The race is not given to the swift nor the strong but those who endure the to the end.

How many of us have heard this? It’s a popular scripture quoted by most Christians. But, here’s the problem, it’s not in the Bible! It sounds Biblical, I quote it quite a bit myself. However, it’s not scriptural at all. It’s not in the Bible.

Some of you are still going to argue me down, knowing you read it somewhere in the Bible. Some of you will even start searching your Bible trying to find this scripture, because you know you seen it in there. You remember it being preached on in Church, but I assure you, it’s not in the Bible.
As encouraging as this saying may sound, it is but a misquote of Ecc. 9:11, hobbled together with Jesus’ saying in Matt. 24:13 “but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved”; and Paul’s references to running a race in 1 Cor. 9:24 and Heb. 12:1.

Nevertheless, although this saying, “the race is not given to the swift nor the strong” my not in the Bible, it is scripturally based and has a lot of Godly wisdom when speaking of our perseverance and continuance in pursuing to grow in Christ and in life heavenward.

Let’s look at, where I believe this saying is taken from, and that is Ecclesiastes 9:11 which says,

*I returned, and saw under the sun... If your reading the NIV, it says, *I have seen something else under the sun*”; which is not quite accurate. The original Hebrew text uses the word *shub (shoob)*; which means, to turn back or return.

If you know the story about Solomon, then you know, that not only did God grant him great wisdom, but that Solomon also had turned from God and started worship false gods, and that he had given himself to what he called, “pleasure folly” or foolishness, which is discussed in the Book of Eccl. So, when Solomon says, “*I returned*”, he was talking about coming back to the Lord, after all his foolishness and worshiping false gods. Upon returning back from his “backsliding” as we would call it, what Solomon realized is that all hope was not lost, that God was a gracious God, wonderful God, who mercies endured from everlasting to everlasting. And, what he goes on to say in Eccl. 9:11 is what he had learned while living both wise and foolish, and that is, he “saw under the sun (or in live in general), that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

Solomon was given great wisdom from God, and though he may have lived foolishly for some time, he still was wise, and his inspired writing
the **Book of Eccl.**, is a book of practical application pertaining to living life, more than a spiritual anthem, for us to understand practical things of live; like he explaining to us, there’s a time for everything in live:

A time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;  
3 A time to break down, and a time to build up;  
4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
6 A time to get, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

Keeping in mind that Book of Eccl., is given to us for practical knowledge. In doing so, I want you to notice that at the end of **Eccl. 9:11** it says, “*but time and chance happeneth to them all*”. Now, to understand what Solomon is talking about, we but have to read the passage in it’s context. So, going back to **verse 10**, “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*” So, what Solomon is talking about is our being industrious and not idle. Finding in ourselves that what we can give ourselves to which will be fulfilling and pleasing unto the Lord. Remember, Solomon told us in **Eccl. 2:24 and 3:22**, that is nothing better than for us to eat, drink, enjoy the fruits of our labour as God has given us and pass on from this life.

So, we see that what he’s saying is, whatever you find and have the opportunity and ability to do, 1) do it to the glory of God; 2) do it with all thy might — meaning, be diligent, have vigor, continue doing, don’t grow weary in well doing. Before we go on, understand, this does not mean giving yourself to just doing things. If your senior citizen and retired, doesn’t mean you have to go out there and find work. No, it means, if you find yourself caring for your grandchildren, then give yourself to caring
for your grandchildren. If you find yourself working in the youth or children’s ministry, then give yourself to the children’s ministry. It says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do”. What it means, is that throughout our life we are to “findeth to do”, we are not to be idle. You know that saying, “an idle mind is the devil’s play house”? Yea, that’s what Solomon is warning us about, idleness which leads to exploits of a sensual life, instead of sober enjoyment of the comforts God has provided.

Solomon urges us to set our hand to something and strive for success, looking unto to God for his blessing upon it, without which all our endeavors would be in vain any way.

However, we must understand whatever we set ourselves to, we are not to be disillusioned, realizing the race is not to the swift — that success and victory is not just in the ability to run; nor is the battle just given to those having strength.

