as well as the grass and the trees; he shines on the wicked and on the just, because he has a nature that faithfully shares what God has put within him.

The sun is in love with God's will. Just as a bridegroom comes out of his chamber on his wedding day, desiring to look upon his beloved bride, so the sun comes out every morning shining with excitement. The sun comes out glowing with anticipation like a bridegroom, longing to be made one with his bride. The sun is faithful to run the daily circuit of God's will, just as Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, faithfully ran the circuit of His Father's will here on earth.

If the natural sun can manifest such excitement over running the circle of God's will, how much more should we rejoice over the privilege of being counted worthy to run in the circuit of God's will, traveling in the way which He has appointed us to go.

We cannot continue running very far in the spiritual race without obtaining the sun's "bridegroom excitement and thrill" over God's will. The flesh grows tired and weary; it gets angry and disgusted with people who are always ungratefully taking and taking without ever showing any degree of appreciation. But bridegroom love for God's will strengthens us to continue running and sharing with others, just as the sun does, what God has given to us. Bridegroom love for God's will takes away murmuring and complaining from our hearts. Hence, we stop looking at other

people and worrying and fretting over what they may be doing or not doing. Our eye is single to Christ Jesus, the One we love. Our delight and thrill is to do His will every day. *He* is the reason for our excitement, rather than what we do or where we do it. Beloved, let us run like the sun!

The second pattern that God gives to us is to run like water out of the Rock.

B. RUN LIKE WATER OUT OF THE ROCK

The waters of the Rock always run humbly downward to the low place, never upward to the high place.

He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused *waters to run down* like rivers (Psalm 78:16).

God brought forth flowing waters from the Rock for His Name's sake in order to quench the thirst of His people. He caused waters to descend like rivers. As the flowing waters descended, they grew into a mighty torrent that resembled a rushing, running river.

When the Rock was smitten in the wilderness, it provided life-giving water for God's people. The first smiting of the Rock was done according to God's perfect will. God in His abundant goodness caused the waters to pour forth copiously out of the Rock. God did not send His water forth in small drops, a scanty supply; He sent forth the waters in an abundant supply. The waters hastened to run down to the low place in order to share their live-giving substance with God's people.

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel (Exodus 17:6).

Out of the smitten Rock flowed an abundant supply of water to satisfy God's thirsty, murmuring multitude.

Later in Israel's journey she came to another place where there was no water. Again, she murmured against God and against her leaders. On this occasion, God intended for Moses to speak to the Rock. Instead, Moses disobeyed the LORD's command by smiting the Rock twice (Numbers 20: 7-11).

The Rock could have hardened His heart in rebellion against such unnecessary suffering. He could have said, "You can beat me, but you can't force me to release my waters." But because the Rock was under subjection to God's headship, He was able to open up freely and to let His overflowing, life-giving water run down again to quench the thirst of God's people.

The people were wrong; they murmured against their God-given leader. The leader was also wrong because he rebelled about the people's rebellion. Yet neither of these two wrongs caused the Rock to withhold His running waters. The Rock, Christ, was acquainted with His Father's supreme headship over *all things*, including apparent injustices. The Rock did not allow the wrongs of man to prevent Him from continuing to send forth His running waters.

May we, too, learn the secret of the Rock. By recognizing and staying under subjection to God's supreme headship even when others decide to smite us outside of God's perfect will, we can continue giving the running waters of life with overflowing mercy to the rebellious and to the thirsty.

The third pattern or example that God gives to us for running is to run like springs in the valleys.

C. RUN LIKE SPRINGS IN THE VALLEYS

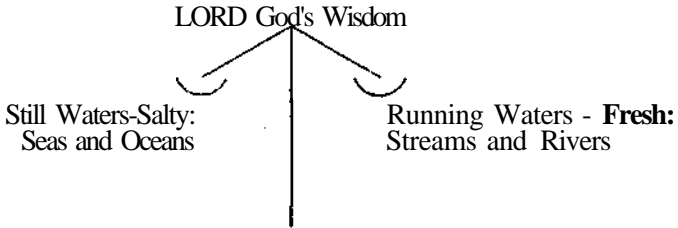
God sends His overflowing springs in the valleys to run between the hills, transforming the low places into fruitful, life-giving pastures and gardens. After ministering in the valleys, the

little springs run on to their final destination, which is the ocean.

