

401 MARATHONS

Rob Robinson

Early this month, Ben Smith, a British runner, completed a marathon. What made this so unique is that he had done the same thing the previous day, and the day before that as well. In fact, Smith ran a total of 10,512 miles in 401 consecutive days. In case you don't want to do the math, that's an average of 26.2 miles per day, one full marathon being actually 26.1 miles. His motivation was to raise awareness about bullying in schools, and raise money for anti-bullying charities. Ben says he was bullied for 8 years when in school. Among many qualities, in addition to an elite degree of physical ability, required for such a feat is that of endurance. I used to run what I considered at the time to be long distances, but I never ran a marathon. Of course, running a marathon is not such a unique accomplishment as it once was, but running for 3-4 hours requires much determination and the ability to keep on when pain, fatigue and discouragement set in. To do that for so many consecutive days is even more impressive.

Being a Christian appears to be a normal, everyday accomplishment. But it, too, requires steadfastness and endurance. It's great to start out the Christian life. Remember when you did that? It was exciting and you had great plans for making Jesus your Lord and living your life radically for him. But to finish the race takes more than a great start. It takes something called steadfastness: *"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."* The crown not given for starting the race, but for finishing it. That means you run the race today, and even though it may become difficult, painful, discouraging, boring, tedious, or inconvenient, you run it again the next day. And the day after that. You run by people standing on the side watching, wondering why you do that. But you keep on running every day. *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."* (James 1:12, Hebrews 12:1)