89 To Run (*Currere*)

Augustine in his little book, *De perfeccione iusticie,* chapter 19,[[1]](#endnote-1) says that everyone who runs rightly, apprehends rightly, not like in a theatrical contest, where all run, but one accepts the prize. Therefore, 1 Cor. 9[:24]: “So run that you may obtain.” Wherefore, it is to be understood here that it is one thing to run, another to walk.[[2]](#endnote-2) For one proceeds more expeditiously who runs than one who walks. Therefore, those who follow God not only ought to walk in his precepts by living, but to run in his counsels. Concerning walking in his precepts it is said in Psal. [142:8]: “Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk.”

¶ Concerning those running, see the Psal. [118:32] says the same, “I have run the way of your commandments.” Delay (*dilatacio*) calls forth one to fulfill the counsels, just as to the letter an enlarging (*dilatacio*) of the heart calls forth man to run. This enlarging happens through the imposed commandment of charity which is greatly effective and calls one forth to greater things.

¶ On the dangerous way, either from thieves or from the chasms, it is safer for the one going hastily to run than to walk. Thus, because the way of this life in the commandments is perilous, either from infernal thieves or from the chasms of this world, it is safer for the one going hastily to run in the counsels, Isai. 55[:5]: “the nations that knew not you shall run to you, because of the Lord,” etc. And chapter 40[:31]: “They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

¶ And because that one who carries the burden, although he can walk on both sides, however he cannot run. Therefore, Peter for himself and all the disciples said, Matt. 19[:27]: “Behold we have left all things and have followed you.” Upon which word well and opportunely he says truly, “we have left,” and because Christ leaped up like a giant for running the way, he could not follow the running one being burdened. In figure that many of the running ones are saved as well as the ones walking, it is read, 3 Kings 4[:26], that king Solomon had more horse chariots than equestrians.

¶ For, of chariots he had forty thousand, but of equestrians in truth only ten thousand.

¶ But here it is to be noted that a runner before he runs eats moderately and disburdens himself. Thus, anyone of us ought moderately to enter upon, to visit and taste of the world. For our “days have been swifter than a post,” Job 9[:25] and Prov. 4[:12]: “When you run you shall not meet a stumbling-block.”

Concerning the way of running is treated above in Chapter [49] Charity (*Caritas*).

¶ Again, it is to be noted that a blind man never runs well for long without stumbling. Wherefore, Tobias senior, “that was blind, began to run stumbling with his feet,” Tob. 11[:10]. Thus, it is he who through sin is blinded does not run rightly to God. Therefore, he says to the Heb. 12[:1]: “Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us.” All things which are under God run counter to the earth in which is hell, according to common opinions, and which has the vilest qualities, namely, coldness and dryness. Thus, all things, counter to the earth and terrestrial matters, run to God, counter to men are terrestrial things which are frigid and dry, without the heat of love and without the moisture of devotion.

¶ A whale emits from its mouth the sweetest odor so that sensing it all the fish run near to it. Thus, Christ emits a sweet odor in teachings and examples so we are drawn to running after him, Can. 1[:3]: “We will run after you to the odor of your ointments.”

¶ Again in a time of war men are accustomed to run with their goods to the castle and to fortified places, but Prov. 18[:10], it is said, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just run to it and shall be” saved. Wherefore, Augustine, the last homily of *Super canonica Joannis*,[[3]](#endnote-3) whoever runs counter to the way runs uselessly, rather he runs to his labor. What is the way through which we run? Christ said, “I am the way.” And what is the fatherland to which we run? Christ said, “I am the truth,” [John 14:6]. Therefore, through him we run, and to him we run, in him we rest. Seneca says, *Epistula* 78,[[4]](#endnote-4) nothing sends a ship along so well as its upper canvas. Thus, nothing helps more to the spiritual course than that which is highest in the ship of our heart if that is elevated to God.

¶ Therefore, running toward the fatherland three things ought to be attended to: the motive, the way, and the method. The motive is triple: fear, love, and opportunity.

The first is fear of sin, just as the rabbit fears the dog, 3 Kings 18[:45]: “Behold the clouds, wind, and rain,” namely, the dropping of the devil, the disturbance of the world, the slackness of the flesh which pursue man. Thus, Elias feared Achab just as there [3 Reg. 18:46] it is said, “and he girded up his loins and ran before Achab.”

Second, the love of the good moves one for running just as reward moves the young runner, money the merchant, Prov. 18[:10]: “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just run to it.” Can. 1[:3]: “We will run after you to the odor of your ointments.” John 20[:4]: “They both ran together,” etc.

¶ Third, opportunity of time and place moves. Thus the driver of a four-horse chariot on a level road and in a beautiful time goes more quickly over the way, Prov. 4[:11-12]: “I will show you the way of wisdom, I will lead you by the paths of equity,” and it follows, “and when you run you shall not meet a stumbling-block.”

