

## LESSONS FROM THE GAMES

Text: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

INTRO: In our text, Paul makes several points of comparison between the life God has set before us, & running a prescribed race course. Several other passages where similar points have been made will also be incorporated into our study.

### I. THERE IS A PRIZE, vs 24.

- A. Two different words associated with the games are used in this connection: the word for prize [Phil 3:14], & the word for the victor's crown.

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14).

- B. The NT writers use the word for the victor's crown to illustrate 3 different aspects of our life-struggle.

1. Most commonly, it is used to picture the eternal life that is promised to all who become Christians & remain faithful to that calling, vs 25;

And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away (1 Pet 5:4).      REV 2:10

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12).

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, & not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Tim 4:8).

2. Paul sometimes used the victor's crown to illustrate the "reward" of seeing those you have taught remain faithful & gain eternal life,

Therefore, my beloved & longed-for brethren,  
my joy & crown, so stand fast in the Lord,  
beloved (Phil 4:1).

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of  
rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of  
our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?  
(1 Thes 2:19).

3. Finally, in the visions of the book of Revelation,  
John quite often uses the victor's crown to  
indicate who is winning at any given time in  
the struggle between the forces of God & the  
forces of Satan,

24 elders, Rev. 4:4, 10  
The rider on the white horse, 6:2  
The locusts from the bottomless pit, 9:7  
The woman clothed with the sun, 12:1  
One like the Son of Man, 14:14

II. A PERSON MUST ENTER THE RACE BEFORE HE CAN  
HOPE TO GAIN THE PRIZE, vs 24.

- A. The word "race" in vs 24 is the Greek word for stadium.
- B. Some say, "I want to see if I can live the Christian life first,  
then later I'll become a Christian."
- C. We are not prepared to run the race till we lay aside every  
weight & sin--& we cannot do that without coming  
into Christ, Heb 12:1; Acts 2:38; 22:16.

III. SOME ENTER THE RACE, BUT WILL NOT WIN, vs 24.

- A. Some have been misled. They think the race is over at the  
starting line, or that it is enough just to enter the race.
- B. Some encounter a few hardships & give up: You ran well.  
Who hindered you from obeying the truth? (Gal 5:7).

Heb 12:1, run with endurance

- C. Some turn their eyes toward wrong goals.
1. Measure self by self, 2 Cor 10:12
  2. The Pharisee felt himself "better" than the publican, Luke 18:10
  3. Some want only to "get by," LK 17:10. "How much do I have to give?" "How much do I have to give?" "How often do I have to forgive?"
- D. Some will be disqualified for violating the rules, vs. 27.  
And if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Tim 2:5)

NOTE: Coy Foust & interscholastic league rules

IV. EACH CHRISTIAN HAS THE ABILITY TO WIN. My winning will not make someone else a loser, 2 Tim 4:7-8.

READ HEBREWS 12:1-2

- A. O.T. saints say, "You can do it, you can do it..."  
B. Jesus says, "Come follow Me, the crown is yours..."

V. EACH PARTICIPANT MUST LEARN SELF DISCIPLINE, 25-27

- A. Good athletes develop a great degree of self control in competing for a perishable reward--the applause, newspaper headline, a trophy, a paycheck...
- B. Christians strive for an eternal reward. They must learn to completely dedicate themselves to the task.
1. Paul ran with certainty, the goal always in mind, vs 26. He was certain of his goal.  
READ PHIL 3:12-14 One thing I do
  2. He faced the task with seriousness, vs 26b.

NOTE: The Olympic boxer may ask himself, "Why should I fight a man I don't even know?" There is only

one answer: he stands between me & the prize. The Christian may ask, "Why do I need to put teachers & preachers & doctrines to the test & reject those who do not conform to the truth?" And the answer is: they stand between us & the goal.

3. To successfully live as a Christian we must devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the cause of Christ. Unlike those around us, we must love truth more than pleasure, right more than applause, obedience more than comfort--and Christ more than self or family or anything & everything else in the world.

Exton, PA, August 5, 1984

La Porte, TX, August 8, 1985 (meeting)

Highway 29, Liberty Hill, TX, October 11, 1986 (meeting)

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, June 15, 1988 (meeting)

Exton, PA, October 2, 1988

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, August 9, 1992

Imhoff Ave., Port Arthur, TX, August 3, 1993 (meeting)

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, July 28, 1996

Wrightsville, PA, September 4, 1996

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, September 17, 2000

Fairfield, PA, September 24, 2000

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, August 15, 2004