



## Chariots of Fire

*Dramatized Documentary Movie of Eric Liddell  
Christian Missionary & “Flying Scotsman”  
Commemorates 1924 Olympic Games  
Four Academy Awards 1981 Including Best Picture*



Eric Liddell was son of a Christian missionary family evangelizing China. He was apart from parents for education in Edinburgh University, ultimately preparing for the mission field. In addition to developing spiritually and intellectually, he became famous for athletic achievement in rugby (wing) and then as a runner for England in the 1924 Olympics in Paris at age 22. Although his sister was concerned that running would draw him away from his China mission commitment, he assured her that he was running was for the glory of God, and after the Olympics he would serve full-time in China with her.

Eric’s spirituality was tested in the Olympic Games, where he likely would have won the 100m dash (he had earlier beaten the Jewish Cambridge scholar who did win). Heats for the Hundred were scheduled on Sunday, and Eric felt he could not violate the Sabbath (actually, the Lord’s Day) by seeking qualification in the preliminary heats. Judges would not grant him a waiver on the basis of his firmly held religious conviction. A Cambridge athlete running in a longer race (400m) offered his earned right to compete to Eric, just so he could “see him run.” Eric won that consolation race in world record time.

While in Olympic City, Eric preached in the Church of Scotland on Sunday. He used the occasion to stress the importance of revering God’s laws above laws of the nations. He may have been surrendering the title of World’s Fastest Human (accorded record holders in the 100m dash) by taking a stand for keeping the Sabbath holy as God’s Day of Rest. Eric went to China in 1925 and served until age 43, when he died during internment in a Japanese prison camp. He was active in Christian witness and ministry, sacrificing heroically for lambs of his China homeland (he was born in Tianjin). Eric never again ran in Olympic or world-class athletic events, but he was a world-class Christian.

### *Spiritual Footnote from William C. Patterson, Ph.D. (Kirkpatrick Clan)*

*Notable to me as one also of Scottish descent, is the evidence of a SIGN given by Eric Liddell to the athletic world to refrain from athletic competition on the Lord’s Day. Better would it have been to establish Friday as a day of physical celebration and brotherhood in Christ. Christian Europe was largely built up by 1924 according to God’s covenant with Adam. It would have been reasonable to declare **one less work day** (Friday) among all developed Christian nations, and dedicate it to honoring the men of work, Adam’s race, by glorious athletic endeavor. Who knows whether or not failing to heed Eric Liddell’s admonition about keeping the Sabbath Day led Europe to war, with nations like Germany and Italy believing they have so much surplus labor power they could devote it to making weapons to subdue neighboring Christian nations, destroying much of Adam’s handiwork in the process.*

*I believe God has used Scotsmen, Christian men inhabiting one of the smallest nations on earth, to champion territorial matters down through history on behalf of the advancing Kingdom of God. They seem to leave nearly invisible footprints of great Spiritual significance, seeable in retrospect by spiritually attentive eyes. Eric tried to establish a frontier for athleticism that would not surrender a most holy day to lesser things. Perhaps by the hindsight of a later Scotsman (me!) mankind will win the much awaited four-day work week in Christendom. Let us then hope to claim Friday, the day of our Lord’s unspeakably cruel and grievous labor on the Cross, as the day to celebrate the physical excellence of God’s Sons, by games renown for spirit and humane physical endeavor. The modern athlete is an icon representing ALL the men of history, especially Christian history, who have labored so long and hard without glory, applause, or consummate bodily beautification. They play now for livelihood on behalf of forefathers who knew only work for livelihood, often distressingly strenuous and debilitating, while faithfully filling the earth, taming it, and stewarding in the name of God.*

### *Minutes & Hours Spent in Physical Fitness Training Add Days & Years to Your Life . . . Christ Adds Eternity*

Senior Citizens have a unique leadership opportunity to encourage adoption of a *Four-Day Work Week* by their cheerful practice of **Physical Fitness Fridays**. Businesses following the Elder example and choosing to offer a mercifully shorter work week would free Fridays for *health-enhancing* athletic experiences and attendance at sports events. Athletic Fridays can help to re-direct and re-dedicate Sundays for *rest and Spiritual rejuvenation*. Positioning Americans for a three-day holiday (“holy day”) weekend emulates the Trinity of God: *Fitness Friday* (BODY rejuvenation referencing God the Son) – *Sabbath Saturday* (MIND rejuvenation referencing the Law [Chronicles] of God the Father) – *Resurrection Sunday* (SPIRIT rejuvenation referencing Christ [Anointed One] by God the Holy Spirit).

***Let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Hebrews:12.1***

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***William C. Patterson, Ph.D.***

### **FYI**

Who is the Great Physician? *Psalms:103.1-5*  
Will Life Always be Strenuous? *Matthew:11.28-30*  
Why Was Man Taken from Paradise? *Genesis:3*  
What is God's Rest? *Hebrews:4*  
How Many Jewish & Christian Holidays? *About 175*  
Will We See Eric Run Again? *1 Thessalonians:5.13-18*  
Eric's Scripture Sermon Olympic Sunday *Isaiah:40*  
Physical Excellence vs Spiritual Excellence *1 Timothy:4.8*  
How to Achieve Excellence *2 Timothy:2.5*  
Who Runs With Patience? *Hebrews:12.1-2*  
Population of Scotland? *5.4 million*  
Population of China? *1.4 billion (260X Scotland)*