

# THE RACE OF SALVATION

The work of God is a race in which one is required to put up maximum effort and abide by the principles of Jesus Christ in order to win the prize of eternal life. To be obstructed or disqualified in the race, which is the one of salvation as not to gain the prize is the worst misfortune a man can suffer in this world.

Literally, race is the act of running, swimming, sailing and so on, in a competition with one or more rivals. It may be with the aim to see who can finish a piece of work or get to a certain place first. And the winner is awarded a prize for his excellent performance. Usually, every event has set rules with which the participants are bound to comply.

In a spiritual sense the work of God is a race. And for the fact that the prize to be awarded every winner in the race is everlasting life it is proper to term it the race of salvation. It is a race that is open to all mankind irrespective of race, caste, colour or tribe. God Almighty said: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else." – Isaiah 45:22

In the race of salvation there are rules or principles laid down for everyone to keep. And it is a requirement that one must continue in the race steadfastly and faithfully till the end so as to obtain the prize.

St. Paul illustrated the work of God with athletic race and in a contrast he showed the excellence of the reward attainable in the Lord's service. The need therefore to be more diligent and hardworking in the race of salvation becomes at once obvious. St. Paul said: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." – 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

As athletes who do not keep to their tracks or obey the rules of the games are disqualified so too the worshippers of God who do not abide by the rules of Jesus Christ as enunciated in the Holy Bible would be deemed unfit or unworthy to obtain salvation.

## Truth

In the first instance, in running the race every one must make sure that he is in the right track, that is, the organisation where the Truth of Jesus Christ is preached without a taint of falsehood or devilish doctrines. Christ said: "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." – John 14:6

It is the Truth that distinguishes the way of salvation from others. This accounts for the popular statement of Jesus Christ that the freedom of his disciples depends on their knowledge of the

Truth. As it is written: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31, 32) Without the knowledge of the truth no one can obtain eternal life in God's Kingdom of righteousness and peace. St. Paul wrote: "For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." – 1 Timothy 2:3, 4

Apart from the knowledge of God, which is of vital importance (John 17:3), there are other qualities a person is required to possess in order to succeed in the race of salvation. In this regard St. Peter's exhortation to such virtues as would enable the Christians to regulate their zeal, courage and conduct, and make them fruitful in the Lord is of particular interest. He stated: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." – 2 Peter 1:5-8

He further exhorted: "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." – Verses 9-11

Three of the qualities which need be singled out for more elucidation or explanation are faith, love and patience. As touching faith, St. Paul stated: "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." – Hebrews 11:6

Love is the premier of virtues. Jesus Christ said: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:34, 35) All the commandments of God hang on love: hence Paul the apostle stated that "...love *is* the fulfilling of the law." – Romans 13:9, 10 See also Matthew 22:37-40, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13, Galatians 5:14

With regard to patience, it must be pointed out that without it no one can persevere or wait on the Lord as not to stumble or fall by the way in the race. Jesus Christ said that it is those who endure (or who are perfectly patient) to the end that will be saved. (Matthew 24:12, 13) And he further said: "In your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21:19) Indeed "...the race *is* not to the swift..." – Ecclesiastes 9:11

What is more, St. Paul exhorted the Christians thus: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." – Hebrews 10:35, 36

One thing that must be known is that sin is a great obstacle to progress in the race of salvation. And so it is enough to conclude with St. Paul's exhortation, to wit: "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, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For

consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” – Hebrews 12:1-3