

Run The Race

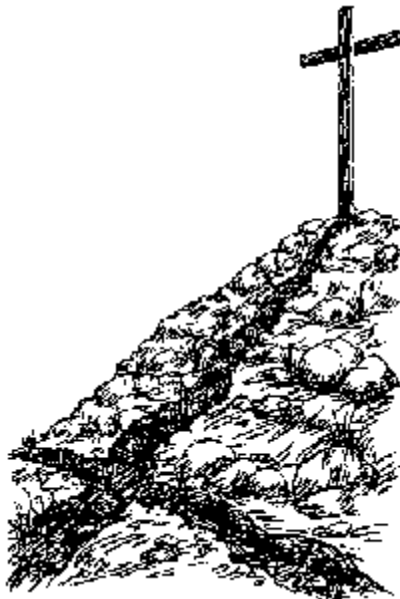
1 Corinthians 9:24-27

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The Prize

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1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (KJV) "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize¹? So run, that ye may obtain². {25} And every man that striveth for the mastery³ is temperate⁴ in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. {26} I therefore so run⁵, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: {27} But I keep⁶ under my body, and bring it into subjection⁷: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway⁸."

¹ brabeion {pronounced brab-i'-on}, the prize

² katalambano {pronounced kat-al-am-ban'-o}, Aorist Active Subjunctive, take possession of, like Israel taking possession of the land

³ agonizomai {pronounced ag-o-nid'-zom-ahee}, Present Passive Participle, to agonize over, contend for, struggle for, labor over

⁴ egkrateuomai {pronounced eng-krat-yoo'-om-ahee}, Present Middle Indicative, exhibits self control, conducts oneself temperately

⁵ Present Active Indicative trecho {pronounced trekh'-o}, run the race

⁶ hupopiazō {pronounced hoop-o-pee-ad'-zo}, Present Active Indicative, to beat black and blue, subject, enslave

⁷ Present Active Indicative, doulagogeo {pronounced doo-lag-ogue-eh'-o}, keep in slavery, treat as a slave, severely, sternly

⁸ adokimos {pronounced ad-ok'-ee-mos}, not standing the test, disapproved

Our focal text today begins with the Apostle comparing the Christian walk or way of life to the Grecian Olympic games. He uses terms that refer to the *marathon runner*, and to the *boxer*: two of the most strenuous sports in these games. The Apostle clearly shows that there is something that we must all strive for ... that we race to

obtain a *prize* ... a prize that relatively few receive. The Holy Writ states, "**So run, that ye may obtain or lay hold on it**". What do we wish to run for? What do we wish to obtain? If salvation is by *grace alone in Christ alone*, as we have repeatedly stated,

(Ephesians 2:8-9 KJV) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast."

a thing brought *supernaturally* on the believer as an act of God - then why should I run? What do I seek to obtain? Have I not been "**blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ**" (Ephesians 1:3)? What else should I seek to obtain? Why run, when all belongs to me?

1. Run To Prove Your Salvation To Yourself and Others

1 Corinthians 9:24 (KJV) "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize¹? So run, that ye may obtain²."

Who are the two people I must *prove* my salvation to?

Everyone runs, but only one receives the prize. I want you to follow the Bible's illustration of the runner for a minute. Now, I know little about the Olympics, though I love to watch many of the contests. As I watch, I always root for my beloved United States, or, if the USA isn't in

the competition, I root for Great Britain. How people are chosen to represent their nations in these events is beyond my knowledge. But I do know this: Those who participate in the marathon races are those who *are equipped* for these races. Those who skate in the figure skating competition are *equipped* for this competition. I have never seen, and probably never will see, someone who trained exclusively for *running* entered into the swimming competition, or vice versa. Each person enters the area of competition they trained for, and are thus *equipped* for. The people who enter each event are the

If the Apostle Paul was concerned about becoming a *castaway*, should I be concerned? (1 Cor 9:27)

best in their fields, focused on taking home the gold for their country.

Though Paul was called by God to be an Apostle of the highest order, though he was saved by grace because of his faith in Christ Jesus, Paul said he wanted to insure that he not be a **castaway**:

1 Corinthians 9:27 (KJV) "... lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway⁸."

or **disqualified** for his Heavenly reward. Think about that for a minute! Paul was not talking about *losing his*

salvation, but he was talking about never, in reality, *being saved*. Paul ran the race that God set before him not to *be saved*, but *because he was saved*. We run to prove our salvation in Christ to ourselves first, and to others second.

Our Lord Jesus Christ equated salvation to a *supernatural action of God*. Jesus said:

(John 3:3 KJV) "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

How is a person born *again*, born a second time? Jesus continued by saying:

(John 3:5-7 KJV) "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. {6} That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. {7} Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

The New Birth is something brought on every believer at the point of salvation. When you accept Jesus Christ as

Salvation is an act of _____, not reform.
Salvation is a supernatural experience that you undergo through the ministry of God the _____
_____. (John 3:3,7)

your Savior the Holy Spirit of God works *in you*, changing you into a *new creature*, a *twice born person*.

