

Keep going.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

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English Standard Version

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

In this chapter Paul encourages Christians to willingly give up their "rights" for the good of those who are weak in their faith.

Paul describes himself as an athlete competing for the prize of a crown in eternity. His point is for believers to pursue godliness, and the good of others, with that kind of commitment.

But when we get to

First Corinthians 9:24–27 builds a metaphor comparing Paul's foregoing freedoms, in order to win people to faith in Christ, with an athlete training to win a prize.

Both voluntarily give up things to which they are otherwise entitled. That requires self-sacrifice and a tough approach to one's own feelings.

They do this for the sake of victory. But the athlete can win only a wreath that will quickly die.

In contrast, Paul aims to win a prize that will live forever. He also trains himself in this way to avoid being disqualified before crossing the finish line.

Point 1 – We need to keep the Goal in mind.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

English Standard Version

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it

In that context,

We would agree that in any race, only one runner wins.

So why participate if you're not going to try to win?

Paul is referring only to the effort and dedication exhibited by the athletes: that is what the believer should duplicate in their pursuit of Christ.

Paul urges them to do what it takes to win. But let's be clear that His point is not that only one Christian can succeed, spiritually speaking.

Church we are not in competing with each other we are in the same team

Or that we are in a contest against brothers and sisters in Christ.

We need each other. If you know anything about life is that we are not always strong many of us need help, and even when we think we are strong we still should keep watch on ourselves so that we do not fall.

Galatians 6:1

English Standard Version

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

So I want you think not about just running the race but focus on HOW we run the race.

Paul is urging us believers to run like well-trained athletes who exercise self-control in all things in order to achieve the goal.

I'm sure that most of us in here own a pair of shoes that we call Walking, or running or exercise shoes.

We have set aside a specific shoe to make sure are comfortable when we are going to be walking or running.

But did you know that?
Percentage of American's who own running shoes but don't run: 87% .

I would say but I cannot be certain that as believers as the church in America we treat our bibles the same.

Now for the sake of this point let say we use that same statistic.

Percentage of believers who own a bible but don't read it is: 87%
Or lets says it this way

Percentage of believers who say are Christian but don't live like they are is : 87% .

An athlete that wants to win a race cannot just say they want to win they have to train, they have to invest time, they have to be constantly be reminded the race won't be easy, but if they train it may be doable.

Remember that verse 24 says

^{v24} Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize?

But the last part of this verse says

So run that you may obtain it

In other words, run like you want to win.

The goal is to live for Christ here on earth so that we may live with him in eternity.

The following verses will explore what it takes for runners to win races and for Christians to be successful in living for Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:25

Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Point 2 – We need discipline to maintain.

Paul's point is that such a wreath will soon die.

The honor of winning the race is short-lived.

Christians, though, exercise self-control and self-denial in order to win a crown that will never die.

Believers should seek this with all the dedication of an athlete who knows only one person can win the crown.

Christians don't literally compete "against" one another, of course, so the emphasis here is on commitment and effort, not rivalry.

Paul's teaching is clear: No amount of self-denial or effort will earn for us God's approval and a place in His

family. Jesus earned that for us, and it is given as a gift to those who believe (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Instead, Paul is describing a reward for service to Christ that will be given in addition to salvation. In Paul's case, that recognition from Christ will be because of those he "won" to faith in Jesus.

Often people say “ in heaven I will get my crown” but did you know that there are actually five heavenly crowns that believers can receive in Heaven.

The Greek word translated “crown” is *stephanos* (the source for the name Stephen the martyr) and means “a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally.”

Used during the ancient Greek games, it referred to a wreath or garland of leaves placed on a victor’s head as a reward for winning an athletic contest.

As such, this word is used figuratively in the New Testament of the rewards of heaven God promises those who are faithful.

We will not be able to go into a lot of details this morning. But I do want to give you an overview.

CROWNS

1) The Imperishable Crown – (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

All things on this earth are subject to decay and will perish. But not so the heavenly crown; faithful endurance wins a heavenly reward which is “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).