He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills (Psalm 104:10).

In His wise design, God engineered the world's water supply to efficiently serve all of His creation's needs.

Also in His wise design, God enclosed the seas and oceans and made them salty in order to prevent the putrefaction of all the plant and animal life which decays inside of them. Otherwise, these mammoth bodies of water would have become huge, stagnant swamps. On the land, however, God provided rivers and streams of fresh, cool, running waters for the use of His creation. These running waters serve the needs of man and animals, cool the air, provide irrigation for crops, and provide a source of energy. God's wise design frees these running rivers and streams from any threat of stagnation and decay.



God causes the rivers and streams to run between the hills and to flow between the mountains on their way to the seas and oceans. There, God commands His clouds to draw up water from the seas and the oceans and to change the seawater to fresh water. Then He orders His clouds to dispense their life-giving waters upon the earth, the rivers, and the streams. Thus, God is the supreme, sovereign Ruler of His law of circularity that governs both the still and the running waters.

A spring has its origin in the valley many miles from the ocean, its ultimate destination. However, before the overflowing

springwater can reach the place of its destination where it can become a part of the mighty ocean, the springwater is forced to do a lot of running, and the course of its journey is seldom straight and smooth. The hills stand as mighty giants to try to hinder the spring waters from reaching their goal. Scornfully, the haughty hills look down on the little streams of spring water with the accumulation of dirt and filth they picked up in the course of their journey. In ridicule they say, "Who do you think you are? You are too small and insignificant to ever make it to the ocean. How do you think that you can ever support the great ships that sail the seas? Why, you can't even cope with the waste that is dumped upon you."

The discouraging words from their inimical obstacles do not stop the streams of springwater from running toward their goal. A stream of springwater knows that it is being fed by an endless supply of clean, pure water from its original source. What others think about the present size, appearance, and ability of a little stream of springwater can neither defile its source nor change its destiny. The little stream runs on with undaunted determination, always bubbling and always running to the low place among the foothills as it flows on toward its final destination.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not possess the same class of determination as the little stream when it comes to running on for God. They allow themselves to be terrorized by what other people say or think. When the way seems too hard and appears too long, they become discouraged and make a choice to stop running onward and upward in their spiritual education and moral development. Therefore, instead of running to the low place in Christ Jesus, leaving the world, the flesh, and the Devil behind, they choose to become bogged down somewhere short of their goal.

This does not have to be our fate, for Jesus Christ, the living Spring of Humility, will impart to us some of His zeal and determination to run the race to its finish. When His determination springs up without our soul, beloved, we can run regardless of what may stand in our way. The little stream of water in the natural realm always finds its way to overcome an obstacle, either by running

around it or under it. Likewise, in the spiritual realm, no distance seems too far around a spiritual obstacle, and no place seems too low to descend beneath a spiritual obstacle as long as we know that it is not hindering us from reaching the prize.

Believers who run like the spring will know the overwhelming satisfaction of being joined eternally to God, for they will be a part of the Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ.

The fourth pattern or example that God gives of running is to run like a river of oil.

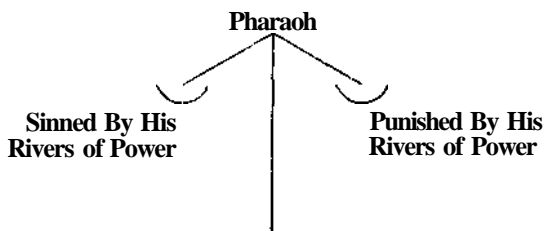
D. RUN LIKE A RIVER OF OIL

God desires for our spirit to run like a river of oil when His judgments are being poured out against our enemies.

Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 32:14).

God declared that Egypt's desolation would be so great that her waters of sorrow would be undisturbed by sinful man. Consequently, Egypt's waters of mourning would flow smoothly and softly like rivers of oil. God used a figurative expression to signify that there would be such a great grief, heaviness, and sadness that even the rivers would run softly and silently, like mourners, or rivers of oil.

