

The First Sunday in Lent ~ Sunday, February 26, 2023

“Cross Training ~ The Race: Training in Focus”

1 Corinthians 9:17-27

INTRODUCTION

Cross-training =

In cross-training, athletes engage in a variety of different _____, practice mental discipline, and learn proper _____ in order to make themselves _____ strong.

In the same way, there are different exercises that we can do if we want to be _____ strong. In fact, in several places in his writings, the Apostle Paul uses _____ analogies and metaphors to highlight the importance of spiritual exercise and training, and to convey key aspects of the Christian life, such as:

“Train yourself to be godly. Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.” (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

In verses 24 to 27, Paul takes us into an ancient Greco-Roman arena and says that the _____ is like entering one of the competitions, like running a race or competing in a boxing match. And he calls us to run so as to _____ the prize.

TRAINING IN FOCUS

#1. The _____.

In using this metaphor of the race to describe the Christian life, Paul is saying that we’re like _____, running in a great race in an ancient Greco-Roman arena. And Paul adopts the stance of an athletics coach, giving us a _____ regimen.

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run in such a way that you may obtain it.” (1 Corinthians 9:24)

In Verse 25, he tells us that the prize these runners are training so hard to win is a: _____.

In contrast, the prize that is held out to us who are followers of Jesus is an _____ crown of righteousness and glory. When by God's

grace we finally cross the finish line of the race marked out for us, our Lord will reward us with unfading _____. And so, like Paul, we need to _____ that we might take hold of it.

Sometimes as Christians we can think that the only motive for obedience is _____ for the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

The _____, when we cross the finish line, is also a motive and an incentive to cause us to run in a certain way. Reward, or the promise of reward, is a _____, and even important, reason for growing in Christian obedience.

The same Jesus who gave Himself for us at Calvary, who saved us, keeps us, and is changing us by His grace, is the same Jesus who will give _____ to us, in a fullness of sweet, intimate, unending _____ forever. He is our great _____.

We’re not just to look back to the work of Jesus at the cross in the past, but we’re also to look forward to _____ with Him in the age to come.

Jesus is the prize, and Paul has his sights trained on winning that prize, taking careful _____, fixing his eyes on Jesus!

“This one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. I want to win the prize. I want to take hold of the promise of reward, of being with Christ, and knowing Him as fully as He knows me.” (Philippians 3:12)

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will reward to me on that day.” (2 Timothy 4:8)

There’s no such thing as _____ across the finish line for Paul. No slackening of his _____ as he comes to the conclusion of the race.

“I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air.” (1 Corinthians 9:26)

How are you running your race?

#2. The _____ to avoid.

“But I discipline my body and keep it under control; lest after having preached to others, I myself might be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27)

The tragedy that Paul's trying to avoid is _____.

We need to understand that he's not doubting the _____ of his salvation here, but neither is he _____ on grace and thinking that he can simply _____ to the finish line.

Disqualified = Adokemos =

We shouldn't think of ourselves as being beyond the danger of _____ or of making a shipwreck of your faith. We shouldn't presume upon grace so that we neglect diligence in Christian _____, and having preached to others we, ourselves, are disqualified.

This is a warning we need to _____ and a tragedy to _____.

We need to _____, press on, and take hold of that for which God has taken hold of us in Christ.

#1. The _____.

Paul is saying that the training regimen he prescribes for running a successful Christian race cannot and should not be _____ either, if we don't want to be disqualified.

There are no _____ Christians.

"Every athlete exercises self-control in all things." (1 Corinthians 9:25)

Self-control is the _____ of any runner who is serious about breaking the tape at the end of the race.

Athletes exercise extraordinary self-control in all things. And they do so for a _____ wreath.

Our prize, however, is so much more _____; so much more _____ of our time, energy, and effort. And so, we need this same kind of spiritual self-control and _____ if we want to win.

"I discipline my body and keep it under control." (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Connotation of the Greek word for discipline =

Paul isn't saying that there's something holy in _____, but rather that he's resolved to beat _____ and his bodily appetites into submission,

and to bring them into _____ with the will of Christ, so they won't hinder his running of the race.

We're not just called to enter the race, but to _____ running; to stay in the fight, no matter how hard it gets, how _____ we become, or how much we might want to _____.

"Be killing sin or sin will be killing you." (John Owen)

CONCLUSION

The race of faith is life's _____ for the Christian. And so, we shouldn't think that we can just coast along instead of running the race.

As we saw in the series on Jude, there's a _____ going on all around us, into which we're all called, and we must fight on.

Paul calls us to fight with our eyes _____ on the prize. We're to run our race with _____ looking to _____.

He's the one in whom we _____. We don't run in our own _____ or with our own energy. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith; and He promises to keep us, to _____ us, and to get us across the finish line if we _____ on Him.

Imagine what would happen if we _____ to Jesus every day. Every weight would fall off and every sin would _____ from us, helping us to run _____ and easier. Each look at Jesus would strengthen us to _____ and finish well

Every huff, every twinge of pain, every stumble, and every prolonged day on earth would be _____ it, as we _____ endured the journey in order to cross the finish line and get to Jesus.

It's not a _____ fight. Don't give up! Keep on running! We're never on the losing side if we _____ in Jesus. Fight on, and run in such a way that you might _____ the imperishable prize that God has for you

ADDITIONAL NOTES