The way through which it is to be run is triple.

¶ The first is obedience as far as God, just as the sun runs to the setting, the slave to the nod of his lord, Psal. [118:32]: “I have run the way of your commandments.” Thus Samuel “ran to Heli,” [1] Kings 3[:5]. So, it was not that one about whom, Job 15[:26]: “He has run against the Lord with his neck raised up.”

The second way is of mercy as far as our neighbor, spiritual as well as corporal. Thus Abraham “ran to meet” the angels, Gen. 18[:2]. And certainly, spiritually in teaching and correcting, Prov. 6[:3]: “Run about, make haste, stir up your friend.” It is not so for that one about whom, Prov. 1[:16]: “Their feet run to evil.”

¶ The third way of uncleanness is as far as the runner himself. Thus, the sun runs and the angel through the world and they are not infected by the evil smells of the places, Psal. [58:5]: “Lord, without iniquity have I run, and directed my steps.” And 1 Cor. 9[:26]: “I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty.”

¶ The example of the poet Ovid concerning Atalanta and the apples.[[5]](#endnote-5)

The way of running is triple: Because eagerly as the child to the nipple, Psal. [61:5]: “They have thought to cast away my price; I ran in thirst.” Jer. 2[:23]: “Know what you have done: as a swift runner pursuing his course.”

¶ Second, it is to be run patiently just as a soldier in tournament, Heb. 12[:1]: “Laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us.” Thus, martyrs run.

¶ Third, perseveringly, just as the runner to the goal, [1] Cor. [9:24]: “So run that you may obtain.” [2] Tim. 4[:7]: “I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course.”

¶ Again, note that some things are required in that running and some things in that course.

¶ In the running are required that the runner himself be agile in body, unfettered by a burden, and not impeded in the way. Concerning the first, see Joel 2[:4]: “They shall run like horsemen.” Concerning the second, [3] Kings 19[:20]: “He forthwith left the oxen and ran after Elias.” Concerning the third, Gal. 5[:7]: “You ran well, who has hindered you, that you should not obey the truth?”

¶ Again, in the course some things are required because the course ought to be discrete and right, fervent and fast, persevering and continuous.

¶ Concerning the first, it ought to be discrete so that impediments are to be avoided. For “every one that strives for the mastery, refrains himself from all things,” namely, impediments, [1] Cor. 9[:25]. And Matt. 19[:27]: “Behold we have left all things.”

Second, the course ought to be straight, for, thus, “Achimaas running by a nearer way,” [2] Reg. 18[:23]. Where note that the way of the commandments is like the public highway; the way of the counsels as if a narrow pathway; the way of supererogation as if the nearer way through which sometimes he is slower.

¶ The example is of the thief on the cross.

Third, the course ought to be fervent and hurried, Psal. [61:5]: “I ran in thirst,” that is, in a fervent desire. Thus, ran Mary Magdalene, Isai. 40[:31]: “They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles,” not as an ostriches run and not as they labor.

¶ Therefore, one ought to hurry because we have a lot to say and the time is brief, Heb. 4[:11]: “Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest.” Wherefore, Bernard,[[6]](#endnote-6) the time past is irrevocable, the time present is unstable, the time future is inconceivable. The same,[[7]](#endnote-7) let us hasten into that rest to the place, namely, of safety, to the sweeter pasture, to the field more bountiful.

Fourth, the course ought to be persevering and continuous. For is it not said that it is the end that crowns and not the fight. And Gregory, in the *Moralia*,[[8]](#endnote-8) for vain is the good that we do, if it be given over before the end of life, but there are others who run quickly, like the tiger on the last day, but sometimes they are delayed as the turtles touched by the beautiful stalk of temporal things.

¶ The example of the tiger[[9]](#endnote-9) and the mirror thrown down in the way, Gal. 5[:7]: “You ran well, who has hindered you, that you should not obey the truth?” On account of this already said, it is to be noted that three impede the course lest we receive the reward. First is the torpor of negligence and desire. Wherefore, it is said in the *Vitae Patrum*, c. 7,[[10]](#endnote-10) those navigating, if they have a contrary wind, they do not immediately unload or abandon the ship tossed on the waves, but fighting against the violent wind, at last they find the right course. So also, we, who are in temptations. Second, what impedes is the love of concupiscence. Third is evil. For example, just as the odor of the white thorn impedes a dog from the track of a beast, Psal. [72:2]: “But my feet were almost moved.” The figure in 2 Kings 20[:9-12], all those who were following the army, having seen the killing of Amasa, stood firm.