God prophesied the fall of Egypt about one and one-half years after Jerusalem fell. Thus, Israel could look back retrospectively and see how vain and foolish was their trust in Egypt. Pharaoh, the Egyptian, imagined himself as a destructive lion among the nations, proudly roaming in their midst to terrify and frighten them into subjection. In reality, he was a dragon in the waters or seas. Pharaoh was like a proud, careless crocodile, blowing his brutal waters of destruction from his nostrils. Pharaoh sinned by his waters of power, so God punished his waters of power.



After God's punishment of Pharaoh and his rivers of power, his rivers of power did not run with the sound of a running, babbling stream, running in God's will, toward its goal, the ocean. But his rivers of power were humbled, so they ran silently and softly, like rivers of oil, before their Creator.

God watched the Egyptians as they proudly and ruthlessly defiled their peaceful waters with greedy conquests that were not in the will of God. The LORD, in His faithfulness, judged Egypt's noisy, proud rivers until they ran like rivers of oil, humbly in silence and smoothness, according to His Purposive Will.

Likewise, man's carnal mind is like the greedy, careless crocodile of the seas; it loves to proudly and clamorously possess things that are outside of the fence of *El Shadday*. The flesh likes to run in its own way, like a noisy babbling brook. Then when God's judgment starts falling, it continues to run about clamorously saying, "This is not fair. I do not deserve this."

This is not the way that God wants His children to run in the time of judgment. He wants us to follow the example of Egypt's rivers that run smoothly and silently like rivers of oil. A soft and smooth spirit that is humbling itself will flow forth with gratitude and praise for God's chastisement and correction. A river of oil never exalts itself with proud waves, making itself noticeable by its noise and clamour. It does neither hand clapping for its own glory nor finger pointing against God's righteous, just judgments. Instead, it is anointed with reverential fear of the LORD that makes it glad to stay in the low place and to run smoothly and quietly in God's way toward the goal, gratefully praising God for His judgment.

May the LORD grant each of us the wisdom to run in His will, like a river of oil, smoothly and silently with gratitude.

The fifth pattern or example that God gives of running is to run like the bridal army.

E. RUN LIKE THE BRIDAL ARMY

God desires that we learn to run like Christ's mighty bridal army against all opposing forces of the King of kings and LORD of LORDS.

When Jesus Christ returns to the earth at His second coming, He will come, not a lowly Babe in a manger, but as King of kings and LORD of LORDS, and He will be followed by His bridal armies who will be wearing white linen. The army which the LORD Jesus Christ will command at His second coming will be made up of many armies of bridal saints. They will all follow Christ's conduct. Clothed in their dresses of white linen purity and righteousness, they will resemble Him, and their white horses of faith will be like unto His white horse of faith.

And the *armies* which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean (Revelation 19:14).

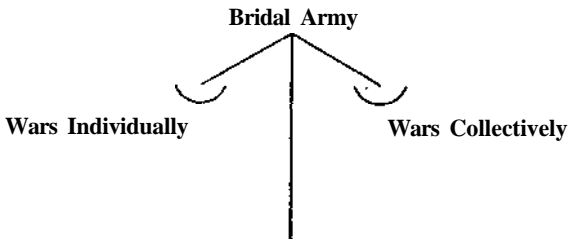
The identity of these armies remains a mystery until we find out from God's Word which of the saints will be clothed in white linen.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her [the Lamb's wife] was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Revelation 19:7,8).

In eternity, some saints will wear white robes (Revelation 6:9-

11; 7:9). Other saints will wear white raiment (Revelation 3:5; 4:4). Only the Bride of Jesus Christ will be privileged to wear white linen. Her clothing will be the visible evidence of her spiritual maturity. Since she will be the only one who will have attained mature spiritual stature during her lifetime on earth, she will be the only who is given the privilege of joining Jesus Christ when He descends out of heaven to make war against the Antichrist and his wicked armies.

