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Starting Too Early

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Track and field was not something that ever interested me as a youth. Let me clarify; it was not something that I cared to participate in. The thought of running around a track, throwing a heavy ball or perhaps seeing how far I could throw a very large "tooth pick" just did not excite me. The reasons could be many but the main one might possibly be that it would have been too much dedication and conditioning than I was willing to pay.

During last year's Summer Olympics, the world stood in awe of a man by the name of Usain "Lightning" Bolt, a 21-year-old Jamaican that impressed the world during the 100-meter race in Beijing. His start was late and he slowed down for the last 20 meters, but still crossed the finish line in just 9.69 seconds with his left shoelaces coming loose. His efforts broke his own world record of 9.72. As fast as Mr. Bolt is, he would have been disqualified and would have lost the race if he "jumped the gun" or left the starting blocks (twice) before the start of the race.

James gives us inspired advice concerning swiftness. We find in the area of listening and responding that we are to be *"swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."* There is to be a swiftness or promptness to hear the words of others, but there must also be a hesitation to act or respond too quickly to a matter. Listening is such a grand quality to have. When we are hurting, depressed or just in need of someone to listen to our concerns or groaning, we value those that listen so well without immediately interjecting their advice. There may be times when we find ourselves in the middle of a dispute. More often than not, instead of being stuck in the middle we hear one side of the story. This has led to more unnecessary pain and suffering for many people. The old saying, "There are always two sides to every story," is true in every case. Those that are good listeners who will be swift to hear and slow to react too soon are coveted.

The proverb writer wisely says *"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him"* (Prov. 18:13). When we consider this verse, it is much the same as a runner jumping too quickly off the blocks. We get to know people so

well that we begin to answer their questions before they utter them. Often, one may begin to take care of a matter before the full matter or problem is well known. This is the folly or foolishness of one that just cannot wait long enough to interject or respond.

Let us all dedicate ourselves to training with a common goal to be better listeners that are patient and considerate. Listeners that are slow to respond harshly. Let us be sure to gain a full understanding of every matter lest we are brought to shame and find that we have jumped the gun and are not able to cross the finish line victorious. The great apostle Paul would say in 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 concerning the Christian race,
"Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."