

A blurred photograph of a male athlete in a blue singlet crossing a red finish line ribbon. The athlete is in the foreground, slightly out of focus, with his mouth open as if shouting or exerting effort. The background is a soft, out-of-focus track and stadium setting.

FINISHING WELL

The Christian Life that Brings the Prize

Many thanks to Jeff Myers who gave me important input.

What is a finishing epitaph for
us.

I have often thought of this
through my life.

George Washington



LOOKING INTO THE PORTALS OF ETERNITY
TEACHES THAT THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN
IS INSPIRED BY GOD'S WORD; THEN ALL
PREJUDICE OF RACE VANISHES AWAY.



Written by Benjamin Franklin

Age 22

The Body of
B. Franklin
Printer;

Like the Cover of an old Book,
Its Contents torn out,
And stript of its Lettering and Gilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms.

But the Work shall not be wholly lost:
For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more,
In a new & more perfect Edition,
Corrected and Amended
By the Author.

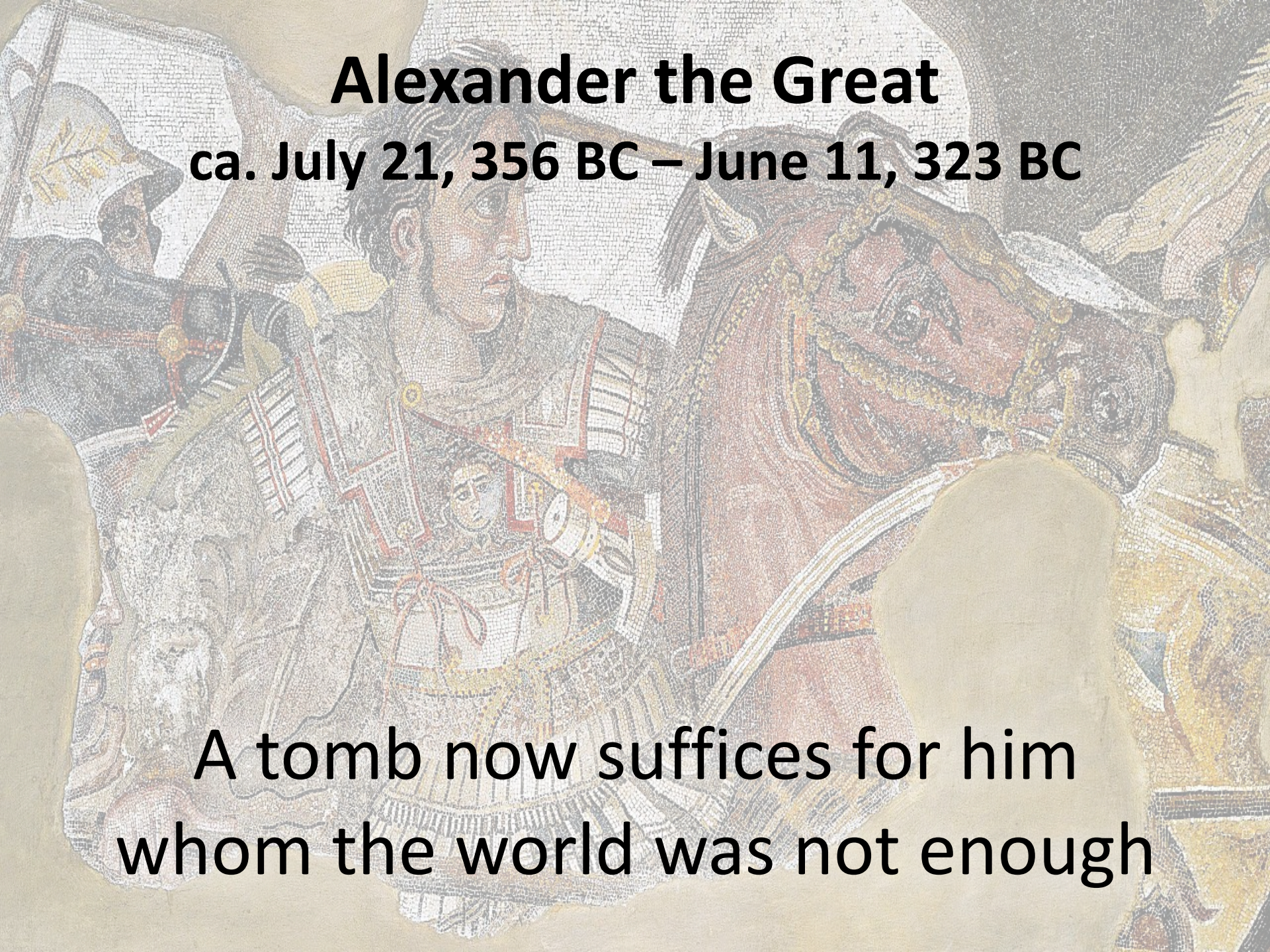
He was born on January 6, 1706.

