

Series: Divine Joy

“Winning the Race” (Part 2)

C.R. 4-15-18

Text: Philippians 3:14-16

Intro: Today we will continue with the theme of winning the race. In the section that we are in Paul uses several athletic terms. As a matter of fact, it would be good if we could picture the Apostle in a race. He is panting for breath and straining for every inch. He is not looking back but he is pressing forward because he knows that there is a prize waiting at the other end.

Last week we discussed winning the race and in order to do so we must have the DESIRE to win. Also we must realize the DANGERS involved with being satisfied and comfortable. We then discuss in order to win we must have clear DIRECTION. Let's continue our look at what it takes to win the race.

1) To Win the Race We Must Have Determination (v.14)

- a. “I press.” This same verb is translated “I follow after” in Philippians 3:12, and it carries the idea of intense endeavor. The Greeks used it to describe a hunter eagerly pursuing his prey.
- b. You can't become a great athlete by reading books about it, or hearing someone lecture on it, or cheering from the stands.
- c. You become great by entering the race and being determined to win.
- d. Paul was a determined man when he was lost without Christ. He also used that same determination in winning people to Christ.
- e. Can you imagine what would happen if we put the same amount of energy into our spiritual life as we do our hobbies. Golf, fishing, shopping, yard work...etc...
- f. There are two extremes to avoid here: (1) “I must do it all” and (2) “God must do it all!”
- g. The first describes the activist, the second the quietist, and both are heading for failure. “Let go and let God!” is a clever slogan, but it does not fully describe the process of Christian living. What quarterback would say to his team, “OK, men, just let go and let the coach do it all!” On the other hand, no quarterback would say, “Listen to me and forget what the coach says!” Both extremes are wrong.
- h. The fact is that God works IN us so that he might work THROUGH us.
- i. We must grasp John 15:5 and clearly understand who the vine is and who the branches are.
- j. With His power and our Determination, we can win the race.
- k. What is the prize? It is the “full and complete gaining of Christ for whose sake everything else has been counted as loss”
- l. Jesus is the prize and my friend he is worth running the race for.
- m. Read 1 Cor 9:24-27**
- n. The Laurel wreath of the Olympic games will fade but the crown that Christ gives never will.

2) To Win the Race We Must Have Discipline (v. 15-16)

- a. It is not enough to run but we must run within the rules.
- b. In the Greek games the judges were very strict about the rules. If you violated any rule you were disqualified. You did not lose your citizenship, but you were disqualified.
- c. We must remember the spiritual rules that have been laid down in the word of God.
- d. One of the greatest athletes ever to come out of the United States was Jim Thorpe. At the 1912 Olympics at Stockholm, he won the pentathlon and the decathlon, and was undoubtedly the hero of the games. But the next year officials found that Thorpe had played semiprofessional baseball and therefore had forfeited his amateur standing. This meant that he had to return his gold medals and his trophy, and that his Olympic achievements were erased from the records. It was a high price to pay for breaking the rules. (Thorpe's medals were reinstated in 1985 by the Olympic Committee.)
- e. We must hold to our convictions and bring others along behind us who will as well.
- f. Paul is not writing this way to magnify himself but to motivate us.
- g. Christianity is too often a spectator sport. Many sit in the stands and applaud what they like and boo at what they don't like.
- h. Paul is challenging the spectators to come down out of the stands and get in the race.
- i. Some were. He called them "perfect" or mature. Paul encourages them to keep running. Don't get complacent.
- j. Not all were mature, and some were even "otherwise minded".
- k. When it comes to Jesus we must run on the same road.
- l. The issue is not what I think or what you think. The issue is what does the Judge say about it.
- m. *Bible history is filled with people who began the race with great success but failed at the end because they disregarded God's rules. They did not lose their salvation, but they did lose their rewards (1 Cor. 3:15). It happened to Lot (Gen. 19), Samson (Judg. 16), Saul (1 Sam. 28; 31), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). And it can happen to us.