The Prophet Joel foresaw how Christ's bridal army will run. By prophetic vision, Joel saw the LORD's bridal army like mighty men of war, like a mighty military formation of infantry in close and deep ranks, joined together as a great shield. This irresistible infantry will press forward under the command of their great Commander, the LORD Jesus Christ. Not one person in this bridal army will leave the ranks, so not one obstacle will be insurmountable to them. Each will pursue his own responsibility of destruction, while at the same time acting in perfect unison.



The great mystery of working and warring together is to keep one's separate path and way, not entangling one's way with that of others, on one side of the scales, while on the other side of the scales, one is united perfectly with the mutual mission and the mutual message of the whole army whose goal is to help implement the specific purpose of the Bridegroom, the LORD Jesus Christ.

They shall run like mighty men; they shall limb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: (Joel 2:7).

The resurrected bridal army shall run like mighty men. The Hebrew root word for *mighty* is *ghib-bore*, meaning powerful, warrior, tyrant, champion, chief, excel, giant, mighty, strong, valiant man.

There will be no spiritual babies in the LORD's mighty army. All of them shall be powerful warriors, tyrants against evil, champions of righteousness. All of them shall burn with the same chief thought and that is to see the cause of Christ excel and triumph. All of them shall be mighty, strong, valiant men of war. They shall run looking for the enemies of Jesus Christ in order to destroy them.

If we hope to run in that glorious bridal army of Jesus Christ, we must start running like that now. This means that we must let Him clothe our hearts and minds with the white linen righteousness that runs like a mighty man of war against the flesh. Resurrected linen righteousness burns with fiery zeal to see every evil, rebellious thought, word, and deed brought under subjection to Jesus Christ. We never will run over someone else's wall of pride until we have the white linen that climbs over our own wall of pride and destroys it.

The sixth pattern or example that God gives us for running is to run like the Word of God.

F. RUN LIKE THE WORD OF GOD

The commands of God's Word run hastily and quickly to perform God's Purposive Will in controlling the universes and in ministering to the need of His creatures.

He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word
runneth very swiftly (Psalm 147:15).

God dispatches His Word earthward, and how swiftly His commandments run! He commands the clouds to dispatch their raindrops to the earth, and how swiftly they fall! He commands the seeds of earth to drink, and how quickly they grow!

The forces of nature, like obedient servants, hasten to perform their appointed task without the slightest restraint or hesitation.

The Hebrew word for *swiftly* is *meh-hay-raw*, meaning to hurry, promptly, hastily, quickly, shortly, soon, with speed, swiftly. This is how the Word of God runs to keep the unity of the divine Purposive Will within the Godhead.

God's Word and God's Spirit both war against the world, the flesh, and the Devil, but they do not war against each other. There is perfect unity and agreement between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. When God the Father issues a commandment for the Word, His Son, to go forth into the earth, the Word, His Son, does not rise and say, "Now, wait a minute, Father. I don't feel like going forth just now. Are we not one in authority?" Certainly, this is not the response of the Word, God's Son, to His Father's commands. He runs promptly and swiftly to obey and to please His Father (John 8:29).

Beloved, the Word, Jesus Christ, is always prompt and quick to obey the Father and the Holy Spirit. He runs swiftly to accomplish that which He is sent to do. Why? Because God's Word loves the unity and the harmonious relationship He has with the Father and the Holy Spirit more than He loves positions of exaltation and honour. He always makes haste to maintain perfect unity within the Godhead.

Such an example of Christ's humility obedience should break our stubborn human wills and fill them with a desire to be like Jesus Christ. Often, instead of running swiftly to obey the LORD's command, we stand around arguing and giving all of our carnal reasons for *not* doing His bidding. Although we exalt ourselves momentarily, we soon learn that pride always fractures and breaks the unity between our heart and God's heart.

Once the unity is broken through disobedience, it cannot be restored except through humility obedience. We can pray and repent all day about being proud and rebellious, but grief of the Spirit and the Word is healed only when we start saying, "Jesus, I'll obey You. I'll go anywhere You want me to go. I'll say whatever You

want me to say. LORD, I'll do anything to keep the marriage relationship between my heart and Your heart."

