

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 (MSG)

EVERY TIME I watch the Olympics on television, the efforts of those involved always inspire me. This year I observed the dichotomy of emotions between contestants. During an interview, one Olympian broke into tears after his event: “I didn’t win! I lost! I wanted to win!” Actually he did win—silver.

Another athlete fell on her face in tears. But her broad smile reflected joy, even though she finished last. A fellow contestant, seeing her fall, had helped her back on her feet. Both women, arms draped around each other, were ecstatic. Why? The woman who had stumbled said it all: “I finished the race. I finished the race.”

In our society, no one offers a medal to a loser. And promotions usually follow the best, the fastest, and the first—not the one who stumbles along the way. Not so in Jesus’s scheme of things. In the race of life, it’s not who breaks the world record or who crosses the line first. Jesus said many who were considered first will be last, and those counted last will be first (Luke 13:30).

Jesus’s example says it all. His last words on the Cross as he hung dying were, “It is finished.” He “finished” the “race” appointed Him. And because

He finished, so can we. When we reach the end of our lives, it's not how fast or slow we ran; it's that we know the One who died for us, and that we completed our race.

Yes, we do run to win. But in heaven, everyone who finishes the race, looking forward to Jesus's appearing, wins a crown (2 Timothy 4:8).

--REBECCA BARLOW JORDAN

FAITH STEP: *Thank Jesus today for the race He made possible for you to win.*