Died 17, 1790

Alexander the Great

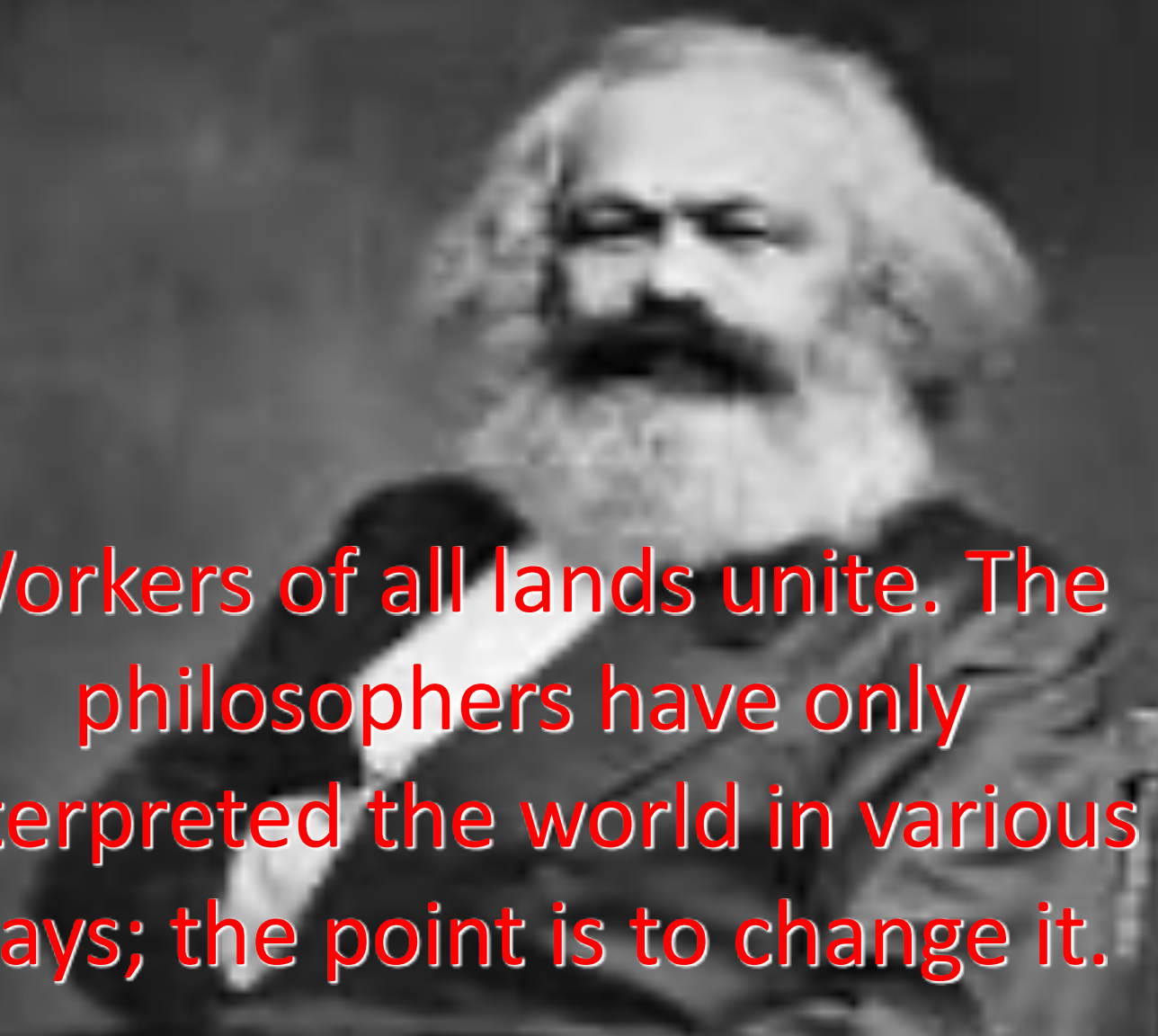
ca. July 21, 356 BC – June 11, 323 BC

A tomb now suffices for him
whom the world was not enough



Karl Marx

May 5, 1818 – March 14, 1883



Workers of all lands unite. The
philosophers have only
interpreted the world in various
ways; the point is to change it.

Epitaph of the Apostle Paul 2 Tim 4:6-8

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”



Saint Paul Writing His Epistles, by Valentin de Boulogne, 17th century AD

Introduction

Paul's perspective at the end of life

- He was poured out as a **Drink Offering** (ultimate commitment)
 - » Sacrificial wine that had a pleasing aroma (Num 28:6-7)
 - » In Phil 2:17, he was ready to be sacrificed for them.

