

Series: Divine Joy

“Winning the Race”

C.R. 4-8-18

Text: Philippians 3: 12-14

Intro: I read this week that a good breakdown of Chapter 3 is Paul’s biography. His Past (1-11), His Present (12-16), and His future (17-21). With that being said we have taken a look at his past. We are now going to look at what Paul wrote about his present. Paul is using a lot of athletic terms in the text, and what it takes to win the race. We are all very aware that great athletes work hard to be great athletes. Paul gives us some great teaching today on how we can win the race. Let’s take a look.

1) To Win the Race We Must Have the Desire to Win. (v.12)

- a. But I follow after. He pursued.
- b. Great athletes have great desire. It’s what gets them up early to work out, to eat right, to get the right amount of sleep.
- c. Illustrate: There have been many who have had natural talent, but they lacked desire.
- d. Mark was telling me this week how Alex Rodriguez took 600 ground balls a day at practice.
- e. The question is not God’s greatness, the question is do we desire the greatness of God to work in our lives.
- f. Do we pursue his will, and his work as the hunter pursues the prey.

2) To Win the Race We Must Realize the Dangers (v. 13)

- a. There is great danger in being satisfied.
- b. Great athletes realize that they must continue to train and push themselves.
- c. Harry came out of the manager’s office with a look on his face dismal enough to wilt the roses on the secretary’s desk. “You didn’t get fired?” she asked. “No, it’s not that bad. But he sure did lay into me about my sales record. I can’t figure it out; for the past month I’ve been bringing in plenty of orders. I thought he’d compliment me, but instead he told me to get with it.” Later in the day, the secretary talked to her boss about Harry. The boss chuckled. “Harry is one of our best salesmen, and I’d hate to lose him. But he has a tendency to rest on his laurels and be satisfied with his performance. If I didn’t get him mad at me once a month, he’d never produce!”
- d. Many are self-satisfied because they compare their running of the race with other Christians, usually those who are not making much progress.
- e. If Paul had of done this he would have been tempted to be proud, but instead he compared himself with Christ.

- f. Danger of False Estimation of our spiritual condition.
- g. The church at Sardis had “a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Rev. 3:1). They had reputation without reality. The church at Laodicea boasted that it was rich, when in God’s sight it was “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). In contrast to the Laodicean church, the believers at Smyrna thought they were poor when they were really rich (Rev. 2:9). Samson thought he still had his old power, but in reality, it had departed from him (Judg. 16:20).
- h. Also, Self evaluation is dangerous. We may make ourselves better than we are, and we may make ourselves worse than we really are.
- i. Paul was not satisfied with his Christian life nor should we be.

3) To Win the Race We Must Have Clear Direction (v.13)

- a. “Forgetting behind” “Reaching Forth”
- b. Paul also uses the phrase “this one thing I do”
- c. “To Forget”, does not mean to fail to remember, it means no longer influenced or affected by.”
- d. Some people are distracted by the success of their past, and some people are distracted by their failures.
- e. You break the power of the past by living for the future.
- f. *We cannot change the past, but we can change the meaning of the past. (Wiersbe)
- g. *Too many Christians are shackled by regrets of the past. They are trying to run the race by looking backward. No wonder they stumble and fall and get in the way of other Christians. Some Christian runners are being distracted by the successes of the past, not the failures, and this is just as bad. “The things which are behind” must be set aside and “the things which are before” must take their place. (Wiersbe)
- h. Paul had clear direction. He was concerned about one thing, not many things.
- i. He was going to specialize instead of spreading out and doing too much.
- j. He would keep the main thing the main thing.
- k. Great athletes specialize and focus on what they are really good at.
- l. Illustrate: Jordan and basketball, Jordan and baseball.
- m. “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down” (Neh. 6:3). “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). Concentration is the secret of power.
- n. If a river is allowed to overflow its banks, the area around it becomes a swamp. But if that river is dammed and controlled, it becomes a source of power. It is wholly a matter of values and priorities, living for that which matters most.
- o. What is your one thing today?