

Three biblical necessities for progress

Romans 8:18-25

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[Greetings & BELLS testimony]

1

Romans 8: 18-25

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

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2

Romans 8: 18-25

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

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3



In a few weeks time is the *Rotorua marathon*, I've run it before, I know one or two of you have run it also. Last Sunday I was talking to *Paul Shipton*, who is training up for this year's Rotorua marathon.

The passage I've just read was written by *another Paul*, who *wasn't a marathon runner*, but who must have had an *avid interest* in athletics and the ancient Greek games, including the marathon, because he *often used athletic imagery* in his letters, as metaphors for describing the *Christian faith*.

There are *all kinds of marathons* in life that we *embark upon*, *persevere at* and hopefully *reach the finish of*:

- *Marriage is a marathon*, that starts when you make your wedding vows, *progresses* through the many challenges of marriage and is *meant to finish* when death parts husband and wife.

- *Raising a family* is a marathon that starts when your *first child is born*, journeys through the *many challenges of parenting*, before reaching the *finish line* when your *last child has left home* ready to embark on their *own marathon* of raising a family of their own.
- *Gaining an education* is a marathon that *starts* as early as preschool (these days), *proceeds* through the challenges of *primary, intermediate, high school, university or tech* and for some *nutters* like me, the *finish line still hasn't been reached at 53!*
- *Pursuing a career* is a marathon, *starting* with your first job, *progressing* through the many challenges of employment and professional development before *reaching the finish line* when your *career aspirations* have been fulfilled. These days it's common for people to pursue *several different careers* during their working life.
- And *church* is a marathon too, *starting* from when a church is planted, like ours was by a group of Christians including *Barry & Jenny Utting* who met together in someone's home, *from which they established a church congregation* that's *grown* into who we are today, but which *won't reach the finish line* until the *renewal of all things* upon Christ's return.

Whether it's the marathon of *raising a family, gaining an education, pursuing a career, growing a church, or something else*, what these *all have in common* is that the *finish line* will only be reached after *ongoing progress* towards the *end goal* (whatever that may be).

According to what Paul wrote in *Romans 8:24*, there are *three biblical necessities* for progressing towards the *finish line*.

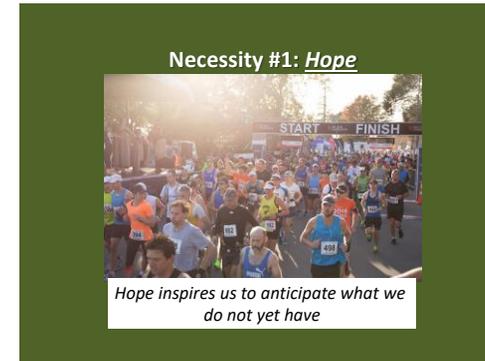
Here's where we find them:

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. **3a**

According to Paul, the three biblical necessities for progress towards the finish line are: *hope, patience and frustration!*

Hope

4



The *first biblical necessity* for progress toward the finish line is *hope*.

Hope inspires us to anticipate what we do not yet have!

Paul's letter to the church in Rome, answers some of the *biggest and most difficult questions* there are to be asked in life such as:

- *How come world history has been affected by one man - Jesus Christ?*
- *How has the life of every man woman and child on the planet been affected by this one man?*
- *What is God up to?*
- *Where is it going?*
- *(and) what does it mean for me?*

The "marathon" Paul is talking about in *Romans 8:18-24*, is the *mother of all marathons* that began when God created the world and *made humans in his image*, setting us off on a course towards becoming the *kind of place and people* God wants us to become.

This *mega-marathon* spans the course of *history* from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

Here's what Paul says about the *biblical hope* that's necessary for *completing* this mega-marathon.

- Biblical hope is an *eager expectation of reaching the end goal God has set for us and the world* (v19).
- Biblical hope is *necessary for salvation* (v24).
- What we are hoping for is *something that as yet is unseen and that we do not yet have* (v24).
- What we are hoping for is *that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God* (v21).
- What we are hoping for is *our adoption as sons and daughters of God*.
- *And what we are also hoping for is the redemption of our perishable bodies when we receive our imperishable bodies at the resurrection, upon Christ's return* (v23).

This is how Paul describes what *biblical hope* is, which is the *first necessity* for progress toward the *finish line* of the *mega-marathon*!

This kind of hope is a *far greater kind of hope* than what's required of an *ordinary marathoner*, yet having said that there's also much that's *the same*!

Every marathon I've entered I've had *eager expectations of reaching the finish, under a certain target time & finishing place*.

Without that hope, I would never have finished any marathon when the going got tough particularly after half way.

At the *start* of a marathon, the *finish line is unseen* because it's 42km away.

When the *pain and weariness* of the marathon is *really bad*, the hope of being *released from it* at the finish line, has *spurred me on*.

And although *stopping and dropping out* would also end the *pain*, the thought of missing out on a *finisher's medal*, and a *finishing time*, and a *finishing placing* has helped me *carry on!*

The same is true for *whatever you are hoping for*, whether that's the *marathon of marriage*, of *raising a family*, of *gaining an education*, of *pursuing a career*, of *growing the church*, or *something else*, because *hope inspires us to anticipate what we do not yet have!*

Patience

5

Necessity #2: Patience



Patience enables us to wait for what we do not yet have!

The *second biblical necessity* for progress toward the finish line is *patience*.

Patience enables us to wait for what we do not yet have!