**Mamertine
Prison in
Rome, in
which Paul
and Peter
were
imprisoned**



DOVE STANDO
TRO E PAOLO
RI-PROCESSO
ALLE CARCERI ET
CRISTO' QVAL
VA DI QVESTO
OSAMENTE



Paul and Peter's prison cell

Picture of Paul in prison



Introduction

Paul's Perspective at the End of Life

I have fought the good fight

I have finished the course

I have kept the faith

**Why Should Finishing Well Matter to
You at Your Age?**

Why Should It Matter Now?

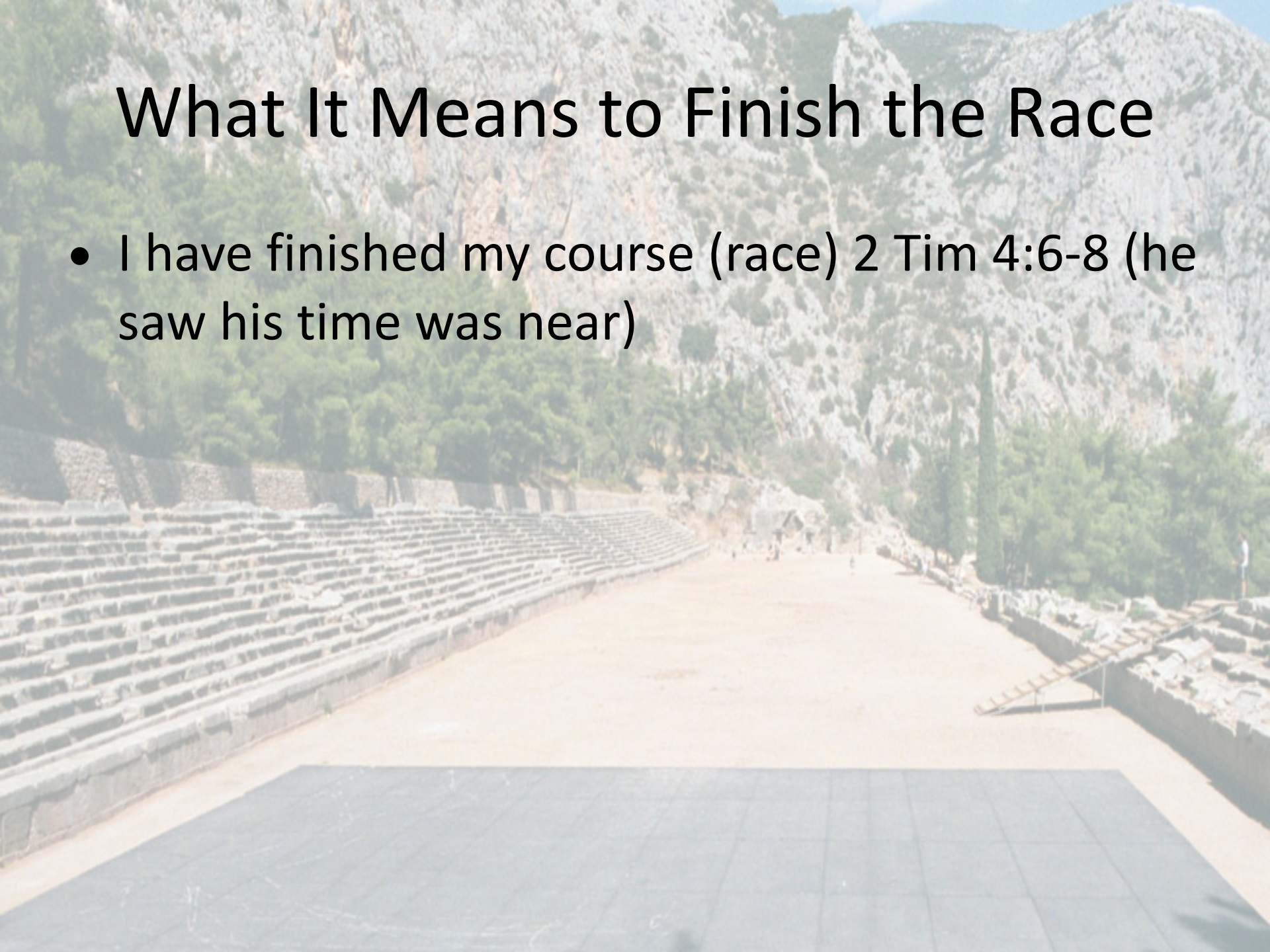
- Life will be over before you know it.
- You must plan for life and not wander aimlessly, wasting time and effort, and finding out only later in life that you have not exercised the right choices to win the race.



