



RUN

TO WIN



1 CORINTHIANS 9:24

DEVOTIONAL

2026



INTRODUCTION

RUN TO WIN

***"Do you not know that those who run in a race
all run, but only one receives the prize?
Run in such a way that you may win."***

1 Corinthians 9:24

Every man is running a race.

The question is not whether you are in the race. The question is how you are running it.

God has called each of us to a race that is uniquely ours. It is not always an easy race. There are seasons when the road is clear and the pace is strong. There are other times when the hills seem steep, the burdens feel heavy, and we wonder how much farther we can go.

There will be obstacles to overcome, battles to fight, disappointments to face, and moments when quitting seems easier than continuing.

But God has not called us to simply start the race. He has called us to run with endurance, remain faithful, and finish well.

As men, we carry responsibilities—to God, to our families, to our churches, to our communities, and to the generations that will follow us.

The world needs men who will stand firm when others compromise, who will have courage when others are afraid, who will persevere when others quit, and who will keep their eyes fixed on Jesus when the road becomes difficult.

The Christian life is not a sprint. It is a race of endurance.

There are times when we need to run. There are times when we need to walk. And there are times when, through God's grace, we simply need to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

What matters is that we keep moving forward.

This devotional has been prepared to encourage you in your race. Each devotional is an opportunity to stop, open God's Word, listen to His voice, examine your heart, and allow Him to strengthen you for the journey ahead.

My prayer is that these pages will help you discover fresh courage when you are afraid, renewed strength when you are weary, and endurance when you feel like

giving up.

Keep running. Keep trusting. Keep believing. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

One day the race will be finished. One day we will cross the finish line. And what a day it will be to hear our Lord say:

"Well done, good and faithful servant."

— *Matthew 25:23*

Until that day.....

RUN TO WIN.

Steve Sparling
Men's Ministry Director



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LESSON ONE

Enduring When Storms Strike

Adapted from "Shipwrecked" series by Rod Loy

1989 was a year of firsts for me. I was newly married and my wife and me were newly hired youth pastors in a small town in the hills of north Arkansas. For the first time, I had to learn to balance my role as a youth pastor and husband. We each had our idea of what a holiday would look like so my first dilemma was trying to figure out how to spend our holidays together. A caveat to this dilemma was that the youth ministry of our district would schedule a mission's trip for the youth of the district to leave the day after Christmas. My wife and I decided that since she was a student in college and could not go to Florida with me to celebrate Christmas with my family that I would go alone a few days before Christmas and spend time with my family for Christmas. Then, when my wife was out of her college class for the semester, she would drive to her parents' home and I would meet her there to celebrate our first Christmas together before I left for my missions' trip.

All was going as planned until my wife was set to leave to go to her parents' house. Her journey would take her down one of the most notorious crooked highways in Arkansas, Highway 7. This was in a day before cell phones and weather apps, so she had no idea of the intensity of the storm that was in front of her. She called our pastor and told him of her plans. He advised her not to make the journey but she was determined to be at her parents' house and with me on our first Christmas.

She began her 85-mile journey down the crooked and step Highway 7, right through the Ozark National Forest. The further she drove down this highway, the heavier the snow became and the less visibility she had. As she began her drive up a steep grade through the Ozark National Forest her car tires began to spin and she began to slide backwards down the road. She backed her car up in order to try one more time to make it over the steep mountain road only to realize that the storm had finally beaten her.

She found herself sitting in her car, in freezing temperatures, with snow blowing all around her. She could not go forward, neither could she return to the warmth of our new home. She was stuck. She had no idea what she was going to do. She did not know how she was going to endure this storm. After sitting there, she looked up to see a house and a convenience store and smoke coming from the house's chimney. She was able to pull her vehicle into the parking lot and walk through the door.