Christians who learn to run swiftly, just as the Word of God does, grow strong in a class of humility that brings particular pleasure and delight to God's heart.

We can run only so far in our spiritual race for the prize without learning to run promptly and swiftly, like the Word of God, to do the Father's will.

The seventh pattern or example that God gives us for running is to run looking for the Crucified Christ.

G. RUN LOOKING FOR THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Mary Magdalene ran boldly, without shame, looking for the Crucified Christ, and to her surprise and joy, she found the glorious, Resurrected Christ.

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie. And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home (John 20:1-10).

Mary's reason for coming to the tomb was to minister out of her love to the Crucified Christ, and her reason for running to tell Peter and John about the empty tomb was to find someone who would help her locate the LORD's body. For a time it seemed that she had found the right people because Peter and John began running to the tomb to investigate the matter. John saw the empty tomb and believed that the LORD Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. However, Peter, after looking around in the tomb for a while, returned to his own home mystified by what he had seen.

Nevertheless, the departure of the two disciples did not cause Mary to give up the search for the Crucified Christ. Weeping, she remained at the tomb where she later saw and talked with two angels clothed in white. Yet this glorious appearance did not satisfy Mary, for her soul was desperate to see the Crucified Christ, the One she loved.

After Mary turned from all earthly and heavenly creatures, a Stranger appeared and began questioning her about her tears and her search. Although she supposed Him to be the gardener, she besought Him earnestly to tell her where He had laid the crucified body of her LORD. Mary was neither fearful nor ashamed to confess that she was looking for the mutilated body of Jesus. Not until Jesus said, "Mary" — as only He could say it — did she realize that she was looking into the face of the risen, Resurrected Christ.

Glory to God! The one who started out running, looking for the Crucified Christ, was the first one to see the risen, Resurrected Christ.

Jesus Christ died and was buried just once. So we cannot go to His physical tomb, as Mary did. We can follow her example, however. We can run looking for Christ's crucifixion of the flesh rather than for carnal, temporal exaltation, glory, and power.

Real heart-hunger is what touches God's heart. He will move heaven and earth, if necessary, in order to meet the desire of the heart that sincerely wants to know *Him* personally. We need not worry about seeing His power. The resurrection glory comes to the soul who runs with her heart looking to see the Crucified Christ.

Before proceeding to the next major point on this stature of truth, let us rehearse briefly the patterns or examples we must follow when running for the spiritual goal, the prize of being in the Bride of Christ.

We must run like the sun—enveloped with Bridegroom love and excitement.

We must run like water out of the Rock—by recognizing God's supreme headship in every situation and in every suffering.

We must run like springs in the valleys—filled with consistent determination to never stop short of the goal.

We must run like a river of oil—anointed with the reverential fear of God upon us.

We must run like Christ's bridal army—clothed with burning zeal to see all of our flesh brought under subjection to Jesus Christ.

We must run like the Word of God—swiftly and obediently in order to keep the unity.

We must run looking for the Crucified Christ—seeking Him personally rather than temporal exaltation, glory, and power.

This brings us to the third point of truth on our main stature of truth concerning running.

III. GOD'S POWER FOR RUNNING

Running, in both the natural and spiritual realms, has power to increase one's energy. Running in the natural realm puts energy to work, and energy begets energy. Running creates power that enables the runner to do what he is too weak to do while sitting or walking.

Spiritual running will do the same thing for us. As long as we are running according to the examples given in God's Word, nothing can stop us from going on for God and reaching spiritual maturity in Jesus Christ.

God's Word reveals three degrees of power that are available to

those who run. The first degree of available power is the power to run through a troop.

A. POWER TO RUN THROUGH A TROOP

There are powerful forces of the enemy that we cannot overcome by merely standing still or walking. We must run through them in order to continue moving closer to our goal.

For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD [Jehovah, the One Who reveals Himself] my God will enlighten my darkness. For by thee [the revealed Word] I have run through a troop;... (Psalm 18:28,29).