Finishing Well

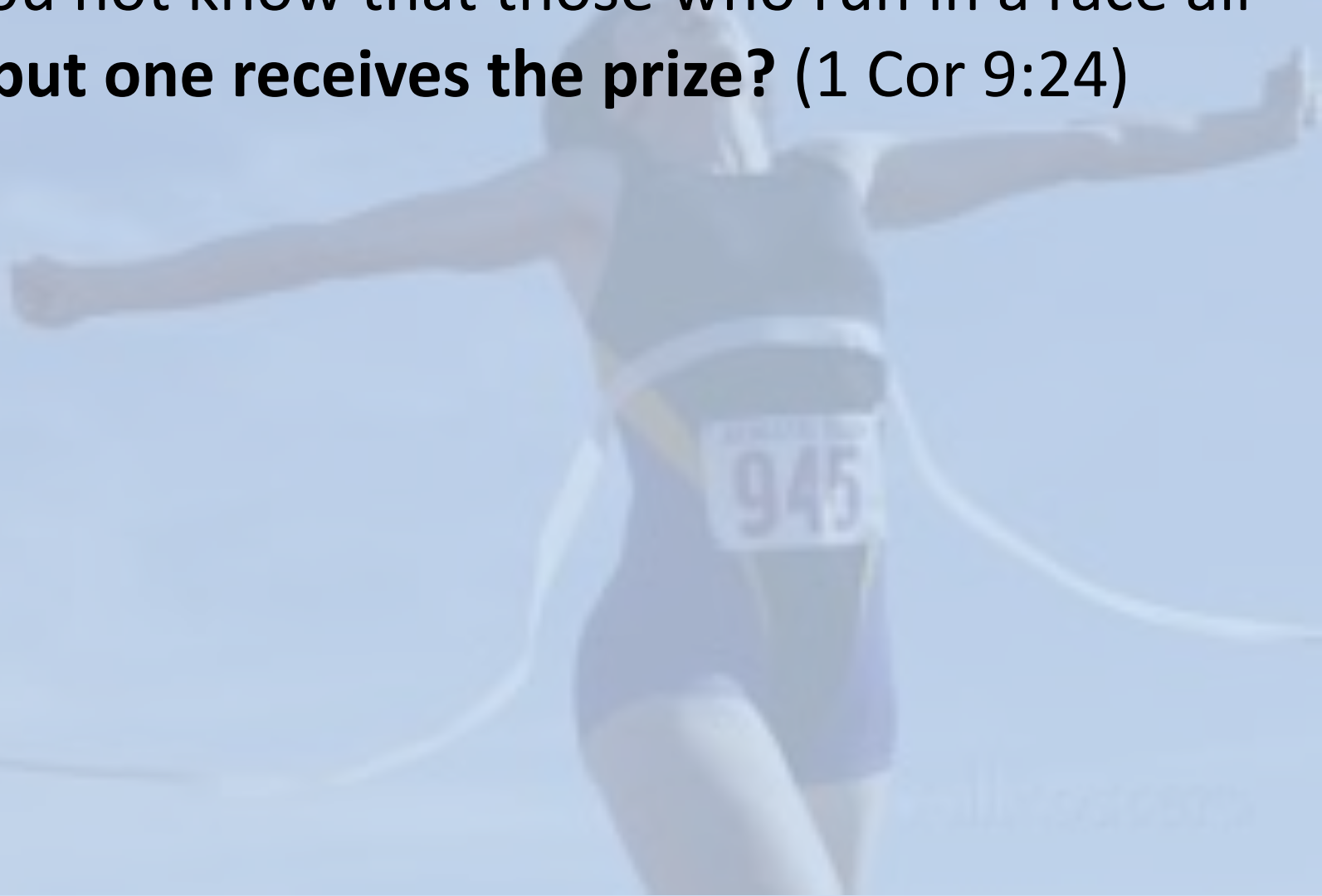
What It Means to Finish the Race

- I have finished my course (race) 2 Tim 4:6-8 (he saw his time was near)



Striving for a Crown

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, **but one receives the prize?** (1 Cor 9:24)



What It Means to Finish the Race

- **“Winning Is Everything**

Part of the reason for such glory was the relatively small number of winners. For the first thirteen Olympiads, there was *only one event and therefore only one winner*. Even after the number of events grew, only the *first place finisher for each event* was considered a victor. Coming in second or third place counted for nothing and were not even recorded. In the event of a draw, the crown was dedicated to the god. Such was the pressure to win that some athletes prayed for either victory or death.”