1. Augustine, *Epistola* 7.19 (PL 44:301): Omnes enim qui recte currunt, comprehendent: non sicut in agone theatrico, omnes quidem currunt, sed unus accipit palmam (I Cor. IX, 24). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Hugh Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium theologicae veritatis* 1.23 (8:78b-79a): Sunt quædam verba quorum nec significatio nec modus significandi Deo convenit ut currere et ambulare nam modus est varia inclinatio animi varios ejus effectus demonstrans. Modus significandi nihil aliud est quam dispositio vocis quæ constituit intellectum sub tali modo intelligendi et per consequens ipsam rem. Cum ergo dicitur de Deo ambulare vel currere et hujusmodi significatio horum prout sunt actu Deo non convenit. Modus autem significandi quamdam importat imperfectionem tionem dico quoad motum qui quidem motus necessitatis convenire non potest. Quædam sunt quorum significatio Deo convenit sed non modus significandi ut creare facere. Quædam sunt quorum significatio et modus significandi Deo convenit ut patet in hoc verbo Exodi: *Qui est misit me ad vos*. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos* 10.1 (PL 35.2054): Qui praeter viam currit, inaniter currit: imo ad laborem currit. Tanto plus errat, quanto praeter viam currit. Quae est via per quam currimus? Christus dixit, Ego sum via. Quae patria, quo currimus? Christus dixit, Ego sum veritas (Joan. XIV, 6). Per illum curris, ad illum curris, in ipso requiescis. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Seneca, *Epistula* 77.2 (LCL 76:168): Nulla enim res aeque adiuvat cursum quam summa pars veli. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.560-572 (LCL 43:104-105):

“‘Forsitan audieris aliquam certamine cursus

veloces superasse viros: non fabula rumor

ille fuit; superabat enim. nec dicere posses,

laude pedum formaene bono praestantior esset.

scitanti deus huic de coniuge “coniuge” dixit

“nil opus est, Atalanta, tibi: fuge coniugis usum.

nec tamen effugies teque ipsa viva carebis.”

territa sorte dei per opacas innuba silvas

vivit et instantem turbam violenta procorum

condicione fugat, “nec sum potiunda, nisi” inquit

“victa prius cursu. pedibus contendite mecum:

praemia veloci coniunx thalamique dabuntur,

mors pretium tardis: ea lex certaminis esto.”

“‘You may, perchance, have heard of a maid who surpassed swift-footed men in the contest of the race. And that was no idle tale, for she did surpass them. Nor could you say whether her fleetness or her beauty was more worthy of your praise. Now when this maid consulted the oracle about a husband, the god replied: “A husband will be your bane, O Atalanta; flee from the intercourse of husband; and yet you will not flee, and, though living, you will lose yourself.” Terrified by the oracle of the god, she lived unwedded in the shady woods, and with harsh terms she repulsed the insistent throng of suitors. “I am not to be won,” she said, “till I be conquered first in speed. Contest the race with me. Wife and couch shall be given as prize unto the swift, but death shall be the reward of those who lag behind. Be that the condition of the race.” [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Bernard, *Sermones de diversis* 106.1 (PL 183.732): Porro tempus in tria dividitur: in praeteritum, in praesens, in futurum. Horum nullum perdit, quisquis recte poenitentiam agit. Nam praeteritum quidem quod perdiderat restaurat, dum in amaritudine animae suae omnes annos suos recogitat: praesens autem tenet jam per exercitium operis: futurum vero per constantiam boni propositi. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum* 33.4 (PL 183.952-53): Festinemus proinde, filii, festinemus ad locum tutiorem, ad pastum suaviorem, ad uberiorem et fertiliorem agrum. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Gregory, *Moralia* 1.37.55 (PL 75.554): Incassum quippe bonum agitur (De poenit., dist. 3, can. 17, incassum), si ante terminum vitae deseratur; quia et frustra velociter currit, qui prius quam ad metas veniat deficit. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 18.102 (1505, p. 477b): Qui autem omnes catulos deferre cupit, specula magna in itinere derelinquit, que mater insequens in via inuenit in eis se intuens, de sua imagine filios esse credit, circa autem sua umbram illic detenta et circa filiorum extractionem de vitro occupata dat raptori pactum fugiendi, et sic per umbram decipiturm ne raptorem pro catulorum liberatione viterius persequatur.

He that will bear away the whelps, leaveth in the way great mirrors, and the mother followeth and findeth the mirrors in the way, and looketh on them and seeth her own shadow and image therein, and weeneth that she seeth her children therein, and is long occupied therefore to deliver her children out of the glass, and so the hunter hath time and space for to scape, and so she is beguiled with her own shadow, and she followeth no farther after the hunter to deliver her children [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. *Vitae patrum*, *Verba seniorum* 7.18 (PL 73.896): Etenim qui navigare coeperint, primo pandentes vela prosperum ventum inveniunt; postea autem contrarius ventus eis occurrit. Sed nautae non mox propter incursum contrarii venti, aut exonerant aut deserunt navim, sed paululum sustinentes aut pugnantes adversus procellam, iterum rectum cursum inveniunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)