

Running for Christ Jesus

Introduction and Review

- Last week we addressed many aspect of the Christian life as a good soldier for Christ Jesus from 2 Timothy 2:1-4.
- We learned that two dominate traits of a Christian soldier are: **strength** in ministry and **dedication** to ministry (v. 1, 4).
- God has equipped the Christian soldier with: Truth, Righteousness, the Gospel, Faith, Salvation, the Word of God, and Prayer (Eph. 6:10-18).
- A good Christian soldier must also be able to teach other soldier and willing to suffer for the cause of Christ (v. 2-3).

I. The Description of An Athlete for Christ

A. General description

In the NT Paul compares the Christian life to athletic competition that involves wrestling, running, boxing & exercising. This is not Christians competing against each other, but each Christian learning how to have victory for Christ in all the events of life (Rom. 8:37; Phil 4:13).

B. Specific description

Each term (wrestling, running, boxing & exercising) describes specific disciplines for the Christian. The Christian will face struggles as a wrestler, must persevere as a runner, fight as a boxer & be faithful in exercising.

II. The Work of An Athlete for Christ (1Co. 9:24-27)

A. Running with purpose (v. 24)

The goal for any serious runner is to finish the race, run with your best effort & receive the prize. The Christian therefore must always be pressing forward toward heaven & eternal life. Our goal is to finish regardless of the kinds of fiery trials we encounter – family, financial, medical, ministry, etc. (2Tim. 4:7; Mt. 25:21).

B. Training with purpose (v. 25-27)

Training involves: self-discipline or self-control “in all things (Gal. 5:23), breaking sinful habits (Heb. 12:1-4), our thinking & attitude (Phil. 3:13b-14), and knowing/obeying

the truth (Gal. 5:7). Training for a godly lifestyle has immense & eternal value (1Tim. 4:7-8).

III. The Reward of An Athlete for Christ (2Tim. 2:5)

A. The crown

Athletes are motivated by the joy of winning & receiving a prize. In the Roman athletic games the prize was a wreath made of some form of vegetation or flowers – perishable (1Co. 9:25b). However the Christian’s reward is eternal & imperishable, and there’s joy in running for Jesus. The Christian’s crown is described as converted saints (now & eternity), righteousness (righteous or perfect life of Jesus), glory (God’s majestic character) & life (Phil. 4:1; 2Tim. 4:8; 1Pe. 5:4; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10).

B. The rules

Even the best athlete will be disqualified if he breaks the rules of competition: illegal substances, equipment, clothing, techniques, etc. Likewise the Christian must follow the word & will of God – no shortcuts, cheating or looking for the easy way. Christian ministry involves difficulty, trials & hardship without exception (1:8; 3:12).

ILL: Many great athletes in US: Roger Staubach, Albert Pujols, Julius Irvin, David Robinson (SA Spurs), etc. They disciplined themselves, worked hard & achieved their goals without cheating. But others have been accused & some found guilty of cheating in their sport. Use of performance-enhancing drugs: Mark McGuire, Barry Bonds, Lance Armstrong, Marion Jones; Mike Tyson biting Holyfield’s ear (1994), Tonya Harding attacking Nancy Kerrigan, etc. The cheating will eventually come to the light & the glory is short-lived. It’s best to follow the rules!

APPL: The same is true with us spiritually. Any shortcuts & cheating in the Christian journey & race won’t last very long. We must be ready for any kind of difficulty; already built up in prayer, faith, hope & the love of God. We must keep our eye on the prize & not get distracted by the temptations of life.

CONCLUSION

So then my beloved brother or sister if you are a Christian, you are also an athlete for Jesus. And since you are an athlete, you should want to give your best to the race that you must run. Therefore remember that there are no breaks in training for kingdom athletes; we are always in training, always running, fighting, keeping the faith, serving, giving, loving, etc. until we finish the race that is set before each one of us. Don't make comparisons or compete with one another, just run and never, never give up! Are you running your best race right now, today? Do it today & never give up!

If you are not a Christian, you're not in the race yet. You have not even made it to the starting line. Your sins are keeping you out of the race. You must be forgiven, saved from the punishment of your sins, brought into the family of God and this race for Christ. But you must trust Jesus for your salvation. You must believe in Him for yourself. Jesus has paid the penalty for your sins with His own life. He wore a **crown of thorns**, pain & suffering for you. He died for you. Will you believe today?

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