Olympic-Legacy.com, http://www.pe04.com/olympic/olympia/prizes_o.php

What It Means to Finish the Race

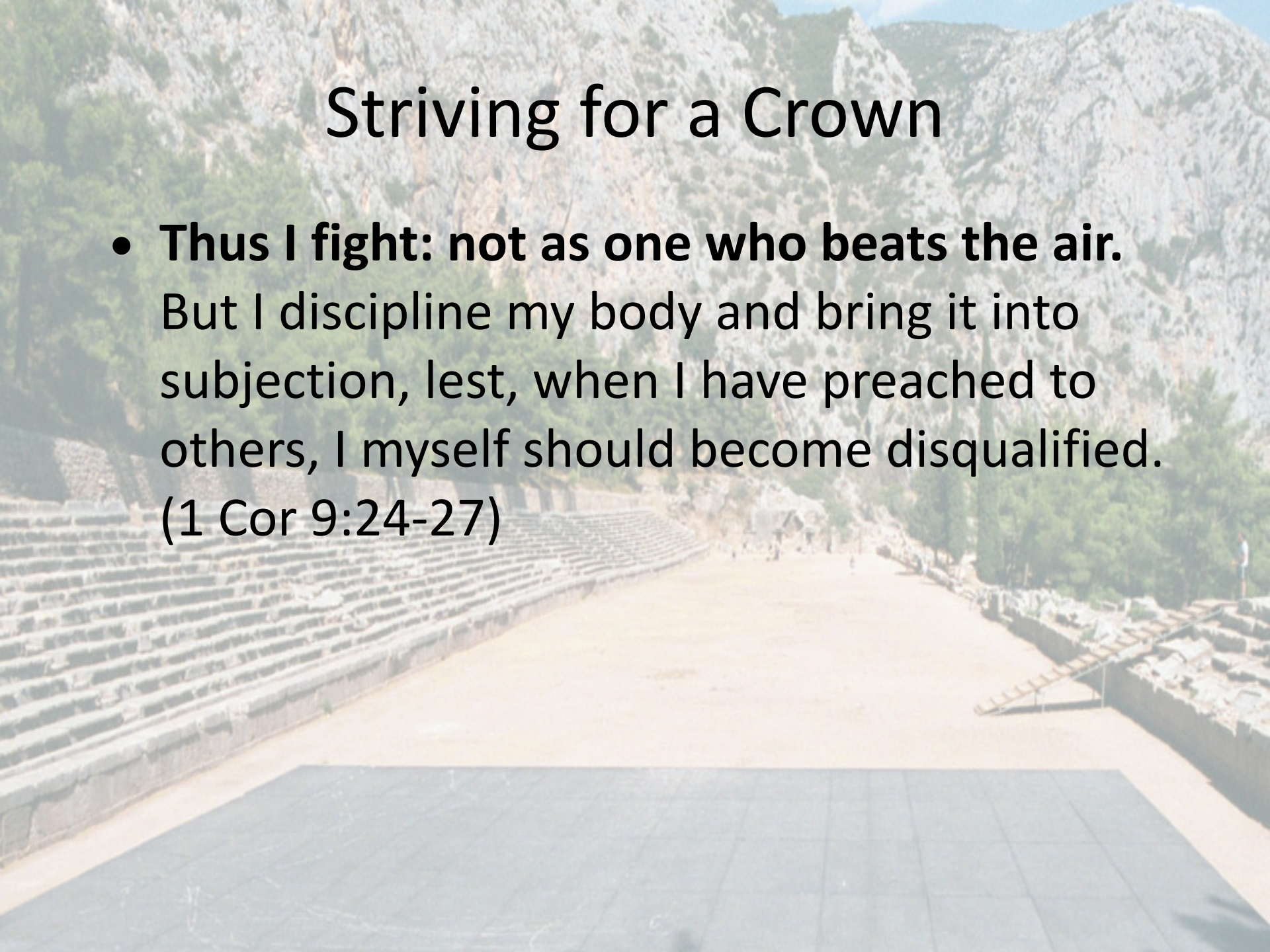
- I have finished my course (race) 2 Tim 4:6-8 (he saw his time was near)
- Unlike Greek games in which only one could win the prize, all can win the prize in the Christian race (not being redeemed, which is a gift)

Striving for a Crown

- Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that **you may obtain it**. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty.

Striving for a Crown

- **Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.**
But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.
(1 Cor 9:24-27)





Fighting a Real Fight, and not Beating the Air

- 1 Cor. 9:26: Striving for a Crown
 - Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.
 - one has bruises & scars from a real fight;

What It Means to Finish the Race

- I have finished my course (race) 2 Tim 4:6-8 (he saw his time was near)
- Unlike Greek games in which only one could win the prize, all can win the prize in the Christian race (not being redeemed, which is a gift)
- The story of John Stephen Akhwari from Tanzania —1 Cor 9:26: being focused on the race track and not wandering in the field (Paul said he ran with certainty, temperate, buffeting his body)

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John Stephen Akhwari (1968 Olympics in Mexico City)





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What is the Faith that Paul Kept?

I have kept the faith, not referring to believing in Jesus *per se*, but in staying faithful to the truth of the Gospel and the whole counsel of God (I have not failed to declare the whole counsel of God); Rom 1:1-6; Gal 1:23; 2:7; Jude 3.



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The Peril of Not Progressing in the Race

Hebrews 6:1-6: “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **and fallen to the side [of the track]**, to renew them again to repentance, **while** they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”

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Eric Liddell (1924 Olympics in Paris)



