



"The mighty oak was once a little nut that stood its ground."
—Anonymous

14-Mar-14

Determination (Part Two)

Tatyana McFadden was born with spina bifida, but today she is a Paralympic athlete, competing in the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia. When she was a child in the Russian orphanage, she would undoubtedly have loved to have a wheelchair, but the experience without one strengthened her arms and gave her the physical stamina she would need for her life's later adventures. In similar fashion, the trials that we go through in this life help to shape and mold us to become perfect for the position that [God](#) has in store for us in the [Kingdom of God](#).

The apostle Paul writes in [Hebrews 2:10](#), "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Bringing it down to our level, the same apostle writes in [Romans 8:18](#), "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

No one would have blamed Tatyana for feeling sorry for herself and her condition. She could have lived her life as a ward of the Communist state until she reached age 16, when she would have been turned out of the orphanage. Had that happened, she would have been a person that few

people knew or cared about, one that history surely would have soon forgotten.

Yet, even in her desperate straits, Tatyana did not perceive that her condition was without hope. Given the opportunity, and with her own personal dedication as well as the encouragement of her mother, she worked tirelessly to strengthen her body to a healthy condition—and her determination has paid off. She has gone well beyond the point of mere fitness; she has worked her body to the point of being what the *Baltimore Sun* describes as a "world-class" athlete.

Tatyana competes to win. Paul exhorts us in [I Corinthians 9:24-25](#): "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. . . . Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." Incidentally, the New King James Version margin reads that the word *obtain* means "win"!

There are videos of Tatyana on YouTube.com in which she describes her daily regimen. While she is attending school at the University of Illinois, pursuing a degree in Human Development, she attends classes in the morning. She usually tries to schedule them so that she is done by noon.

With classes over, she then spends the rest of the day in studying and training. Her training includes push-ups, pull-ups, weight lifting, wheelchair racing, and more. She does this training with other serious, competitive athletes *every single day*. How many times have we heard of the importance of our *daily* study, as well as the counsel to help our brethren because "iron sharpens iron" ([Proverbs 27:17](#))?

Tatyana says that she wanted to prove that "with training, hard work and dedication you can be the best," and she also challenges us with the admonition, ". . . if you don't train, you are not going to be the best." Because her desire to win is so important, she does not let anything stand in her way. She also gives some great advice by stressing the vital importance of time-management.

Tatyana arranges her life so that she has time set apart to train in her calling. She believes that sports saved her, admitting that she does not know what her

life would be like without it. The same is true for us. God has given us a calling that demands our devotion. When Christ returns, He will reward the overcomers (see [Revelation 2:7](#), 11, 17, 26, etc.). Some will have grown thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred ([Matthew 13:8](#), 23)—dare we say bronze, silver, and gold (see [I Corinthians 3:12](#))? We have to consider, since we assume that God's Spirit has been planted on good ground, how much will we produce?

Tatyana also sets for us an example of forgiveness. Few of us have been abandoned by our parents, but she has gone far beyond just forgiving her mother: She has welcomed her back to share the joys of her life. The December 2003 *Forerunner* "Ready Answer" speaks to this Christian practice:

It is very difficult to "[love](#)," "bless," "do good," and "pray" for a person who has hurt us deeply. It goes against our human nature to behave positively toward someone we feel deserves shame, censure, and punishment! Putting this principle into practice is a high hurdle for any Christian to clear. Yet, as Christians, we know that forgiveness is one of the keys that [Jesus](#) taught for healing. Not only is it a teaching—it is also a command. (*The Tongue: Our Tool of Power*)

Recall that Tatyana states that sports was her salvation. It is her reason for living. *She desires to win*, not only for her own good, but to set an example for others to follow. Life for Tatyana really began when her adoptive mother brought her home to the United States. Speaking about her early childhood experiences, Tatyana said that she was given life twice, once through birth and the second time through adoption.

For Christians, God has acted to save us. It is *our* reason for living. God has brought us to His home and into His Family ([Colossians 1:13](#)). He has also twice given us life. We have been born physically and been made a new creation, and our *real* life begins now, as we learn to live God's way of life.

To an extent, we have control of our ultimate outcome. Paul writes, ". . . I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. . . . I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in

Christ Jesus" ([Philippians 3:12](#), 14). In addition, this is our opportunity to show those that follow us toward the Kingdom of God "just how it is done"!

We are now in the competition of our lives. We are not competing against others, but against ourselves. Following Tatyana McFadden's example of passion, earnestness, and nearly unrivaled determination, we must work with our Father, compete to win, and "go for the gold"!

[On March 12, 2014, Tatyana captured a silver medal in the the women's 1-kilometer sit sprint (cross-country skiing) at the Winter Paralympics in Sochi. Earlier in the week, she finished fifth in the 12.5-kilometer sit race.]

- John Reiss

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[Endure as a Good Soldier](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The cultural mindset in Israelitish nations has weakened, negatively influenced by affluence and cynicism, which has undermined our ability to endure hardship and sacrifice in pursuit of a worthy national goal. Instead of discipline, indomitable will and character with pure national goals, we have opted for self-indulgence, laxity, and compromise. In God's plan, the development of uncompromising character requires struggle and sacrifice. Our victory over Satan requires continual drill, tests and development of internal discipline. Like the military, the victory is built incrementally in the mind; the warfare is the drill. (Luke 16:10)

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Discouraged? Why?](#)

by Staff

As God's children, we have no need to become discouraged for long. God has given and done so much for us that we have no reason to get down.

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