

1Corinthians – Week 34

I. Review (Chap. 9:19-23)

A. Paul relinquished his freedom in Christ so that he could win people to Christ by submitted to their amoral customs and practices:

- i. Paul followed Jewish customs in order to win Jews.
 1. Ex. He did not eat pork in the presence of Jews.
- ii. Paul followed Gentile customs in order to win Gentiles.
 1. Ex. He ate pork in the presence of Gentiles.
- iii. Paul submitted himself to those who consciences were weak
 1. He abstained from meats offered up to idols so as to not offend the weak. (cf. 1Cor. 8:13).

B. Paul made himself a servant to win as many as possible to Christ!

II. Continuation

A. Paul's Disciplined Life

i. Paul compares the Christian's walk to running a race:

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

a. Every three years, the city of Corinth hosted the famous Isthmus Games

i. Those who signed up for a particular race were expected to run.

ii. Even though all the contestants ran, only one gets the prize!

iii. Is Paul saying that only one Christian per congregation that will get the prize? No!

iv. I believe his point is this:

1. Not everyone that enters the race is going to win!

2. You don't get the prize by simply running the race.

3. You get the prize if you WIN the race!

4. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to run in such a way that they may WIN!

b. Winning the spiritual race is not determined by speed, but by how you run the race.

i. Many decades ago, a college football player named Roy Riegels picked up a fumble and ran across the field for a touchdown!

ii. There was one problem: He ran the wrong way!

iii. It did not matter to his team if he ran with speed or style or sincerity. His error cost the team the game!

c. In Christianity, there is a right way and a wrong way to run.

i. What are wrong ways to run?

1. Being entangled in sin (Heb. 12:1), like having a steady diet of arrogance, complacency, ignorance, immorality, etc.

d. Paul now goes into the several principles for winning a race...

ii. The principle of self-control

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

a. An athlete exercises self-control in all things:

i. He does not eat or drink anything he feels like eating or drinking.

ii. He must put a great deal of effort and devotion into his training.

iii. You can imagine when an athlete, who runs around the track and doing calisthenics only to see his friends relaxing and eating all kinds of junk, may find himself wondering if all his efforts is worth it!

b. Paul's disciplined life was manifested by his relinquishing his freedom to win others to Jesus!

c. Paul mentions the next principle for winning a race...

2. The principle of a motivation

a. 1Corinthians 9:25b (ESV), “... *They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable*”

i. An athlete endures the grueling practices because he is motivated by the prize!

1. During those days, the winner of the Isthmus games received a wreath of leaves!

2. He would wear the wreath as a crown and would receive cheers from the crowd!

3. As time went by, the wreath eventually faded to brown, crumbled and discarded.

4. However, a Christian’s motivation is to obtain a wreath that doesn’t fade nor crumble!

ii. What is the Christian’s wreath?

1. 2Timothy 4:7-8 calls it the crown of righteousness.

2. 1Peter 5:4 calls it the crown of glory

3. James 1:12 & Revelation 2:10 calls it the crown of life.

b. Paul mentions another principle for winning a race...

3. The principle of efficiency

a. 1Corinthians 9:26 (ESV), “*So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.*”

i. A runner runs with the prize in view; not aimlessly, wasting energy.

ii. A boxer does not punch the air, wasting energy; he makes every punch count!

iii. In other words, the effort that is used must be effective in achieving the desired goal.

iv. Finally...

b. The principle of playing by the rules

i. 1Corinthians 9:27 (ESV), “*But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*”

1. One of the saddest things in any race is the possibility to persevere through all the training, exert all of the energy to run the course only to be disqualified because the rules were broken!

2. There are rules to be followed in a race or else the race is forfeit!

3. The spiritual race a Christian runs is no exception!

4. What are the rules? The New Testament teachings!

5. The temptation is to run the race taking short-cuts, ignoring the rules or running in a wrong direction!

6. But doing so results in disqualification!

7. Therefore, Paul tells the Corinthians that he disciplines his body, keeping it under control of the Holy Spirit.

8. He did not want to find himself telling others what they ought to do while not living up to his own counsel (cf. 1Timothy 4:16).

9. A Christian gets disqualified of the prize if he is a hypocrite:

a. Those who cause others to stumble into sin

- b. Those who put an obstacle in the way of the gospel.**
- c. Consider Luke 13:23-24 (ESV), “*And someone said to him, ‘Lord, will those who are saved be few?’ And he said to them, ‘Strive [agonize] to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.’*”**
 - i. Casual runners and procrastinators will not win, since, for their action and attitude shows they are not motivated by the prize!**