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Being an Overcomer by Faith

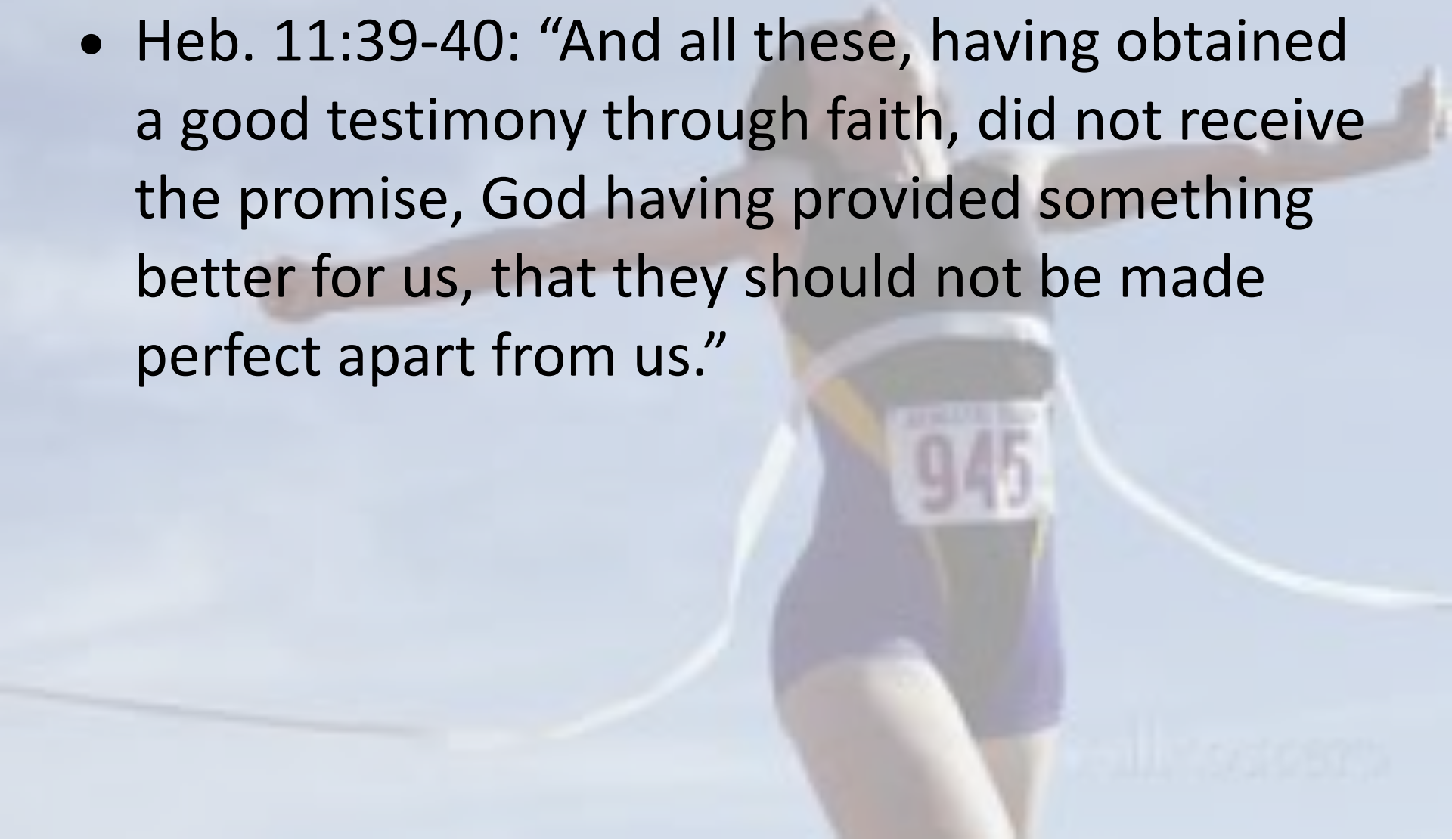
Overcoming

Heb 11:8—12:1-2 Witnesses who were observing the race.

- Those who were running the race are divided into two groups, those who were victorious in the world's perspective, even though they had failure along the way, and the second group who were persecuted, tortured, and even put to death.
- What if in the struggles of life you don't progress, or you fall, can you still finish the race and receive the prize? Yes, because it is not an issue of speed, necessarily, but of endurance.
- **Contrast** of John Stephens Akhwari and Eric Liddel