In *answering some of the biggest and most difficult questions* there are to be asked in life, *Paul says in Romans* that *waiting patiently for God to accomplish what he has set out to do through Jesus is integral* to just about every question we may have about life.

because I *didn't have any energy left to carry on!*

Here's what Paul says about *biblical patience* in Romans 8:18-24

- *Creation has patience* as it waits in *eager anticipation* for the sons and daughters of God to be revealed. (v19)
- *We ourselves* whom the *Holy Spirit is active in*, also have *patience* as we *eagerly await* our *adoption as sons and daughters of God* and for the *redemption* of our *perishable bodies* upon Christ's return (v23).
- All this that we *do not have yet* we must *patiently wait for!* (v24).

This is how Paul describes what *biblical patience* is which is the *second necessity* for progress toward the *finish line* of the *mega-marathon!*

This kind of patience is a *far greater kind of patience* than what's required of an *ordinary marathoner*, nevertheless there's also much that's the same.

The marathon *isn't a sprint!*

Paul Ballinger holds the record for the Rotorua marathon at 2 hrs 16min 5 and seconds, but even he didn't set that time by taking off at a sprint.

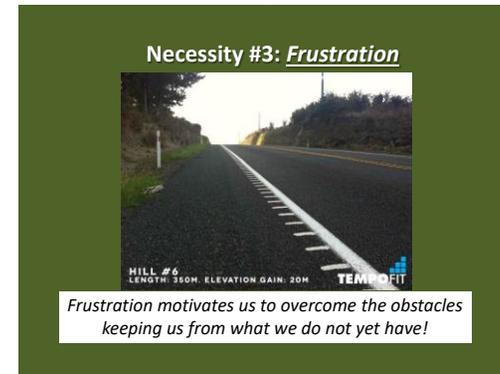
But whether the goal is *breaking the record*, going under *three, four or five hours*, what's necessary for completing *any marathon*, *whatever the time*, is *keeping to a pace* your body is capable of running at for 42.195 km, and to do that requires lots and lots of *patience!*

My first attempt at running the Rotorua marathon ended in failure because I was *too impatient*, and I thought I was capable of running it in a *faster time* than I was *capable of*. I ended up paying the price for going out too fast, and eventually had to slow down to a walk and then eventually stopped and dropped out of the marathon just past the Rotorua airport,

The same is true for *whatever you are patiently waiting for*, whether it's the marathon of *marriage*, of *raising a family*, *gaining an education*, *pursuing a career*, *growing the church*, or *something else*, because *patience enables us to wait for what we do not yet have!*

Frustration

6



The *third biblical necessity* for progress toward the finish line is *frustration!*

Frustration motivates us to overcome the obstacles keeping us from what we do not yet have.

In answering some of the *biggest and most difficult questions* there are to be asked in life, Paul says in Romans that *God has overcome the greatest frustration* keeping us and *the world* from becoming the kind of place and people *He intends it to be*.

Here's what Paul says about *biblical frustration* in Romans 8:18-24.

- *Creation* has been *subjected to frustration*, not by its *own choice*, but by the *will of God* who subjected it.

- Paul describes creation's *present state of existence* as being in *'bondage to decay'* and *groaning* as in the *pains of child birth*.
- He describes *our frustration* at also *being in this state* as *groaning inwardly* as we eagerly await our adoption as sons and daughters, and for the redemption of our perishable bodies upon Christ's return.
- The *cause of our frustration* is that *we do not yet have the perfect world to live in, nor the perfect body to live in it, nor the perfect people to live in it with, as God intended it to be.*

Just like the *marathon runner* in the latter stages of the marathon but when the end still seems a long way off, *we're frustrated* because *we're not there yet!*

But what *may come as a surprise to you* (as it has for me) is that rather than being a *negative*, (which is how I've always thought of frustration) this kind of biblical frustration, is actually a *positive thing!*

That's because this kind of frustration is what *motivates us* to *dig deep* and to *turn to God* to help us *overcome the obstacles keeping us from progressing to the finish line!*

The *Rotorua marathon* is the *only marathon* in the world that goes around a lake that's *exactly 42.195 km around it!* But as you know there are *lots of hills* around lake Rotorua. The *obstacle* preventing many runners from *reaching the finish line* in the Rotorua marathon comes at the 30km mark when the runners reach the *sixth major hill* along the course.

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And *this hill* is the *toughest of them all*, not only because it's *the biggest*, but especially because of *where it is* on the marathon course which is at the *30km mark*.

You see it's at about the 30km mark that the marathon runner has run out of *their stored glycogen energy levels* causing them to experience what's called *"hitting the wall"*

But right at the point in the *Rotorua marathon* just when the runners are *"hitting the wall"*, they also have to *run up and over the biggest hill on the course!*

And even if they make it over, there's *still 12 km to go* after that, before *reaching the finish line!*

So it's *not surprising* that it's at *this point* where most of the *non finishers* of the Rotorua marathon start *dropping out like flies!*

But *not* for those who are able to *dig deep and keep pressing on for the finish line*. These are the ones who *get up and over this final obstacle* eventually making it to the *finish line* and claiming their *Rotorua marathon finishers medal!*

What is it that motivates them to *run up and over the hill* and *onto the finish line* when by this stage they have *no energy left* to run on?

It's the *frustration* they feel at *not being there yet!*

Biblical frustration (the kind that Paul describes in these verses) is what *motivates us to overcome the obstacles keeping us from what we do not yet have.*

And the same is true for *whatever frustration* you may be experiencing, whether that's the *marathon of marriage, of raising a family, gaining an education, pursuing a career, of growing the church, or something else*, because *frustration motivates us to overcome the obstacles keeping us from what we do not yet have!*

According to what Paul wrote in *Romans 8:24*, there are *three biblical necessities for progressing towards the finish line*. They are: *hope, patience and frustration* at *not being there yet!*

And where do these biblical necessities come from?

They come from being *fueled by the Holy Spirit of God!*