This comes on every person by faith - but though it is by faith, it a *certain reality* that occurs in the life of the believer.

Christians are not *reformed creatures*, but we are *converted creatures*. A reformed creature is one who changes his ways, changes on the outside, but has no change on the inside. A *converted* creature, however, is changed from the inside-out. A *reformed* creature, much like the Pharisees and Sadducees, is a whited tomb, condemned by Jesus when He said:

(Matthew 23:27-28 KJV) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. {28} Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

You can change all you want to on the outside. You can wash yourself, put on fresh pressed clothes, groom yourself immaculately, but unless you have been *converted* from the inside-out then you are not saved. The Christian works for Jesus *because he has been converted*. This is one of the major evidences of true salvation, that a person will willingly work for Jesus. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a number of warnings about our failure to work for Him. The Bible is packed with warnings about anyone who *professes salvation* in Christ but shows *absolutely no evidence of it*. Jesus warned His disciples:

(Matthew 10:22 KJV) "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Did you read that? He that endures (Aorist Active Participle *hupomeno* {pronounced hoop-om-en'-o}) to the end shall be saved. Did the enduring *make* the believer saved? No, faith alone in Christ alone brought

The Pharisees and Sadducees were clean outwardly – that is, *reformed*, but were not *converted*. Jesus gave a simple test for salvation. What was it? (Matthew 23:27-28; 10:22; 7:22-23)

salvation. But Beloved, unless you have been *converted*, and converted people *remain in the faith*, then you may not be saved. There **MUST** be endurance. You **MUST** be changed by the supernatural power of God the Holy Spirit, and once changed you **MUST** continue to work for Jesus. **C.H. Spurgeon** said:

“Although we are sure that men are not saved for the sake of their works, yet are we equally sure that no man will be saved without them; and that he who leads an unholy life, who neglects the great salvation, can never inherit that crown of life which fadeth not away.”

a. **Works alone have no saving power.** Those who call Jesus Lord, and do wonderful works in His name, are not

necessarily saved. As Jesus said:

(Matthew 7:22-23 KJV) "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? {23} And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

If you are saved by Grace, then you first of all *know Jesus*. You are well acquainted with Him, and, better

Do works alone save? (Matthew 7:22-23)

still, He is well acquainted with you. As He hung on that Cross He knew you, and as He looks on your face today He sees the blood of atonement applied. Both you and He are companions, kinsmen, close brothers. The Spirit of God has come into your life and converted you, and now you know one another.

There are many who profess Christ, and even do great works in His holy Name. There's power in the name of Jesus! There's majesty in the name of Jesus! I commend you on your coming to Church this Sunday morning, but mere attendance to Church - merely calling Him "Lord, Lord", this has no saving power. There must be a recognition of your lost estate, and a recognition that Jesus alone can bring you from this state. There must be a total surrender of your salvation to the Carpenter.

b. **Profession without commitment has no saving power.** Jesus requires His children to obey His

commandments, to walk in the Spirit, to be obedient to His Will.

(John 14:15 KJV) "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

(Luke 6:46 KJV) "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Some come to Church for some ulterior motive, perhaps to win the approval of their fellow man. Others come to

Does *profession of salvation* without a commitment to Christ save? (John 14:15; Luke 6:46)

Church to salve their conscience. Many people who have never been saved come to Church in hopes that the Bible or the people will *justify a poor lifestyle*. Many denominations have fallen trap to this error, and have compromised the clear teachings of Scripture in an effort to give indulgences to those in terrible sin.

The proper reason for coming to Church is because I am saved, and because my Lord wants me to do so. I come to Church *because* God the Holy Spirit resides in me, and bids that I go. I do not go for the entertainment. I go because I know Jesus, and keep His commandments. If I do not go to Church for the right reasons - or go grudgingly because I seek, through these actions, to be saved - then my profession may be insufficient for true salvation. I run to prove my faith to both myself and others.

2. I Run To Obtain or

Seize Hold Of The Mastery

1 Corinthians 9:25 (KJV) "And every man that striveth for the mastery³ is temperate⁴ in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

I run, first of all, to prove to myself and others that I am, truly, saved. But **second** I run in order that I receive a crown, that prize that waits for the overcomer in Heaven. The runner at the Olympic games struggles for the *corruptible* crown, but the true Christian for the *incorruptible crown*, one that will never fade away.

There are four crowns mentioned in the Scripture. They are:

The **Crown of Life**, which is given to the Christian who is mature in his or her faith:

(James 1:12 KJV) "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

(Revelation 2:10 KJV) "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The **Crown of Happiness** is given to the Christian who

spreads happiness by testifying of Christ:

(1 Thessalonians 2:19 KJV) "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or **crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"**

The **Crown of Righteousness** is given to the believer who stays in step with God:

(2 Timothy 4:7-8 KJV) "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: {8} Henceforth there is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."**

Finally there is the **Crown of Glory**, given to those who brought glory to Christ on the earth:

(1 Peter 5:4 KJV) "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye **shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."**

The Bible teaches us that there is a judgment day coming

What are the four *crowns* mentioned in Scripture ... and when will they be rewarded? (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 Peter 5:4)

for every person who has ever drawn breath on this earth. The unbeliever will be judged and, once found unbelieving, shall go out of Heaven to a place where there is only weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

(Matthew 13:41-42 KJV) "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall **gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; {42} And shall **cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**"**

There is also another judgment, a Judgment Seat of Christ, where every saved believer shall stand and give an account of himself to God. The Bible tells us:

(1 Corinthians 3:13-15 KJV) "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. {14} If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. {15} **If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."**

R.G. Lee preached a sermon called "Payday Someday", where he emphasized that we would all be paid one day
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The unbeliever who dies without Christ goes to judgment and eternal punishment. The believer, however, has his _____ judged after he leaves this life. (Matthew 13:41-42; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

for how we lived our lives. Those who have lived their lives laughing at Jesus, making little of His commands, considering Him slack in His judgment, will one day discover a payday comes. Our God is a *Covenant God*, and He demands obedience of His covenant people. Jesus said:

(Mark 10:29-30 KJV) "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, {30} But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

what we lose for His sake will be recompensed to us in time. There is a payday someday, and God is the Paymaster.

Third, I Run To Glorify My Savior Jesus

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (KJV) "I therefore so run⁵, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: {27} But I keep⁶ under my body, and bring it into subjection⁷: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway⁸."

If I am saved - and I believe I am saved by faith in Christ - then my heart is bound to my Jesus. I understand my true purpose in life. "Purpose?", you ask, "What purpose?" Before you knew Jesus you had no purpose

other than that of self, of satisfying those things that made you happiest. Life was only happy while you were pleased with the way things were going, and you drifted from day to day believing that – to live for the moment – that was enough.

The unbeliever runs *uncertainly*, being tossed about by every whim, every desire. If you ask the unbeliever what satisfies him he will say, "To be rich", but when he makes more riches he wants more riches. You ask another unbeliever what he wants, and he will say "power". But once he achieves power, he wants more power, and enough is never enough.

The believer saved by Grace does not live his life so uncertainly. When he runs, he runs toward a certain goal. When he boxes, he aims at his target, not at the air. What is the goal, the aim, the purpose of the Christian? Why, Beloved, is it not to glorify the One who saved us from eternal damnation? For the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 6:20 (KJV) "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

We are bought with a price – a terrible price. See Him on the Cross, hanging in agony, pouring blood down the tree. That should have been me; that should have been you. We are bought with every stripe, every nail, every tear, and purchased with the precious Blood of Christ. My goal must be to glorify the One Who died for me. I must lift up and praise His holy name, even with my last breath. Each one of us must glorify God in Christ ... but

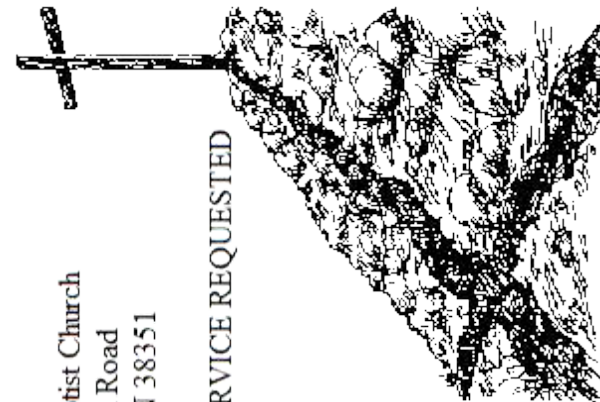
this Church itself has the goal of glorifying Jesus:

Romans 15:5-6 (KJV) "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: {6} That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have no energy to battle within, but our goal is to – with one accord, with one voice – glorify Jesus. We are to work for Him, to do His will, to shine in this wicked and perverse world and in so doing lead others to a place where they might be saved. In just a little while we will

The goal of the Christian is to _____ Jesus Christ while we are in this life. (1 Corinthians 6:20; Romans 15:5-6)

have a Vacation Bible School at Rock Hill. Children, youth, and adults will be here to learn about Jesus. Some will come because of the fun, or because they usually go to Vacation Bible School. Many may not even think about Jesus – for them its all about the food and the games. As we approach this time let us remember that our goal is to glorify Jesus, to lift Him up, to tell all who come that He alone is the only Way, Truth, and Life. Let's all work together to – I pray – lead as many of these children, youth, and adults to Jesus as possible. God Bless you all!



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