We Have Exemplars Who Are Witnesses of Obtaining the Prize

- Heb. 11:39-40: “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

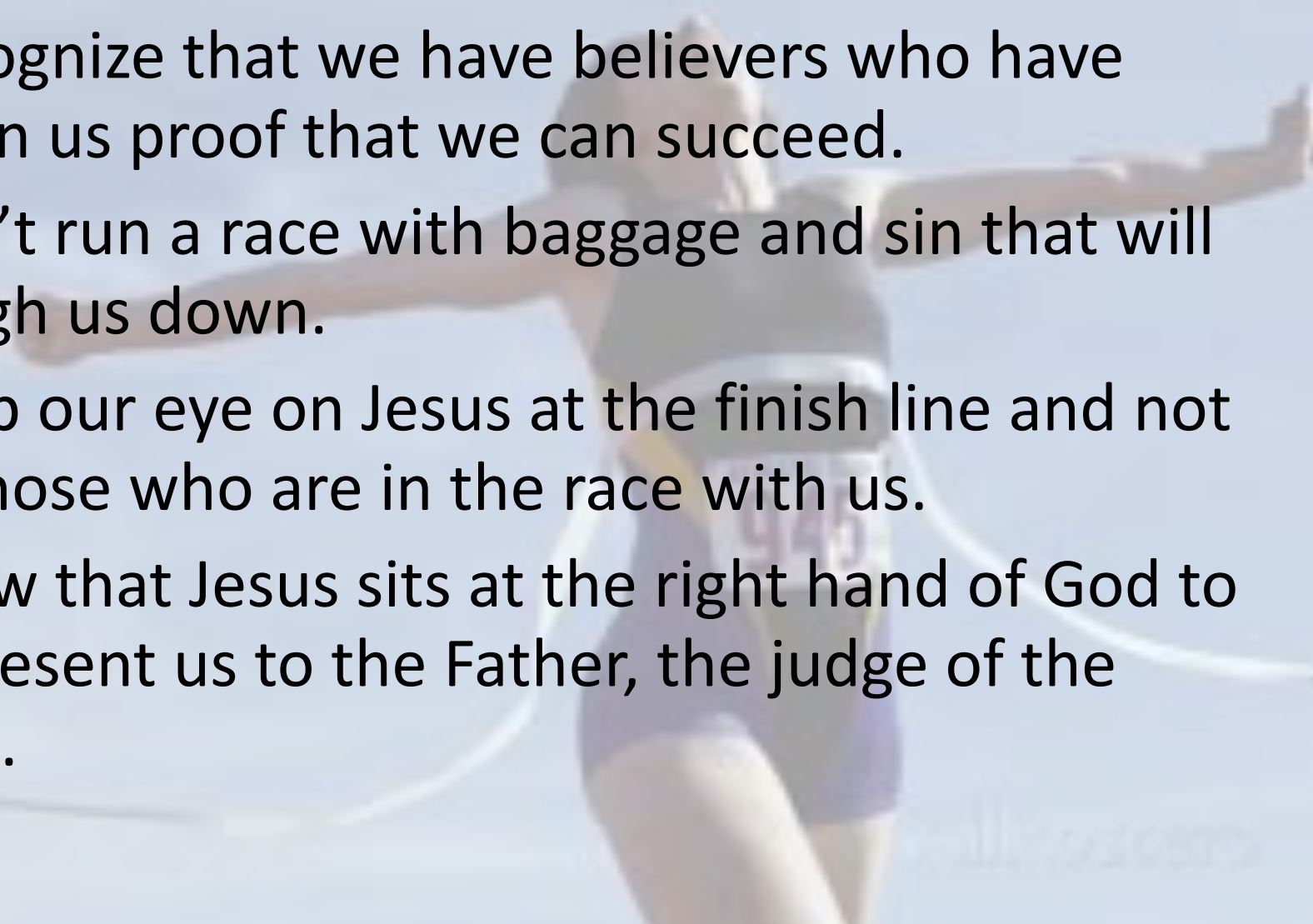


We Have Exemplars Who Are Witnesses of Obtaining the Prize

- Heb. 12:1-2: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

What We Should Learn from this Passage to Win the Race

- Recognize that we have believers who have given us proof that we can succeed.
- Don't run a race with baggage and sin that will weigh us down.
- Keep our eye on Jesus at the finish line and not at those who are in the race with us.
- Know that Jesus sits at the right hand of God to represent us to the Father, the judge of the race.



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