



Letters About Perseverance

Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-16

"Welcome back to the Mail Center!" Ranger Reggie greeted the campers. "I have good news. Ranger Drosselmeyer stopped by and fixed Safari Sam's jeep! I didn't even know he used to be a mechanic. It just goes to show what can happen when you keep your faith focused on God!"

Safari Sam jogged steadily through the Mail Center and up to the counter. "Hut-2-3-4! Hut-2-3-4!" he called out, as he trotted behind the counter to join Ranger Reggie.

"Hi, Safari Sam! What are you doing?" Ranger Reggie asked.

"Can't talk," Safari Sam turned and jogged around the Mail Center again. "Have to stay focused. Hut-2-3-4! Hut-2-3-4!"

Ranger Reggie just stared. "What are you doing?"

"I'm focusing," Safari Sam called out. "I'm getting in shape to beat Ranger Drosselmeyer."

"Why, did your car break down again?" Ranger Reggie asked, laughing.

"No," Safari Sam assured him as he stretched a bit. Then, he started jumping in place. "He replaced the starter and now Superstar Sally is riding super smooth!"

"Then, why do you want to beat him?" Ranger Reggie asked.

Safari Sam ran past him and waved a flyer in his face. "Take a look at this!"

Ranger Reggie caught the paper and read the headline, "Join Us for the Ranger Runaround Rally Race!"

Safari Sam crossed his arms. "It's the biggest ranger race of the summer and I'm going to win it!"

"That's great, Safari Sam!" Ranger Reggie exclaimed. "It says here the winner gets a thousand dollar prize to give to his favorite charity. Is that why you're running the race?"

Safari Sam looked surprised. "It does?" Sam asked. "To be honest, I didn't even know about the prize. I just want to beat Drosselmeyer."

Ranger Reggie sighed. "Are you still upset with him? Even after he fixed your jeep?"

Safari Sam looked down sheepishly. "I know. And, I am thankful, it's just . . . why does he get to be the best at everything?! He's the best at volleyball, he's the best at jeep fixing, he's the best Bible teacher . . ."

"Excuse me?" Ranger Reggie scowled.

"Well, second best, after you," Safari Sam corrected. "My point is that just once I want to see him lose. With these long legs of mine, I know I can outrun him!"

Ranger Reggie just shook his head. "Oh Safari Sam, you are focused on the wrong thing."

"Oh, yeah? Now, I suppose you are going to tell me there is a letter in the Bible about racing." Safari Sam rolled his eyes.

"As a matter of fact, there is! Let me show you since it's Mail Time!" Ranger Reggie found the Bible in the mailbag and opened it to Hebrews 12:1. He read, "'Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross . . .'"

"What does that mean?" Safari Sam interrupted.

"Perseverance is a big word that means never give up. This letter is telling us to have the right focus and to pay close attention to Jesus. We should be just like Jesus. He kept His eyes on the finish line," Ranger Reggie exclaimed.

"What finish line?" Safari Sam asked.

"Heaven!" Ranger Reggie explained. "Jesus knew the only way we could be in heaven with Him is if He sacrificed Himself for our sins."

"Oh, so Jesus was willing to die on the cross because it was worth the prize?" Safari Sam asked.

"Yes! Paul tells us to keep our eyes on the finish line and that being more like Jesus is the prize," Ranger Reggie continued.

Safari Sam punched his fist victoriously in the air. "I've got my eyes on this finish line! When I cross it, I'm going to laugh while Drosselmeyer cries his little eyes out!" Safari Sam pretended to wipe tears from his eyes.

Ranger Reggie put his hand on Safari Sam's shoulder. "Oh no, Safari Sam, you're still missing the point. There are so many better reasons to win the race."

"Name one," Safari Sam demanded.

"Well, for one thing you get to give the prize money to your favorite charity. You could give the money to help people in need and use your talents to glorify God!" Ranger Reggie suggested.

Safari Sam nodded. "Well, I guess you're right."

"Of course, I'm right. It's just like the letter Orville was showing me this morning." The campers called Orville. He swooped over their heads and dropped a message egg into Ranger Reggie's hands before crashing into the window.

"Wow, Orville had his eyes on the target!" Safari Sam joked, as the bird stood up with a shake and flew back up to his nest.

Ranger Reggie opened the egg and removed the paper inside. "Here is Orville's message. It's from Paul's letter to the Philippians." He read, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things."

"So, you're saying I should focus on God instead of focusing on hurting Ranger Drosselmeyer's feelings," Safari Sam said with a sheepish grin.

Ranger Reggie patted him on the back. "It's always the right choice to keep our focus on God!"

"I bet our featured creature knows how to focus on the finish line!" Safari Sam guessed.

"Let's find out!" Ranger Reggie answered. "Wild William, who is today's featured creature?" Wild William mysteriously appeared at the back of the barn and announced, "Swift and mighty by design, he gallops toward the finish line."

"I know an animal that focuses on the finish line and gallops! It's a racehorse!" Ranger Reggie proudly announced. At that moment, Ranger Reggie realized Wild William was headed for the horse stalls. Before Ranger Reggie could move, Wild William had opened a stall and a muscular black horse lunged out, galloping up the walkway toward the Mail Center. Mane and tail streaking behind him, the horse leapt into the room and over the counter, knocking Ranger Reggie down in the process. "Ow! That hurts! Ouch! Ooh! Ah!" He fell to the ground, clutching his head.

Safari Sam grabbed the horse's reigns and brought him under control. "Ranger Reggie! Are you okay?"

"Oh sure, he only kicked me in the head," Ranger Reggie replied sarcastically. He winced and tried to sit up. "Hey Orville, come on down!"

Safari Sam looked concerned. "Ranger Reggie, we already read Orville's message."

"Was it good?" Ranger Reggie groaned.

"Oh yes, it was great!" Safari Sam assured him. He handed the horse's reigns to a nearby counselor.

"Wow, that horse kicked you really hard. You'd better lie down."

Ranger Reggie leaned against a chair leg. "I can't. I must lead us in the Camp Venture Camper's Code," he murmured.

"You lie down, Ranger Reggie," Safari Sam instructed, "and I'll lead the code." He motioned for the campers to stand and raise their right hands.

They recited the code together. "I will love God with all my heart. I will love my neighbor as myself. I will be a light wherever I go!"

When they were done, Safari Sam helped Ranger Reggie to his feet. "I'm taking you to see the camp nurse!" Safari Sam slowly led his injured friend out the door as the campers began filing out to enjoy another sunny day at Camp Venture.