We all no the fable of the tortoise and the hare. The hare was stronger and faster and took off, but the tortoise knew his consistency would pay off, his plodding along, not letting discouragement or obstacles to detecting from reaching his desired goal, while the hare would get distracted, discouragement and sidetracked along the way and never reach his destination. Just having the ability or strength does necessarily mean we will also succeed. I recently watched a boxing match, where one guy was chiseled, had a physic with muscles everywhere. He looked strong. His opponent was almost fat looking and literally had no defined muscles. The muscle man was at least three inches taller and 20 lbs bigger. The fight lasted two rounds, and it wasn’t the strong man who won.

How often do we start moving in one direction, face opposition and then quit? You had a great idea, you even have a passion, but once the real work came, you wore yourself out, found yourself discouraged, feel overcome by the challenges! It happens all the time to even the strongest willed people. They give up right before the good stuff is about to happen.
Many people are like the hare, even having good ideas, good intentions and potential for success, but they falter before they can see something come to fruition. How many of us know people who jumps from idea to idea trying to become a millionaire. They want the fastest path to riches. They get all excited about his latest idea but as soon as it becomes hard work, challenging or face opposition, they stop, look for and easier way, “a better way”. This will always bring failure! This is what Solomon means, when he says, “but time and chance happeneth to them all.” You have to constantly water your seeds! You have to prepare and work your fields for the seeds to take, to grow strong roots, and produce crops. You can’t just go around scattering seeds hoping something will grow. Farmers don’t operate businesses that way, why would you expect your finances or business ideas to work any differently. Neither does it work for serving the Lord!

Paul, an accomplished man in both education and spiritual wisdom, used of the Lord, spoke of Timothy about not yet having attained yet, but he continues running towards attaining that which God has for him. Listen to what he says in Philippians 3:12-14,

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”.

Hebrews 12:1 and 1 Cor. 9:24 speaks of running the race of life with endurance. Prizes are not given in the middle of races, but only at the end of the race. Eccl. 9:11 give us this same principles for obtaining success in life and as a Christian.

There are those who start off in ministry for the Lord, and we are not just talking about preaching, evangelizing, deacon or other such things in your local Church. We are simply talking about something your hand has
found to do in service and praise of the Lord, whether it be making Christian T-shirts, clothing and shoes, writing blogs that praises God, to writing children’s books, feeding the homeless or mentoring young kids at your Church, and many other things in between. Many give up, give in, when faced with challenges, opposition, trials, disappointments, discouragement, or need of perseverance. Many quit before God is able to bless it, unwilling to grind it out, do it with all their might. See opposition as God saying no or not blessing it, and say to themselves,"this isn't working, for this reason or that reason, and often quit right before their big break was about to take place. They miss the blessings God had in store…

A major reason is lack of faith… Yes, a lack of faith!  **1 John 5:14-15** says,

> And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

If, I know that what I delight and desire in my heart to do will Bless the Lord and others, I know it’s in His will. If I have faith that He hears my prayers to do, what would Bless His name, and be a blessing to others, then I by faith know the Lord heard my prayers and petitions of what I desire of Him to bless. However, will my faith carry me through discouragement, opposition, challenges to obtain the blessing from the Lord?

Having faith in the Lord is easy to say! It’s another thing to even believe! But, it’s altogether different to live out faith!  (Check out our tee-shirt of this saying at our website store FITW.ORG

Many of times, God challenges us, wanting us to demonstrate our faith by putting some energy and effort in what we are doing for The Lord Jesus Christ. To preserver, to overcome challenges by our faith. Victory doesn’t
come easy. It takes a little sweat no, let me rephrase that, It takes a lot of sweat. But God’s Word tells us, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

Many of us fail to understand, that life itself is a race, and that race is not a sprint but a marathon. We are to continuously have hope, and press on with endurance and perseverance, believing God is with us and for us. To prosper us, not to harm us. Look at the story of Jacob working for Laban. As Jacob labored for Laban tending his sheep for more than 14 years, God prospered Jacob right under Laban’s nose. While Jacob was tending to Laban’s sheep to keep them pure, without spot or speckle, God inspired Laban to give all the speckled, spotted cows to Jacob, and before he knew it, Jacob had more cows than Laban. But, Jacob preserved tending to Laban’s cows for 14 years. Read the story Gen. 30:25-36.

Phil.3:14 says, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”. The word used for "I press" is the Greek word διώκω diókō (dee-o'-ko), which means literally "to follow after, pursue." The Greeks used it to describe a hunter who eagerly and relentlessly pursued after his prey. You see, a person does not become a winning athlete by listening to lectures, watching movies, reading books or cheering at the games. He becomes a winner only when he gets into the race with a determination to win. The Apostle Paul had a steadfast determination:

He would not quit
He would not turn back.
He would not give in.
He would not throw in the towel.
He would not slow down.

He pressed toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
If you want to be a winner in this race of life and Christianity you must have a spirit of endurance.
God doesn’t want to hear, Lord I’ve tried. God is not calling us to be average. God calls us to be unique. He wants us to be the vessel that holds his power. The world knows what man can do. But God wants us to be an example of what he can do. Man already knows about our abilities but man needs to learn about God’s capabilities. Man already knows what we can do, but we ought to be a witness of what God can do.

We serve a God who calls us to a mission impossible. He calls us to go into the hedges and highways and compel men to come to Christ. Christ does not call us to a religion of ease but he calls us to a service. He does not call us to convenience, he calls us to sacrifice and to endure. What you set your hands to that brings praise to the Lord and can be encouragement and uplifting to others, do it with your might. It doesn’t matter if it’s Christian comedy, feeding the homeless, making shoes or shining shoes, that God can be glorified through you, then do it with your might, know God is with you and preserve.

Christianity is not about what we can do, but it’s about being able to do all things through Christ who strengths us. Anybody can do what he can but it takes a child of God to do what he can’t. All of us are able to do what we can do even if we don’t do it.

I tell you this, if you’ve been born again, if you’ve been washed in the blood, if the Lord saved your soul, and done signed your name in the Book of Life, you ought to be able to do what you can’t.

Whatever you can do, you and God can do it better. With God, your little becomes a lot. With God a handful of meal and a cup of oil is more than enough to feed a hungry preacher and a starving widow. With God, two small fish and five barley loves is more than enough to feed a hungry multitude. Whatever you got becomes greater whenever you hook it up with the Lord.

That fine house becomes a home when Jesus stops being a visitor and takes up residence. Knowledge hooked up with the Lord is turned into
wisdom. A dream blessed by the Almighty becomes a vision. A career that yields to the spirit becomes a calling. A life that is dedicated to the Lord becomes an abundant life. When you trust God with what you can do he gives you power to do what you can’t.

If you are determined to endure, God will turn your cannots into cans. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I can run and not get weary. I can walk and not faint. When you give Him all you got. He supplies you with whatever you lack.

A. When you are Incapable, He is Capable.
B. When you are Weak, He is Strong.
C. When you don’t Know, He Does Know.
D. When you are Powerless, He is All-Powerful.
E. When you don’t have an Answer, He Does!

Is there anybody here who has reached the unreachable? Then you can do some more. If you haven’t succeeded in mission impossible. Then you have some more to do.

Look unto Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our Faith. Sometimes when trials and tribulations comes up, we sometimes find ourselves ready to give up. But if you look to Jesus. Who kept on running. He bared the cross, but he kept on running. They whipped him with 39 stripes, but he kept on running the race. They pierced him in his side, but he kept on running. They laid him in the tomb, but he kept on running. But early, one Sunday morning, he got up with all power in heaven and earth in his hand.

The Lord Never was, nor ever has been on the loosing side. He knows what it is like to stand in the face of opposition. He experienced it as he hung on the cross. I’m glad that the Lord knows first hand all the same things that I experience. He knows my pain because he has felt pain. He knows my sorrow, because he has felt sorrow. He knows how to be down. He knows how to shiver in our cold and how it feels to sweat in our heat. He knows what it feels like to be hungry and thirsty. I’m glad that He
knows all about us. So when you feel like you just can’t make it, you can be assured that he knows just how much you and I can bear.

The greatest encouragement comes when we fix our eyes on Jesus. The bible describes him as the author and finisher of our faith. Jesus is the perfect example of the faith that we ought to express. We ought to be able to say that I can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength.

So, the saying, “the race is not given to the swift nor the strong, but to those who endure to the end, may not be in the Bible, but it’s a Biblical concept, continue to run the race with faith.