

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 67

Dearest Grandchild,

Last week we talked about John Colter's race for his life, and Andy Payne's race for a \$25,000 prize. Today's letter will deal with another race. The lesson from this race involves persistence. God is on your side, and you will receive the victor's crown if you do not give up.

Wise King Solomon wrote: **"The race is not to the swift . . ."** (Eccl 9:11) I'm sure you have heard about the proverbial race between the tortoise and the hare. Well, this true story from history teaches the same lesson.

Every year Australia hosts an endurance race from Sydney to Melbourne. This ultra marathon is 543.7 miles long. The typical contestants are world class athletes under 30 years of age. Most are sponsored by multinational corporations. It is one of the most grueling athletic events in the world.

When the race began on April 27, 1983, the field included world racing champions like the famous Siggy Bauer who had previously set a 1,000 miles world record in South Africa. Radio and television luminaries were also there to cover the event. To the surprise of everyone, one of the contestants was a 61 year old potato farmer named Cliff Young. He had no sponsors, no special training, no fancy uniform, and no racing shoes. His support vehicle was a rusty panel van driven by a friend nicknamed "Wobbles". This moniker was given because he once had polio and couldn't walk right.

Cliff's training involved growing up on a large farm and helping take care of 2,000 sheep. When the storms rolled in Cliff would sometimes run for two or three days chasing down the lost sheep. He didn't seem to be a world class athlete. He was merely an unmarried potato farmer living at home with his mother. His diet included lots of boiled potatoes, pumpkin, spaghetti, and egg flips. There was no need to test him for performance enhancing drugs. He did choose, however, to run without his false teeth as their clacking annoyed him. He also chose to run with long pants to hide his varicose veins which he said "hung down like grapes". He did, however, cut some holes in his pants to provide ventilation. When the race started the professionals quickly left Cliff behind. Cliff didn't even run like everyone else. He ran with a strange "shuffle". Some feared for the old man's safety. The typical routine for the professionals was to run for 18 hours and sleep for 6. Since Cliff was not a professional he chose not to sleep. In the morning people were surprised to find that Cliff was still in the race. He had jogged all night down to a city called Mittagong.

After the first day Cliff was still far behind, but he kept on running. When he got to a town called Albury he was asked about his tactics. Cliff said he would keep running until he finished. He did! Every night he got just a little bit closer to the leaders. By the last night, he passed all of the others, and by the last day, he was 9 hours in front of them. He finished the race in 5 days, 14 hours,

and 35 minutes, shattering the previous record by more than two days.

He was surprised when he was given the \$10,000 prize money. He didn't even know about it. Consequently, he decided to give \$2,000 each to 5 other contestants and kept nothing for himself.

Most of his life Cliff ran in heavy and awkward gumboots. When he received his first pair of professional running shoes he said that he ran so fast that it took him 200 meters to slow down and stop. Today the "Young Shuffle" has been adopted by other ultra - marathon runners as being more energy efficient. Further, modern competitors who want to win, also choose to run without sleep as did Cliff Young. But most of all, Cliff reminds us that "the race is not to the swift". There is something to be said for those of us who are slow, if we keep on running to the finish line.

**"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." (1 Cor 9:24-27)**

REMEMBER! THE RACE IS NOT TO THE SWIFT! God does not grade on a curve or compare you with others. As long as you don't quit, and are faithful until death, you will receive the crown of life (Rev/ 2:10).

Here is a brief video about this amazing man

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGFA2N0oS1Q>

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce