Developing Personal Character

Part 2 – "The Character of a Winner"

I Corinthians 9:24-27
4-26-2017

Introduction: Verse 24

You can be a winner for the Lord!

***Run, that you may obtain God's prize!**

To be a winner for the Lord, we must be:

I. **<u>SELF-CONTROLLED</u>** (v. 25)
(*"temperate")*

II. **<u>FOCUSED</u>** (v. 26)
("not as uncertainly")

III. **<u>DISCIPLINED</u>** (v. 27)
("body into subjection")

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How would you like to be in the Olympics?

"The Greeks had two great athletic festivals, the Olympic games and the Isthmian games. The Isthmian games were held at Corinth and were therefore intimately familiar to those to whom Paul was writing. Contestants in the games had to prove rigorous training for ten months. The last month was spent at Corinth, with supervised daily work-outs in the gymnasium and athletic fields. The face was always a major attraction at the games, and that is the figure Paul uses to illustrate the faithful Christian life. ***"Those who run in a race run all, but only one receives the prize."*** No one would train so hard for so long without intending to win. Yet out of the large number of runners, only one wins. A great difference between those races and the Christian "race" is that every Christian who will pay the price of careful training can win. We do not compete against each other but against the obstacles--practical, physical, and spiritual--that would hinder us." (MacArthur, p. 214).

The background context of verses 24-27:

The Apostle Paul gave this example to challenge believers to surrender whatever it takes so that they might be more effective in giving their lives for the Lord's work!

I. Paul chose to remain <u>single</u>
so that he would not be hindered by marital obligations (v.5)

II. Paul chose to <u>minister</u> without <u>pay</u>
so that he would not be misjudged as a money-hungry evangelist (v.6-18)

III. Paul chose to <u>adjust</u> his <u>methodologies</u>
so that he would reach more people, without compromising his message or Biblical convictions (v.19-23)

IV. Paul chose to <u>discipline</u> his <u>life</u>
so that he would win the Lord's prize and remain usable to Christ (v.24-27)

"Run all" - Every believer is in the Christian race.

--Not on the side lines -- Not spectators in the stands -- But athletes in the event!

In the Olympics, no athlete quits -- too much is invested to give up and watch.

"One receiveth the prize" -

In a race, all runners run, but only one ends up the winner.

All of us believers, who are also running a race (Heb. 12:1-2) ought to run so as to obtain the favor of Christ. Not a half-hearted, lacsadasical, who cares style of Christianity.

In the Greek Isthmian games (likewise in the Roman Olympics), there could be only one winner, but in the Christian race, there can be many winners.

In the Olympic games, each contestant competed against others; in Christianity, we compete against ourselves (Gromacki).

"Obtain" - Run to get God's prize; "go for the gold!" Give it your best effort so that you may attain that which Christ has obtained you for. (Phil. 3:12 - *"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.")*

In the Christian race,

--some run to be seen by others ("See, I made it!")
--some run to keep up with others ("I'm as good as you are!")

Others run to be their God-given best and to allow God to grant them victory.

Acts 20:24 - *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."*

Our Lord deserves more than a half-hearted flabby Christian service.

You can be a winner for the Lord!

***Run, that you may obtain God's prize!**

To be a winner for the Lord, we must be:

I. **<u>SELF-CONTROLLED</u>** (v. 25)
(*"temperate")*

"Temperate" - lit. to have <u>strength</u> over self.

The word refers to having power over the flesh and its desires; not given to the excesses or abuses demanded by the old carnal nature.

Where is victory found? Not in self. But in God's Spirit. This virtue of temperance is a product of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23), not a product of "self."

When we speak of self-control, we do not mean putting self in control over self. Self can't control self. We mean having a control over self that is outside of our control.

"Corruptible crown" - perishable victor's <u>pine wreath</u> (a *"stephanos")*. A crown of leaves that would weather, not last!

Nothing this world offers will last.

In the Olympics, the glory fades and your are forgotten. You can't take the award into eternity when you die; this world's trophies stay in this world.

"Incorruptible" - not subject to tarnish, ruin and loss.

"The greatest investment is an investment in the greatest things."

II. **<u>FOCUSED</u>** (v. 26)
("not as uncertainly")

"Not as uncertainly" - not without aim; not aimless or without purpose or objective--We need a goal! God's goal!

To run with uncertainty would mean to be unsure of the goal and course of the race, the how and why of the race. Do you as a believer lack focus as to the "how" and "why" of the Christian race?

--Focus on God's directions for the race by knowing and obeying His Word. (ILLUS: the coaching needed by Olympian champions)

--Focus on the goal of our race, which is to glorify God.

Why are you here? To glorify God. How? Jn. 15:8 - *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."* --- By proclaiming the Gospel and make disciples.

Evangelism and edification is to glorify Him on earth.

Do you know <u>why</u> you come to church?

Do you know <u>why</u> you should read God's Word?

Do you know <u>why</u> you should obey God?

Keeping your focus involves:

1) Not being distracted by your <u>past</u>
(moving on from <u>past</u> victories or defeats)
"forgetting those things which are behind" (Phil. 4:13)

2) Keeping your attention on your <u>future</u> goal
"reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13b-14)

3) Following the <u>right example</u>
"Looking unto Jesus..." (SEE: Hebrews 12:1-2)

"Not as one that beateth the air" - Don't be a "shadow-boxing" Christian; going through the motions but doing nothing. Rather, get in the ring and do something.

III. **<u>DISCIPLINED</u>** (v. 27)
("body into subjection")

"Bring it into subjection" - lit. to make it (my body) a slave.

A slave to who? To Christ, i.e. to His Spirit.

The Spirit should control our minds and our minds then control our body.

1. Spirit
2. Mind
3. Body

Paul's body did not control him; rather, he controlled it and subjected it to his spirit and mind.

Too many people reverse the order. Their body dictates to their mind what it wants and the weak mind rationalizes and justifies a violation of conscience, and thus grieves and quenches the Spirit.

"Most people, including many Christians, are instead slaves to their bodies. Their bodies tell their minds what to do. Their bodies decide when to eat, what to eat, how much to eat, when to sleep and get up, and so on. An athlete cannot allow that. He follows the training rules, not his body. He runs when he would rather be resting, he eats a balanced meal when he would rather have a chocolate sundae, he goes to bed when he would rather stay up, and he gets up early to train when he would rather stay in bed. An athlete leads his body; he does not follow it. It is his slave, not the other way around." (MacArthur, p. 215).

You have discipline when you...

1. **<u>DO RIGHT</u>, EVEN WHEN IT HURTS!** (Acts 4:18-21; 5:29)
(The Principle of <u>Duty</u>)

2. **<u>DENY YOURSELF</u>, WHEN YOUR WILL CONFLICTS WITH GOD'S!**
(Mk. 8:30-38)
(The Principle of <u>self denial</u>)

3. **<u>WORK HARD</u> AT WHAT REALLY COUNTS IN LIFE!** (I Tim. 4:7)
(The Principle of <u>priorities)</u>

4. **<u>WAKE UP</u>, WHEN YOU WANT TO SLEEP IN LATE!**
(Prov. 6:6-11)l

5. **<u>DO NOT PROCRASTINATE</u>, WHEN "LATER" SOUNDS APPEALING!**
(Prov. 3:27, 28)
(The principle of <u>promptness</u> [punctuality])

6. **<u>DO NOT COMPROMISE</u>, WHEN "GIVING IN" IS THE EASIER CHOICE!** (Daniel chapters 1, 3, 6)
(The principle of <u>convictions)</u>

7. **<u>DO NOT QUIT</u>, WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH!**
(Acts 13:13; 5:36-41; II Tim.4:9-11)
(The principle of <u>patience</u> [endurance])

"Castaway" - (*adokimos*) - unapproved, disqualified in the race.

The word "castaway" in context does not refer to the loss of salvation, but loss of service or ministry for Christ. To be rendered unusable, worthless, or "put on a shelf."

Conclusion: