

**Introduction:**

- 1 Cor 9:23-27
- The point of salvation is to make the glory of God visible in the world. Yes, Jesus wants to have an eternal relationship with you. Yes, Jesus wants the Father to have, in you, the family he created. Yes, Jesus died for you that you might live for Him! But the point of salvation is to make the glory of God visible in the world. And it starts where you are planted.
  - Paul, *"I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings."*
  - In another place he said, This one thing I do. *"...I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,"* (Philippians 3:13, NLT) "we live and move and have our being in Him," and it's His pleasure we should pursue above all else. There's only One whose opinion about us really matters - Jesus.
- King David had this heart and mind. *"The one thing I ask of the Lord— the thing I seek most— is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple."* (Psalm 27:4, NLT)
- As we have been going through the scriptures year, our focus has been on being equipped to to over come. I want to share with you this morning the power of living for one thing, while living to an audience of One. It takes singleness of heart and mind.
- *ILLUS: Too many Christians remind me of the London Bus Company several years ago. That Transit company was striving for efficiency. They made it their goal to always be on schedule. No other bus route in any other community seemed to even rival their efficiency. So... how did they do it? How did they manage to keep such a tight schedule? Well, it seems that IF they were in danger of getting behind schedule, their drivers were instructed to simply to not stop at bus stops, even when there were people waiting there for the bus. As you can imagine, that made some customers fairly angry. But the London Transit Authority released this statement to explain why they didn't always pick up waiting passengers at the bus stops: "It is impossible for us to maintain our schedules if we are always having to stop and pick up passengers." Now, what's wrong with this picture? That's right – a bus company does not exist in order to meet a schedule. The PURPOSE of the bus company is to pick people up and drop them off. In the same way our purpose – as Christians – is to pick people up and drop them off at the feet of Jesus.*

**I. Paul's Mission**

- A. *"I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings."*
  1. We get to this passage of scripture in 1 Cor because Paul is having to bring correction to the church.
    - a) They were moving wildly in the gifts, but not for God or for others. They moved in the gifts wildly for themselves.
    - b) They were sexually more sinful than the heathens around them.
    - c) They had so much freedom they had no constraints.

- d) Their main problem was that they could not detach themselves from the world they lived in. They continued to be subject to the gods they had been delivered from. IE. Like the delivered Jews and their golden calf.
- 2. Because of this, Paul writes this letter to the Corinthians to get them to evaluate themselves in light of the Gospel and to set a new course in Christ. Have you ever had to set a new course in Christ because you realized some things about your life and His Gospel that didn't line up?
- B. Paul states, *"My whole purpose in living is to spread the Gospel of Christ and to also share in its blessing."*
  - 1. Paul was not living for himself, as the Corinthians were. He was living for God. He was living his life to an audience of One. What mattered to him most was that God was pleased with him and that he was about his Father's business.
  - 2. Paul's life was the message unlike his Corinthian counterparts. He could truly say, *"Follow me as I follow Christ Jesus."* (1 Cor 11:1)
  - 3. *"I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings."* 1 Cor 9:22
- C. Then Paul uses the culture surrounding the Corinthians to illustrate how to do this. He speaks of the Olympics.
  - 1. Everyone in Corinth was familiar with the annual Olympic games.
  - 2. Everyone in Corinth was familiar with Olympic runner and boxers.
  - 3. Paul uses things common to the people he is trying to reach to illustrate truth. Jesus did the same. IE. In Zambia, preached to a village. There were little chicks following a mother hen around. Eventually she sits down fluffs her wings and they gather under her. That became my message.

## II. Paul's Race

- A. Everyone runs but only one gets the prize. He is not telling us that there is only one winner in this Gospel race. He is telling us to run this Gospel race like champion Olympic winners. RUN TO WIN!
  - 1. Run according to the rules. *"An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."* (2 Timothy 2:5, ESV) There are no short cuts in the world of sports. Athletes everywhere have been disqualified because they did not participate according to the rules. Entire careers thrown away because of it.
  - 2. Run as a disciplined athlete. Discipline covers many topics. IE. for the athlete it is eating, training, recovering, practicing.
    - a) Tom Brady - has one the most strict regimens of eating of any athlete. And he has been doing it most of his NFL career.
    - b) Most Olympic athletes spend their whole life training for one shot at the gold.
  - 3. Run to obtain the prize. If you are going to run...run to win!
  - 4. Run with purpose in every step. Win! Win! Win! Purpose will enable you to push through the pain.

- B. The first step to living authentically in Christ is to get the right diagnoses of our condition. This is what Paul is trying to achieve in the Corinthians. Jer 17:9 says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind to reward a man according to his conduct according to what his deeds deserve."*
1. Paul is identifying the authentic Christian life as compared to the life the Corinthians are living.
  2. He is telling them there is no room for short cuts, no room cheating, no room for sloppiness!
  3. It is easy to make others think that we trust in God. Too often church attendees can speak the Christian language, even go through the motions of Christian living, yet in their hearts there is that root of rebellion that is always resisting, arguing and grumbling against the Holy Spirit of Christ.

### III. Paul's Fight

- A. I am not shadow boxing. IE. Shadow boxing is pretending to be boxing.
1. This is not pretend church.
  2. This is not 'sort of' Christianity.
  3. I discipline my body like an athlete (second time Paul says this). I train my body to do what it is supposed to do. I tell it what we are going to do! It does not tell me what to do!
    - a) IE. Smith Wigglesworth was once asked, "How are you feeling?" His reply, "When I get up, I never ask Smith how he is feeling. I tell Smith how he is going to feel."
- B. Paul communicates the severity of this self-control in these two verses 26 and 27. It is about, as the Moravians would say, "To win for the Lamb that was slain the rewards of His sufferings."

### IV. Living to Win

- A. Keep your eye on the eternal prize!
1. Live with your eye on eternity.
  2. Live knowing Eternity's eye is on you!
  3. My opinion: The majority of the body of Christ does not do that. Result is the weakness that the body of Christ displays and the weakness of our expression in the earth.
  4. To run to win we must exercise focus on the prize, self control to get it done, and everything we do must revolve around it.
- B. Paul's concern is being disqualified - ἀδοκιμος - inauthentic, unattested.
1. The Corinthians are living as a people who have not put themselves under the watchful eye of God. Because they are in authentic, they will be disqualified.
  2. It sounds like Jesus talking to his followers: *"On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'" (Matthew 7:22-23, NLT)*

3. The word is also used in Romans: *"Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done."* (Romans 1:28, NLT)
4. Thus to keep from becoming inauthentic we must examine ourselves:
  - a) *"Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith."* (2 Corinthians 13:5, NLT)
  - b) *"That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup."* (1 Corinthians 11:28, NLT)
- C. The race of life has eternal consequences because grace is verified by the way we run. Paul's running of the race verified the power of grace at work in his life.
  1. Difficult times, challenging times, hard times all test our faith but may it reveal the power of grace at work in our lives!
  2. *"Life is a proving ground for whether faith is alive or dead – a proving ground for whom we trust."* John Piper

### Conclusion:

- God has not saved you to sit in the stands. God has not saved you to lie on the track. God has not saved you to put the gloves on. God has saved you to spend yourself for the glory of his Son.
  - *"as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:20–21, ESV)
  - *"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."* (1 Corinthians 6:20, ESV)
- The point of salvation is to make the glory of God visible in the universe.
- One of my favorite passages: *"As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. <sup>8</sup>And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing."* (2 Tim 4:6-8 NLT)