In the course of our journey, we come face to face with many enemy troops. Sometimes the world with its many alluring attractions is like a band of robbers, for it uses its enticements and carnal thrills to steal our Bridegroom love, to steal our time and attention. Sometimes our own flesh bands together in ignorance and rebellion to keep us from humbling our hearts. Other times fallen Lucifer appears personally (either as Satan, the Devil, the Serpent, or the Dragon Revelation 12:92) with a part of his demonic army to war against us.

Any one of these troops, taken as a whole, is too strong for us to overcome if we just stand still. That is why we must run with the LORD, the revealed Word. He is the One Who has the power to run through and divide the enemy troops. Glory to God!

We do not have to overcome *all* of the world at once. Neither do we have to overcome *all of* the flesh, or *all* of the Devil's power at once. As we run letting the light of the revealed Word lighten our darkened understanding, we see clearly which portion of the troop is standing in our way today. Our running power does not originate in our flesh. It comes out of God's revealed Word. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ [the revealed Word of truth] which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). We can run through any

troop by joining ourselves to the revealed Word, "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world [or the flesh, or the Devil]" (I John 4:4).

The second degree of available power is the power to leap over a wall.

B. POWER TO LEAP OVER A WALL

Many times in our spiritual race we meet obstacles and hurdles that can only be overcome by leaping over them.

...and by my God [Elohim, the Creator] have I leaped over a wall (Psalm 18:29).

David wrote of an occasion when it was necessary to leap over a wall. This was no ordinary wall such as is seen on some obstacle courses. It is possible to run around that kind of a wall because it has an end. In this verse, the Hebrew word for *wall* means a wall, as going about. In other words, it refers to an encircling wall with no apparent avenues of escape.

Occasionally, we come to a place where it seems that, instead of our meeting one troop at a time, all the troops of the world, the flesh, and the Devil join hands, as it were, to form a united and impenetrable wall of opposition. Although we cling desperately to every bit of truth that is in us, every way of escape seems blocked.

Beloved, for anyone who has ever known the indescribable pleasure of a marriage union of the heart with the LORD's heart, it is like the torments of the inferno to be placed in a position where there seems to be a wall between one's relationship with the LORD. It is a terrorizing torment to not have sufficient power to leap over the wall. The only way of escape is to lay hold of enough of God's Word and to keep humbling ourselves, going down, until we get small enough to find a new portion of Christ's crucifixion and His resurrection power which will make a way of escape. Then we can continue running toward the prize.

We must not allow ourselves to be swallowed up by the death and hell of our present circumstances just because *we* cannot see a way out. On the contrary, this is the time to start calling on God [Elohim, the Strong One, the Creator], the One Who has power to create a way where there seemeth to be no way.

When Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, went to death and hell for you and me, He faced what to the flesh was an impossible situation. His actions at this time are recorded in the eighteenth Psalm. Some people say that that Psalm relates to David's deliverance from Saul, but, prayerful study of this portion of God's Word reveals that the context goes far beyond David's personal "hellish" experience. The Psalm tells of the time that God the Father left His temple in heaven in order to deliver His Son from death and hell. It tells of how the Father shook heaven and earth, literally, and laid bare the foundations of the world. God never did this for anyone except His Son, Jesus Christ. King David's vision of the Son's suffering experience in hell was so real to him that he wrote as though it had happened to him personally.

In hell, Jesus' *nephesh* soul could have had every reason in the natural to disbelieve God's Word, God's nature, and God's power, had He not been God's spotless Lamb. He was compassed about by the sorrows of death. Floods from ungodly men washed over Him. The sorrows of hell encircled Him, and the snares of death prevented Him. If Jesus had been like many Christians today, He would have said, "God, You are not fair to make me come to such a miserable, ungodly, unholy place. I've been clean and righteous and humble all my life. Why should I have to be cut off from the land of the living, cut off from running the race to its end? I'm tired of keeping myself unspotted. This is more than I can bear. I'll just give up and become one with all the corruption and death that is around me."

Praise the LORD that Jesus never acted like that. When Jesus humbled Himself as far as His Father had purposed for Him, and no further, when He could find no way out, He raised His voice to the LORD God and began crying for the Father to come with His

creating power and resurrection glory to create and to make a way out of His death distress.

