

The Victor's Crowns 3.19.17 #cccsermons

We live in a sports crazed society. I want you to know, even though we are obsessed about sports, **we are not the first people to be obsessed with sports.**

- It is not by accident that the Apostle Paul uses **SPORTS** metaphors in speaking to the people of Corinth, Greece. The Greeks had two great athletic events -- the Olympic games, which we are very much familiar, and the **Isthmian Games**, which were held at the city of Corinth every three years.
- Paul likens the Christian walk to an athletic **RACE**. Today, we are going to look at **our race that we are running** and how to become a better runner in life.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NIV) ²⁴ *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.* ²⁵ *Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to **get a crown that will not last**; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.* ²⁶ *Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.* ²⁷ *No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

#1 Run to **WIN**. (24)

- Many people believe that all you have to do is accept Christ and **be good** and you'll get into heaven. **Paul is saying here that MORE is expected from us.**
- **Ephesians 2:10** (NIV) *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*
- In a day where everyone receives the **PARTICIPATION** prize, the Bible speaks differently. We are not all equal and neither should we be.
- **2 Corinthians 5:10** (NIV) ¹⁰ *For we **must all appear** before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.* (see also **1 Corinthians 4:5**)
- In fact, in the Parable of the Talents found in **Matthew 25:14-30**, God says that He will reward those who **use** their talents, but He will cast out those who bury their talents.

#2 Run with **SELF-DISCIPLINE**. (25)

- After all, an athlete's **STRENGTH** comes from discipline.
- **We too must be willing to make whatever SACRIFICES there may be to successfully complete the mission that God has set out for us.**
- For without discipline, we too will fail. Self-discipline is extremely important in our Christian development because most of our day **we don't have** anybody telling us what we have to do to live a "winning" Christian life.
- The world and the church is full of naturally brilliant people **who will never be anything more than ordinary** because they aren't willing to make the **SACRIFICE** necessary to become great.
- We need to discipline our **MINDS** (see **Philippians 4:8**)

- We also need to discipline our **BODIES** (see **1 Timothy 4:8**)
- We also need to discipline our **SPEECH** (see **James 1:26**)
- We need discipline our **PRIORITIES**. (see **Matthew 6:33**)
- This victor's crown is given to believers who faithfully run the race, who crucify every selfish desire in the flesh and point men to Jesus. Don't wear yourself out to win trophies that don't last!

#3 Run with **PURPOSE**. (26)

- Don't go through life **AIMLESSLY**. **After all, if you aim at nothing, you hit it every time.**
- Every one of us is unique and designed with purpose for a purpose. How you use your gifts and abilities is your gift back to God.

#4 Run with **CONVICTION**. (27)

- Paul says that he disciplined his body like an athlete in order for others to see **CHRIST** in him and seek salvation.
- Day by day, we **SELECT** the things that are most important to us. Our **MATURITY** as Christians will be determined entirely by our skill in selecting what is most important to us.

So what can we run away with?

#1 We all have the DESIRE to run, but we don't have the DETERMINATION to run it well. We need to avoid becoming spiritually complacent.

- Christian character is **BUILT**.

#2 We don't have to win FIRST, we win by FINISH well.

- Even though in all athletic races only one person wins, in our race we don't have to finish first we just have to finish without stopping or quitting.
- We win based on the **WAY we run the race** (see **2 Timothy 4:7-8**). If we are faithful, then one day we will stand on podium - not for gold medal, but for an opportunity to receive the **crown of righteousness**.

#3 We don't run to win TODAY, we run to win TOMORROW!

- Don't spend your life trying to win trophies that don't last!

#4 We need to understand that days of adversity are going to come, so keep RUNNING disciplined.

- **Don't be fooled:** It's only going to get harder to be a Christian in the last days.
- Solomon once said, *"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."* (see **Proverbs 24:10**).

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV) *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*