2) The Crown of Rejoicing – (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

As Christians we have more in this life to rejoice about than anyone else. Think about it we are in actual relationship with the king of kings. We will rejoice in Heaven.

The crown of rejoicing will be our reward where “God will wipe away every tear . . . there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

3) The Crown of Righteousness – (2 Timothy 4:8)

We inherit this crown through the righteousness of Christ which is what gives us a right to it, and without which it cannot be obtained.

Because it is obtained and possessed in a righteous way, and not by force and deceit as earthly crowns sometimes are, it is an everlasting crown, promised to all who love the Lord and eagerly wait for His return.

Now keep in mind that this crown is not for those who depend upon their own sense of righteousness or of their own works. Such an attitude breeds only arrogance and pride, not a longing, a fervent desire to be with the Lord.

4) The Crown of Glory – (1 Peter 5:4)

Though Peter is addressing the elders, we must also remember that the crown will be awarded to all those who long for or love His appearing. This word “glory” is an interesting word referring to the very nature of God and His actions. It entails His great splendor and brightness. Recall Stephen who, while being stoned to death, was able to look into the heavens and see the glory of God (Acts 7:55-56).

But It also recognizes that believers are incredibly blessed to enter into the kingdom, into the very likeness of Christ Himself. For as Paul so eloquently put it, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

5) The Crown of Life – (Revelation 2:10)

This crown is for all believers, but is especially dear to those who endure sufferings, who bravely confront persecution for Jesus, even to the point of death. In Scripture the word “life” is often used to show a relationship that is right with God. It was Jesus who said, “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

We need discipline to maintain our eyes focus on the Jesus and hearts need to be marked with his word.

as His children of God we must keep His commandments, obeying Him, always remaining faithful.

So, as we endure the inevitable trials, pains, heartaches, and tribulations—as long as we live—may we ever move forward, always “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2) and receive the crown of life that awaits us.

Point 3 - We need discipline keep us accountable.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27

²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Now if we can be honest that accountability is not something that I think we naturally like. But we all need it. I have pastors and friends who help me with accountability.

Think about it this way. We were not created to be alone.

We need each other and It be arrogant to say we can do it on our own.

There is much temptation already in the world today, and Satan is always striving to create even more. In the face of such temptation, many Christians seek out an “accountability partner” to pray with and help share the burdens that come with doing spiritual warfare.

Lets look at king David

King David was alone the evening that Satan tempted him into adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11).

The short version of the story

The story of David and Bathsheba is one of the most dramatic accounts in the Old Testament.

One night in Jerusalem, King David was walking upon his rooftop when he spotted a beautiful woman bathing nearby (2 Samuel 11:2). David asked his servants about her and was told she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:39).

Despite her marital status, David summoned Bathsheba to the palace, and they slept together.

Bathsheba later discovered she was pregnant (2 Samuel 11:5), and she informed David. The king's reaction was to attempt to hide his sin.

David commanded Uriah to report back to him from the battlefield. Bathsheba's husband dutifully answered David's summons, and David sent him home, hoping that

Uriah would sleep with Bathsheba and thus provide a cover for the pregnancy.

Instead of obeying David's orders, Uriah slept in the quarters of the palace servants, refusing to enjoy a respite with Bathsheba while his men on the battlefield were still in harm's way (2 Samuel 11:9–11). Uriah did the same thing the next night as well, showing integrity in sharp contrast to David's lack thereof.

It became apparent that David and Bathsheba's adultery could not be covered up that way.

David enacted a second, more sinister plan: he commanded his military leader, Joab, to place Uriah on the front lines of battle and then to purposefully fall back from him, leaving Uriah exposed to enemy attack.

Joab followed the directive, and Uriah was killed in battle.

Not only did David sin sexually but he committed murder to hide that sin.

God's forgiveness is not a license to sin.

His love does not open the door to sin.

His Grace is not a permission to-do whatever we want because who cares he is going to forgive us.

Application – Forgiveness is a gift that only God can give to those who genuinely repent.

Yet David was called a man after God's own heart because he demonstrated his faith and was committed to following the Lord.

Yes, his faith was tested on a grand scale, and he failed at times. But after his sin he sought and received the Lord's forgiveness. In the final analysis, David loved God's Law and sought to follow it exactly. As a man after God's own heart, David is a role model for all of us.

In the account of David and Bathsheba, we find many lessons.

First, secret sin will be found out.
Second, God will forgive anyone who repents.

Third, sin's consequences remain even when the sin is forgiven.

Fourth, God can work even in difficult situations.

In fact, David and Bathsheba's next son, Solomon, became the heir to the throne. Even in bad situations, God has a plan that serves His sovereign purpose.

We should not be playing with God's willingness to forgive us.

1 Corinthians 9:26

So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.

There is dramatic turn in verse 26

Now Paul turns the spotlight on his own training for this prize.

He insists that he does not run aimlessly. His work is very intentional.

Then he includes another common competition of the day, boxing.

Paul writes that he does not train so that he can beat up the air.

Boxers often use "shadow boxing" as a training tool, where they duck and strike against an imagined opponent.

Paul

He is disciplining himself for actual competition.

Ok I'll be honest with you but I have never been a huge sports fan. Don't get me wrong I enjoy a good game and sometimes the game is so good that I'm watching and I may even cheer if our team is doing good.

But there is something that has always secretly made me laugh a little that in most cases its usually the people who are yelling at how bad the coach is or how the players are and that the payer should have done this or done that.

In all reality probably can't play the game good.

I mean it is reasonable to say that.

That if the people yelling in the living rooms at the TV were as good as they think they would be on the field playing the game

Instead of at home with a bucket of chicken?

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Sadly, there are many Christians who do same.
Sit far away and all the do is criticize.

We need more Christians to live for Jesus
We need more believers to share the gospel
We need more Christians to God on mission trips

WE need more Christians to keep going despite what is
going on.

We need more Christians to get into the game!! Stop
running aimlessly and stop beating the air v26

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This is what Paul is saying here

Paul said “I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I
do not fight like a boxer beating the air.”

Paul plans to win the fight, to land some serious blows on
his opponent.

Point 4 - We need discipline to help us to end well.

1 Corinthians 9:27

But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

The Greeks had a race in their Olympic games that was unique.

The winner was not the runner who finished first. It was the runner who finished with his torch still lit. I want to run all the way with the flame of my torch still lit for Him.

Paul remains in this state of continual training because he does not want to be disqualified.

He is not talking about losing his salvation as a result of sin.

Paul's own teaching is very clear that salvation is a gift, not something that comes as a result of strenuous effort

(Ephesians 2:8–9). In other words salvation can't be earned.

The prize he is running for is the crown of recognition from Christ that he has served well.

In his case, this will include the lives of all of those who have believed in Jesus as a result of his preaching.

The context is Paul failing to obtain his goal of winning others, not somehow earning salvation.

This passage is not talking about salvation as the prize. Paul teaches clearly that salvation is a gift, not something that comes as a result of strenuous effort (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Nothing can disqualify a true believer from salvation, but sin can disqualify us from having an impactful testimony (1 Corinthians 9:27).

The prize Paul refers to is Christlikeness.

He wanted to be able to say at the end of his life,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to

**me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing”
(2 Timothy 4:7–8).**

Our faith is not about im saved from hell and I can cruise for my whole life.

Our Christian life is supposed to be a life lived by faith.

Our Christian life is also supposed to be one of death to self in order to live a life by faith.

Our Christian life is also supposed to persevere to the end

So the Christian life is one lived by faith in the God who saved us, empowers us, seals us for heaven, and by whose power we are kept forever. The day-to-day life of faith is one that grows and strengthens as we seek God in His Word and through prayer and as we unite with other Christians whose goal of Christlikeness is similar to our own.

Lets pray.