The glory of the Father's personal presence coming down into the midst of hell is what sprang up in the Son's heart, filling Him with glorious resurrection power to leap over the wall, power to leap out of the place of death and hell, stand up with resurrection life, and to run on in His Father's Purposive Will.

God still has the power to create a way for us to come out of our personal experiences of seeming death and hell. Instead of murmuring, complaining, and accusing His justice, we should start calling on the LORD Jesus Christ, on the LORD God, the One Who has the humility nature and power to create new ways for us to go on for Him. Resurrection, leaping power comes to those who keep running even in death and hell.

The third degree of available power for those who keep running is the power from the mercy of God.

C. POWER FROM THE MERCY OF GOD

It is the power of God's great mercy from His holy Name that enables us to stay in the race. Therefore, all glory for successful running goes to the LORD's merciful Name.

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9:16).

Our power to run for God does not proceed out of our proud, fleshly will. Left to itself, our will is exactly like everyone else's will, constantly striving for the high place. If we have a desire to run in the way of humility today, it is because God's mercy provoked this running spirit in us. Every Christian who runs until he attains the prize of being one with Jesus Christ will spend eternity praising God for His infinite mercy, love, patience, and long-suffering that made it possible for him to be in the Bride of Christ.

This brings us to the fourth and final point of truth on our main stature of truth concerning running.

IV. GOD'S PRIZE OR REWARD FOR RUNNING

Every kind of race in the natural realm offers a prize in order to encourage candidates to join in the race. Likewise, God offers a prize to all who join in His spiritual race and who finish the race in His appointed time.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but *one receiveth the prize*? So run, that ye may obtain (I Corinthians 9:24).

God has a reward to give in return for service done either for Him or against Him.

Those who have run the race to gain the full spiritual stature of Jesus Christ will be rewarded with the prize of being His Bride. The LORD will recompense us for every pain and will repay us for every suffering that we have encountered in running in the race.

The prize at the end of the journey of life is being in the Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ. Many people are running so slowly, as though they had eternity to gain this glorious goal. They run for a while and sleep for a while. They take countless side trips into the world, stopping frequently to fight with other brothers and sisters along the way.

The spiritual race, in one way, is diametrically different from a natural race in which there is just one winner. However, in the spiritual race, the prize can be obtained by *all* who run well and lay hold of the full stature of Christ in their allotted time in this world. But we must persist constantly, diligently, and vigorously in our course. The contest is not trying to outdo one another, but to overcome the world, the flesh, and Devil and to lay hold of the stature of Jesus Christ.

Paul clearly informs us that we cannot run half-heartedly without becoming a castaway from the prize. We cannot give Jesus Christ half of our heart's energy without being thrown out of the race, without being discarded as a runner in the race. We cannot take the way of our flesh without becoming rejected and disapproved as a runner in the race. This does not mean that the person loses his soul and goes to hell, necessarily. The word *castaway* means to be unapproved, rejected. Rejected for what? It is possible for us to be rejected from being in the Bride, beloved, from knowing the eternal joy and pleasure that goes to those who gain spiritual maturity in Christ by stature.

Jesus Christ will soon appear to catch away His Bride, the mature one, along with the rest of the overcomers who make up the wedding party. If we hope to be among those who win the prize, we must set our face like a flint toward the goal. We must run with our whole being—body, soul, spirit, heart, and will.

In this study, we have seen God's plan or conditions for running, God's patterns or examples of running, God's power for running, and God's prize or reward for running. This lesson should enflame our hearts with new determination to run quickly in the way of God's Word and Spirit so that we may advance rapidly in our growth in the stature of the LORD Jesus Christ and lay hold of the prize, the Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ, God's eternal reward for running in the spiritual race. Remember, Jesus Christ is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. He is the One Who gave us the glorious vision of the prize; He is the One Who will help us attain spiritual maturity in Him, and He is the One Who will help us run in such a way as to gain the eternal prize of being in His Bride. Time may be short, beloved, but we can make it—if we run.