



The Race

By Lucy Wall

I was having a conversation one day with a group of people who were a mix of Christians and non Christians. We were discussing the rather sobering subject of sin and judgement and one man's comment really stood out to me. He was looking into Christianity at the time and as he was listening to what others were saying on the topic he spoke up and said,

"I totally get that people like Hitler and other murderers deserve judgement, I understand that. I agree that rapists, pedophiles and people who do awful things absolutely deserve to be judged but my issue is when I hear that ordinary people like me are going to be judged too. I don't think I deserve judgement because I'm not a bad person."

I really appreciated the young man's honesty and felt I could relate to his issue because I remembered saying something very similar myself before I gave my life to Jesus. I began to share an analogy with the group that I hoped would help shed some light on the Biblical view of "good and bad people" and what the standard is for going to Heaven when we die. A couple of months later I felt the Lord putting it on my heart to turn this analogy into a poem and soon found myself writing "The Race."

Something else that I felt was very important to share with the group that day and also with anyone reading this poem is that God loves us and wishes that none should perish. As the Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9,

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

God wants us to be in Heaven with Him in eternity, it's why He sent His Son Jesus to die on the Cross to pay for our sins.

There are so many angles for discussion when it comes to sin and judgement and too many for me to go into here! My hope is that this poem might help us as we take on the challenging task of looking at ourselves truthfully in relation to sin and get us thinking about what it is Jesus has achieved for us through His death and resurrection.

Such wonderful weather! A jolly fine day!
Soon the excitement would get underway.
A marvellous challenge across wind and sea.
Competitors numbering one, two and three.

Each was attempting to swim every mile
And so they embarked on their watery trial!
"Aim for the prize!" was the thought to embrace.
"Bang!" went the gun and so off went the race!

Forwards they dashed with a call to be brave
As each of them dove through the very first wave.
With cheers from the seashore starting to dim,
Disaster arose only two miles in!

"Alas! It goes badly!" the first swimmer cried.
"Just double your efforts!" the second replied.
But sadly he couldn't, his muscles were spent.
So down to the depths the first swimmer went.



The second and third journeyed on at a rate,
Quite unaware of the first fellow's fate!
Onwards they traveled when just up ahead
They noticed a flag in a bold shade of red.

Their hearts filled with glee as they cut through the spray;
The ten mile marker! They'd made it half way!
But just as their strokes passed the little red flag
The second discovered he'd started to lag.

"Alas! It goes badly!" the swimmer cried out.
"Just swim!" cried the third "For there's no room for doubt!"
But his limbs were too weary, his joints had grown tight.
He dipped from the surface and sank out of sight.

On went the third with such gusto and strength,
He felt quite assured he could swim any length!
The sight that awaited him filled him with joy
For on the horizon he glimpsed land ahoy!

Steadfast he swam through the foam and the fizz,
Sure that the victory soon would be his!
But though his attempt had been really quite cracking
He suddenly found that his vigour was lacking!

Alas, it went badly so close to the mark!
He'd thought that he'd knock the ball clear out the park!
The race had been lost in spite of his wishes
So down went the third one to sleep with the fishes.

A sorrowful ending, it beggars belief!
None would have thought they could come to such grief.
So as our competitors meet with their end
Let's look at the moral together dear friend.

One did quite badly, the second okay,
The third was an inch from the end you could say!
One awful, one average, one glowing report!
But *all three* performances sadly fell short.

No trophy was lifted, no medal received.
The outcome was not what they would have believed!
Though efforts were varied the battle was lost,
All ended up paying the ultimate cost.



Achieving *perfection* they would have prevailed
But none could attain it so all of them failed.
A tale with a lesson for you and for me,
This troubling story has meaning you see.

We've gladly no part in this race full of strife
But how do we fare in the race we call "Life?"
Some are just evil and some are okay
While others are practically saints you might say!

We look to our deeds and achievements to gauge
How "good" or "bad" we'd be deemed in this age.
Although over time our failings may worsen,
Most of us claim that we're "not a bad person."

Stating our virtues, we couldn't be "gladder."
We'd probably place ourselves high up the ladder!
Judging our actions when next to our brothers
We measure ourselves by comparing to others.

We look down our noses though nobody should
And *always* find someone who makes us feel "good!"
Scorning our flaws which we'd rather excuse,
God must have heard every reason we use!

"He murdered millions *and* had affairs!
I've *never* fallen to such evil snares!
I can't believe I'll be judged for my sin.
Blameless I'm not but I'm better than *him*!"

"I don't really care what it says in God's Book,
The sins I've committed He'll just overlook!
I give to charity *and* feed the poor!
This claim that I'm "wicked" I cannot endure!"

But God doesn't judge us with balancing scales,
This incorrect view is the tallest of tales.
It seems that His law has been misunderstood,
Our wickedness can't be outweighed by our "good."

Though genuine kindness *is* pleasing to Him,
No one's "good deeds" can cover their sin.
This is a thought that needs some correction,
All come up short for the mark is *perfection*!



Works cannot save us, they will not suffice;
The standard is *Jesus*, the plumb line is Christ.
No one can claim to be empty of sin,
All of us fail when we stand next to **Him**!

His law is to show us that each is a sinner
But those found in Jesus come out as the winner!
It's why God invites us to open our eyes,
To trust in our Saviour and share in *His* prize!

No matter what glorious traits we've displayed,
The glory is *His* for by grace we are saved!
Though generous acts bring praise to God's Throne
Our hope and our faith are in Jesus alone.

Come, let us question and reason together;
Where are the ties that we really must sever?
Where is our confidence? Where is our boast?
What are the strengths we rely upon most?

Let us know *now* that to gain the reward,
We look to none other than Jesus our Lord!
Run with endurance to conquer life's race
And thanks to Christ Jesus we'll end in first place!

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift from God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Philippians 3:8-9

"...that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith."

Romans 3:10

"There is none righteous, no, not one."

Romans 3:20

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for the law is the knowledge of sin."

Romans 3: 23-24

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."