She was face to face with a man, who in her words, looked like a “sketchy hippy” at best. She told him the story of her journey in the midst of this storm and asked if she could spend the night. He agreed to let her do so. She called our pastor and her parents to let them know she was okay and what her plans were. The “sketchy, hippy dude” at the convenience store showed her the room she could sleep in for the night. He asked her if there was anything else she needed before he left to go sleep in a teepee that was outside the store. My wife noticed there were no locks on the door, and began to wrestle with all kinds, of thoughts about what could happen that night in the midst of the storm.

The next morning after the storm, she noticed the roads had been cleared by a road crew and she would be able to make it to her parents’ house. She thanked the man for his kindness and left for home. When she told her story to her parents and me, we decided we would go back and thank the sketchy man in the teepee who lived on Highway 7. Enduring the storm was a great miracle. However, she would soon discover an even greater miracle.

A few weeks later, we were able to go and thank the “sketchy, hippy dude.” When we found the place she spent the night, we went into the convenience store and asked to speak to the man who lived in the teepee. Only to find out that on the night the storm struck and my wife was not sure how she could endure through the storm, the owners were in another state for the holidays and no one lived in the teepee. To this day, we

are convinced that God sent an angel to watch over my wife in the midst of a storm and give her the endurance she needed to survive.

What we learned from our first storm experience is that storms are interesting to watch, but frightening to experience. When you are facing storms of life, the storms that happen without warning, that are not your fault, and you feel like will never end, God will give you endurance to make it through the storm when it strikes. This lesson is designed to help you develop endurance to survive a personal storm.

COURAGE

C1: What are your thoughts as you read/heard the introduction?

C2: Describe a time in your life when you felt like you were in a situation and there was no way out.

C3: What are some steps you can take to survive a natural storm? What is your plan to survive the storms that come in life? Storms that were not your fault? Storms you could not avoid?

C4: Read **Acts 27:1–9 (ESV)** ¹ And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. ² And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. ³ The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. ⁴ And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. ⁵ And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷ We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. ⁸ Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. ⁹ Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

- What are some lessons you can discover from the life of Paul as you endure a personal storm?

STRENGTH

S1: Read **Acts 27:1-3 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being not often and 4 being a lot, how well do you ask for help when you are going through a difficult season of life? Why did you respond the way you did?

S2: What are some cliché's you hear when you are going through a storm? How well do these cliché's help you endure through the storm? Why do you think our first response in a storm is to give a cliché?

S3: Read **Acts 27:4-10 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- Have you ever been in a horrible storm and tried to pretend the storm was not there? Why do you think it is difficult to be realistic when you are going through a storm?

ENDURANCE

E1: Read **Acts 27:14-22 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- What is the difference between being realistic and speaking in faith?

E2: Write out some ways you can speak faith while you are trying to endure through your storm.

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being often and 4 being not often, how often do you speak words of faith in your storm? How can you improve your Faith Speaking?

E3: Read **Acts 27:23-25 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- Why was Paul able to speak words of faith to help him endure his storm?
- What are some of the phrases you hear when you are trying to endure a storm?
- Write out a plan to help you endure the storm that comes to your life.

E4: Find a quiet room and read aloud or listen to someone read **Isaiah 41:10-13 (ESV)** and **Psalms 27:1-6 (ESV)**.

- What thoughts do you have as you hear these words?
- How does hearing these words help you to deepen your love of God?

E5: After going through this lesson, how can you practically help someone who is going through a storm of destruction or pain?



LESSON TWO

Enduring Through the Storm with Hope

Adapted from "Shipwrecked" series by Rod Loy

Paul understood storms. While on a ship headed to Rome to stand trial, he wound up shipwrecked. You may not be facing a literal shipwreck but nonetheless you are facing a storm. When you are in the middle of a storm; fear, anger, and discouragement may seem like the emotions you readily exhibit. How do you survive the storms that come your way? Thomas Chisholm reminded us of a powerful way to make it through a storm with a poem he wrote. Read the following history of his great poem "Great Is Thy Faithfulness:"

Thomas Chisholm was born in a simple log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, in 1866. Lacking a high school education or any college training, he became a school teacher at the age of 16 and later entered the newspaper business.

The following years found him ordained a pastor, but poor health forced him to leave the ministry. After a time of recuperation, he moved to New Jersey to work as an insurance agent.

A prolific writer of poetry, he sent a collection of his poems in 1923 to his good friend William Runyan, a musician associated with Chicago's Moody Bible Institute, who also worked for a hymnal publishing company.

While on a trip to Baldwin, Kansas, Runyan leafed through the poems sent by Chisholm and was immediately taken in by the depth of meaning and lyrical beauty of the words found in the poem "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Years later, Runyan recalled, "This particular poem held such an appeal that I prayed most earnestly that my tune might carry over its message in a worthy way."

Out of a simple prayer, Runyan's melody took shape, and the completed hymn was published by Runyan that same year.

The hymn's first verse is a simple expression of God's unchanging faithfulness, based on Lamentations 3:22 (KJV): "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

Verse two continues with an expression of God's

faithfulness to us in the natural world He created—the changing of the seasons, the movements of the celestial bodies—all joining together in praise to their Creator.

The hymn culminates in the final verse with the testimony of peace that comes through redemption, God’s abiding presence in our daily lives, and the blessed hope of heaven.

The refrain echoes the infinite faithfulness of God to extend mercy and compassion: “They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:23, KJV).

Looking back on the writing of the hymn, Chisholm recalled in 1941, “My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.”¹

When storms rage, find a quiet place to get alone with God and His Word. He will faithfully teach you how to endure through the storms of your life with hope. This lesson is designed to help build your faith in the midst of a storm.

¹ Eric Wyse, *The History of “Great is Thy Faithfulness.”* January 01, 2014, Lifeway <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/the-history-of-great-is-thy-faithfulness> (accessed March 6, 2019).

COURAGE

C1: What are your thoughts as you read/heard the introduction?

C2: List some emotions you have felt when you have gone through a storm in life?

C3: On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very often and 4 being not very often, how well do you reach out to others when you are going through a storm? Why did you respond the way you did?

C4: Read **Acts 27:25–26 (ESV)** 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we must run aground on some island.” and answer the following:

- How does focusing on others help you endure through your storm?
- Why is it hard to focus on others when you are living through your own storm?

STRENGTH

S1: Read **2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- When is God's power revealed in your life?
- How does this verse help you endure through the storms of life?

S2: Read **Acts 27:27-29 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- Why do you think Luke wanted you to know that they were in a storm for 14 nights?
- Have you ever been in a storm that lasted an extended time? Were you able to maintain your hope in the midst of storm? Why or why not?

S3: Read **Acts 27:30-31 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very often and 4 being not often, how often have you tried to take a shortcut when you were trying to endure through a storm? What lessons did you learn from trying to take a shortcut? Why is it hard for you to do what is right in the midst of the storm?

ENDURANCE

E1: Read **Acts 27:33-34 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, how well do you take care of yourself physically? Write out a plan to improve.

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, how well do you take care of yourself emotionally? Write out a plan to improve.

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, how well do you take care of yourself spiritually? Write out a plan to improve.

E2: Why do you think it is important to take care of yourself when you are trying to endure a storm?

E3: Read **Acts 27:35 (ESV)** and answer the following:

- Paul is in the same storm as the rest of the people, yet Paul gets some bread and before he eats it, he prays in front of everyone. Write out a prayer you think Paul might have prayed while he was trying to endure the storm.

- Take 15 minutes and write out some things you can give thanks for today. What emotions do you feel?
- What are some ways you can stay thankful in the midst of your storm?

E4: Find a quiet room and either sing or listen to the old hymn "Great is thy Faithfulness." How does hearing this song help you to deepen your love of God?

E5: After going through this lesson, how can you practically help someone with hope who is going through a storm of destruction or pain?

