

4 April 2021

1 Corinthians 9:24

Those that preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

In the Church @ Corinth, there were some that scrutinized/questioned Paul's apostleship; this led to questions about whether it was right to support him in the gospel ministry or not.

But Paul would not allow this issue to become a hindrance to the gospel of Christ. (9:15-16). Christ called me, and I will fulfill my calling!

Galatians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)"

The Lord Jesus Christ commissioned me, He sent me to preach the gospel, and I will preach it without charge! Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel! *1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

Paul exercised a spiritual discipline over himself so that he might become servant to all; that he might preach the gospel to all.

(V19): "I willingly made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more"

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: Paul in this section likens the Christian life to the athletes who trained and competed in the Olympic Games.

History records it that the Isthmian Games were held Corinth, Greece, these games were different from the actual Olympic Games, which were held in Olympia, Greece. They took place every (4) years, beginning in about the 8th Century B.C. the Olympics were held every four (4) years and continued until about the 4th Century A.D.

The Olympics included running, wrestling, and boxing. Paul got their attention with this illustration, likening the Christian life to the Isthmian Athletic games which were held in Corinth!

The city of Olympia, where the actual Olympics were held no longer exists, but its archaeological ruins are located on the western side of the city of Peloponnese, Greece.

The Olympic Games were revived in the late 19th Century, (in 1896), they were held in Athens, Greece.

The Apostle Paul begins this passage (V24) comparing the Christian life to a "Race" in the Olympic Games, in which, only one runner would receive the prize.

(V24): “Know ye not” or don’t you know that (when you’re watching the athletes run, that all the racers are running and competing to win the race, but only one runner is going to win the prize? Only one will be crowned!

In the Ancient Olympics, there were no silver and bronze medals, there was only ONE prize; ONLY ONE WINNER was crowned.

Paul applies this to the Christian’s life; do you see how the runners in these races run? Do you see how the fighters fight? And the wrestlers, how they wrestle? With all of their might? Why? ***Because they want the prize!***

So, believer in Christ, LIVE the Christian life like an athlete training for and competing in the Olympic Games. Train, Run, and Fight to TO WIN!

Again, in the Isthmian and Olympic Games, only ONE received the prize, but in the Christian life, EVERY born-again child of God, every runner and every fighter receives the prize of heaven! So run that ye may obtain!

Hebrews 12:1-3, Philippians 3:8-14

Christian, are you running toward heaven like an Olympic athlete who is running for the gold medal? Are you training and running to win the prize? Are you training and running toward heaven as if you WANT the prize of heaven?

(V25): “And every man (or EVERY athlete in the Olympics) or that striveth for the mastery in temperate in all things”

Every one of these athletes MUST exercise a great deal of self-control over their own bodies. They MUST train for months and years, struggling and agonizing in their training; all for one purpose, ***so that they might win the prize!***

Even in their diet, they are very strict; controlling their appetites as they keep themselves from eating things that might negatively affect them in competition or slow them down in the race.

Christian, do you exercise “spiritual discipline and self-control” in your Christian lives? Are you feeding your faith in Christ and denying your sinful flesh? Are you being prudent, cautious, and wise in what you allow into your life? Are you careful to stay away from things that would hinder you from RUNNING for the heavenly prize?

The Olympic Athlete must deny themselves and refuse certain things so that their focus might be on one objective; competing for the prize!

(V25B): Now THEY DO IT to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible”. 1 Timothy 4:7-8, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, James 1:12, Revelation 3:11

Paul now brings this imagery of athletic training, discipline, and competition in the Olympic Games to himself personally.

(V26-27): “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, NOT as one that beateth the air”: (I don’t just run aimlessly and punch at nothing!) But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”.

Paul directs his attention to himself! I love the first (4) words of (V26):

“I therefore SO RUN”; meaning, I run with heart, and ON keep myself ON COURSE!

I pray that is your heart child of God for the “Race” that is before you in the Christian life!

I remember when I used to Run the CCC 10K Race, I had a friend who would buy the “T” shirt (for the race) every year, and wear it, but he NEVER ran the race.

How many professing Christians are there in the world who are wearing the “T” shirt that says, I am a Christian, but they are NOT running the race! They’re not even in the race!

Paul here (V26): I don’t run for nothing; I am running for the prize! I don’t punch at nothing, I don’t just punch at the air, but I punch at my opponent; I fight and agonize that I might win the prize!

(V27): “But I keep under my body (I bruise my own body so as to keep it under subjection) so that I might WIN the prize and crown of which I preach! Romans 6:12-14, Colossians 3:5

Keeping under my body literally means, like a Boxer to connecting under the eye!

I keep my body under control; “LEST that by any means” (or lest somehow) after I have preached to others and pointed them to that worthy and good race of faith in Christ, and that good fight, that I myself should be a castaway” or rejected or disqualified.

2 Timothy 2:5, Romans 6:12-14, Colossians 3:5, Hebrews 12:1-2

Bottom line: Here I am telling you how to run the race of the Christian life, but I myself MUST also run MY Race and live my Christian life so that I may win Christ and the crown of righteousness!

Back to (V24): As Paul exhorts his hearers to run like the winner of the prize, so Christian, run that you may obtain!

Obtain: Seize, possess, apprehend!