

1 Cor 9 pt 3 v.24-27 - Compete

Paul spends a great deal of time speaking to the relation that the believer, you and I, ought to have toward the other - deferring our liberty, our convictions, for the sake of others as an act of love and service as partakers of the gospel.

He now shifts gears on the heels of that thought - being a partaker of the gospel - a sharer in the good news of redemption. He moves into the realm of how we ought to relate to that very thing - salvation, the faith.

v.24 is enough to open and close the entire matter - there are lots of people running a race, but only one wins. So bearing that in mind, run with the intention of winning.

This is not a perfect analogy to our faith because we know that if we place ourselves as the runners and we are competing with one another well only person is going to win. Only one of us will be saved. But that is not the case.

[Jhn 6:37 NKJV] 37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

[Heb 7:25 NKJV] 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

****If we place Christ as the runner in this analogy then there is only one winner, the race has been one and you are the prize****

Paul's point to all of this sports analogy, we love sports analogies, is that we need to be competitors. - "run in such a way that you may obtain the prize, that you might win"

He uses imagery of a foot race to demonstrate a basic truth in regards to endurance, stamina, toughness, and self-denial.

I think instinctively we all know what Paul is trying to communicate. But let's be clear about what he is not communicating - this is not a message of try your best in that most half-hearted of ways that we allow for elementary school field day, or - as long as you had fun. No, it is - compete.

[Jde 1:3 NKJV] 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend **EARNESTLY** for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Let me explain - I've done a lot of running in my day.

Here is an actual picture of me running: - show image

Seriously, what I've learned about running - and some things that relate to our role in competing for the faith. Requirements, here are a few: want to, discipline in training, miles.

Running requires want to. Because it is physically taxing, and at times monotonous - just feet slapping the pavement, and running against somebody else requires pushing yourself past what is comfortable, sustainable pace. You have to want to. You have to enjoy that - and some people do.

Running in a competitive, meaningful way requires training and discipline. At one time our requirement was to run 25 miles a week. It requires getting up early before the day starts or staying up late after the day ends to get in those miles.

Next requirement is miles - to prepare for a 2 mile race you don't run the 2 mile race - you run 5 miles or 6 miles. You build endurance and stamina through running longer than you are preparing for. Your body becomes accustomed to the run, and then you can push some more challenge yourself further.

Finally, you have to be temperate in all things! - Take care of your body and the things that you are consuming.

v. 25 -

Adding detail to Paul's encouragement to be a competitor for the FAITH, or as Jude said, an EARNEST CONTENDER - if we are temperate, moderating our diet, being careful with the things we consume but we don't RUN our race -big deal, that's legalism, you're not even in the race, your reward is the satisfaction you get from saying no to junk. Nobody is going to give you a medal for that.

If we run our race but are not temperate in all things there is a strong likelihood that we will still be carrying around extra junk in our trunk AND we certainly won't be able to compete with those athletes who are in the front of the pack. If we say I'm going to run but not give up the junk then we ought not be surprised when we see limited results in our race both in speed, distance, and personal results.

perishable v. imperishable crown - competitors for these games were awarded laurels crafted out of pine boughs or other plants to make crown to acknowledge their victory. They trained hard, and suffered, and sweated, and bled. They labored through heavy breathing and vomiting and muscle failure. They endured defeat and stretches of poor performance for the ultimate goal of being a competitor - all of that just to compete - with no certainty of victory. And then, when they were victorious they were awarded a crown that began to deteriorate as soon as those boughs are trimmed from the tree.

The promise to those of us who run, who compete for the faith is that the prize will not perish or deteriorate, but will last forever.

What is the prize? debate - does this mean my salvation? does it mean reward? the main things are the plain things - without striving too mightily to ignore the plain truth Paul is communicating we know that there is the Biblical imperative to compete, to run with certainty not aimlessly and without commitment.

[Heb 12:1-4 NKJV] 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares [us], and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [our] faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

v.26 - run with certainty - know where you are going and commit every fiber of your being in running that race set before you with a resolve that is fueled by the certainty of victory with which Christ himself went to the cross for our sakes. Your prize is certain for it has already been secured.

thus I fight not as one who beats the air - two things

1. shadow boxing or boxing in a mirror - it is exhausting, it's helpful, it's not a real fight.
2. you only get points in a bout if you land punches - not for near misses

With that in mind, If we viewed the largest portion of our salvation as a marathon, or a 12 round bout - something that requires endurance and stamina and heart (oh btw we learn something about our weaknesses along the way) then we might not lose heart and throw in the towel or put our hands on our hips and quit. Lord help us to endure. If we kept in mind that this is a glorious fight we participate in we might take courage and drive on.

[Phi 3:12-14 NKJV] 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing [I do], forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

v.27 - Paul prepared himself for the fight, for the competition - he indicates here that he fought himself

The greek wording here more accurately reads:

“to strike under the eye; to give a black eye.”

to beat black and blue, to smite so as to cause bruises and livid spots

from *hupopion*, "the part of the face below the eye;" *hupo*, "under," *ops*, "an eye", hence, to beat the face black and blue (to give a black eye), is used metaphorically, and translated "buffet"

Paul struggled mightily with his flesh, as we all do. Romans 7 - the good I want to do I don't do and those things I don't want to do I find myself doing.

BUT, in failure he didn't quit - acknowledging Christ's vast grace - he waged war against his flesh instead of conceding defeat - remember Paul's victory is purchased as ours is through Christ's blood. But he FIGHTS on - that he might not be disqualified.

Matthew Henry's comment on the text: Note, a preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may show others the way to heaven, and never get thither himself. To prevent this, Paul took so much pains in subduing and keeping under bodily inclinations, lest by any means he himself, who had preached to others, should yet miss the crown, be disapproved and rejected by his sovereign Judge. A holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle; and how much more necessary is it to our preservation? Note, Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him.

[2Ti 4:6-8 NKJV] 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.