

Disciplined Running – 1Corinthians 9:24-27

Bible Study ~ 2/15/17

Grace Church of Lockeford

Paul has just finished explaining that everything he does is done with the focus of advancing the gospel message. He became all things to all men that he might by all means save some. In that context, of advancing the gospel at all costs, Paul describes the necessary mindset the believer must have in order to run the race of life well. The “disciplined running” mindset manifests in three distinct areas. **First...**

1. Disciplined Running Understands The Goal v. 24

When runners line up at the starting line to run a race, they know that only one of them will win. What is important on race day is how much preparation you have done. If you come to the race having done nothing, you will not run well. That is the heart of Paul’s illustration here. Everyone runs, one gets the prize. Therefore, we want to run to the best of our ability. We want to run to win the prize! This is a mindset. This is a constant, daily reminder that we run to obtain a prize!

Let’s deal with a question here. What is the prize? V. 25 mentions an imperishable crown. Revelation reveals that crowns are cast at Jesus feet. When we combine these understandings, I believe it is clear that the prize we run for is our personal ability to glorify Christ in eternity! When it comes time to cast my rewards at the feet of Jesus, I don’t want to have a paltry little band. I want to have a Santa Claus sack of crowns to throw at His feet! Why? Because I want to demonstrate how worthy, holy, and awesome our God is! I want to glorify Him to my maximum capacity!

The race we run in the Christian life is not against each other, it is against ourselves. If I do not run in the way Paul is about to describe, I will have less reward, less ability to glorify God. If I run well, I have greater ability to bring Him glory. So I am racing against myself. The motivation to run well is in understanding the goal. We don’t run for personal gain. We run for God’s glory! Our love for Him and desire to please Him fixes us on the goal of bringing glory to Him. **Understand the goal. Secondly...**

2. Disciplined Running Is Self-Controlled v. 25

Several commentaries I read on this passage mentioned that the competitors in the games Paul is referencing had to sign a statement that they had trained for ten month prior to the competition. Competition in athletics requires strict training and self-denial in order to be fit to compete. This word “temperate” literally means *to control oneself*. Paul states that we are to be self-controlled in all things. The idea here is that if those running in a physical race see the value in self-controlled living, how much more should we who are running for a much greater prize!

The crown athletic runners compete for is perishable. The laurel crowns of old are long since dust. The medals, stars, and jerseys of today will one day be dust as well. How much more important is it for us to compete for something that lasts! When we live self-controlled lives, we are living for an imperishable crown! In short term, instant gratification, consideration, self-control seems like a burden. However, when we consider that it is working for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Cor. 4:17), self-control is a small price to pay!

If you want to run in such a way to obtain the prize, this is how we do it. We run with self-control. **We must understand the goal we must be self-controlled. Lastly...**

3. Disciplined Running Requires Focus vv. 26-27

Paul now describes his own habit of running. This is what he does to be self-controlled and able to obtain the prize. First, he does not run uncertainly. The idea of this word is that when Paul ran, he had a goal in mind. He wasn’t aimlessly running around! He was focused and ran toward the goal! This requires knowing what the goal is. The goal is the glory of Christ! We live to bring Him maximum

glory. This enables us to run with certainty of focus and purpose. Secondly, Paul says he doesn't fight like someone who beats the air. The image here is of a boxing match where one opponent never lands a blow. If you never land a blow in a boxing match, you lose. Paul is not beating the air. The implication is that he is beating his opponent. Who is that? The world, the flesh, and the devil! He goes into this in more detail in v. 27.

In contrast to uncertain running and hitting air, Paul disciplines his body. This word literally means to beat. Paul is not talking about asceticism, or self-abuse here. He is talking about the training and work necessary to run and fight effectively. He wants to subjugate his body so that he can live in a self-controlled manner. Rather than being the slave of the appetites and desires of the body, Paul makes his body his slave. Paul does not want to be disqualified after having instructed others in the way to run! This is not talking about a loss of salvation, but a loss of reward and a diminishing of ability to bring Christ glory when crowns are cast at His feet. It also has in focus the loss of ability to bring others to faith in Christ. The focus throughout is the glory of God. That is why we preach the gospel, why we live self-controlled, and why we run the race.

The blessing here is in understanding that there is a prize we strive for. The prize of God's glory and our approval at His return! How we strive for that prize matters. Run hard and with self-control.

CHALLENGE: Run a self-control race of life while focusing on Jesus Christ!

V. 24

Know – οἶδα oida *know*. *To know (reflectively) – to know or have knowledge about (someone or something); normally as acquired through reflection or thinking.*

Race – στάδιον stadion *stadium*. *Stadium – a large structure for open-air races, sports, and entertainments.*

Prize – βραβεῖον brabeion *prize*. *Prize – something given for victory or superiority in a contest or competition.*

Obtain – καταλαμβάνω katalambanō *grasp; lay hold of*. *To win (acquire) – to acquire something through one's efforts.*

The prize cannot be eternal life because we don't get that through effort!

V. 25

Competes – ἀγωνίζομαι agōnizomai *struggle; fight; strive*. *To fight – to be engaged in a fight; carry on a fight.*

Temperate – ἐγκρατεύομαι egkrateuomai *control oneself*. *To exercise self-control – to resolutely control one's own desires (which would produce actions); especially sensual desires.*

Perishable – φθαρτός phthartos *perishable; corruptible*. *Perishable – being subject to breaking down into one's constituent elements; whether until one is dead or after one is dead.*

Crown – στέφανος stephanos *crown*. *Wreath (Hellenistic) – a wreath (or diadem) worn on the head to signify victory, glory, or prestige (and sometimes sovereignty).*

Imperishable – ἀφθαρτος aphthartos *imperishable; incorruptible*. *Imperishable – not being subject to breaking down (and thus lasting forever).*

V. 26

Thus – οὕτως houtōs *so; thus; in this way*. *Thus – in the way indicated.*

Run – τρέχω trechō *run*. *To strive (run) – to strive, conceived of as running; perhaps as if running in a race.*

Uncertainty – ἀδῆλως adēlōs *uncertainly; aimlessly*. *Uncertainly – showing lack of certainty or goal.*

Fight – πυκτεύω pykteuō *box*. *To box – to fight with the fists; often as an athletic endeavor.*

V. 27

Discipline – ὑποπιάζω hypōpiazō *beat; discipline; wear down*. *To discipline (bruise) – to discipline, conceived of as striking forcefully so as to make (the undereye or face) black and blue.*

Subjection – δουλαγωγέω doulagōgeō *enslave; sunjuugate*. *To dominate (enslave) – to dominate, conceived of as enslaving someone.*

Disqualified – ἀδόκιμος adokimos *unqualified; disqualified*. *Phony (bogus) – fraudulent; having a misleading appearance.* “The apostle did not fear the loss of eternal life. He feared not having His Lord's approval at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and not having the privilege of ruling with Christ which will come to all who have His approval (cf. Luke 19:17; 1 Cor 9:25).”¹

¹ Dwight L. Hunt, “[The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians.](#)” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 741.