

Seeking My King & His Kingdom

#47 Running To Win

Former New York Yankees catcher, Yogi Berra once said: "It ain't over 'till it's over." He unknowingly expressed one of the greatest principles in the Christian life. It matters little to have the lead at the beginning; what matters is how you finish. Victory is won at the finish line, not at the starting blocks. Moreover, the Christian life is not a 100-yard dash; it is a marathon that requires endurance and a lifetime commitment to keep running with the intent of finishing strong. The cliché, "It ain't over 'till it's over" also serves to remind you and me that even if we have fallen far behind in the Christian race there is still time to finish well.

Rom. 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have HOPE.

Paul's Driving Motivation:

I Cor. 9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

²⁵ And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

²⁶ I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air:

²⁷ But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. [disqualified]

Paul used the imagery of an athlete who must be disciplined if he is to win the prize.

1. Discipline means giving up the good and the better for the best.

2. The focused athlete must watch his diet as well as the hours he keeps.

- Refuse the wrong foods and late-night parties: There is nothing wrong with food and fun!
- But IF they interfere with your highest goals, they become hindrances and not helps.

3. The Christian does not "Run the Race" to get to heaven.

- I am in the race because I have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Only Greek citizens were allowed to participate in the Olympic games.
- They MUST obey the rules both in their training and in their performing.
- Any contestant found breaking the training rules was automatically disqualified.

II Tim. 2:5 And if anyone enters competitive games, he is not crowned unless he competes lawfully (fairly, according to the rules laid down).

4. In order to give up his rights and have the joy to win the lost and build up the saints, Paul had to discipline himself. He sacrificed immediate gains for eternal rewards; immediate pleasures for eternal joy and glory.

- If we desire above all to serve the Lord and win His reward, we must pay the price now.

6. A Herald announced the rules of the contest, the names of the contestants, and the names and cities of the winners. He also announced the names who were disqualified.

- Castaway is a technical word that would be familiar to the Greek games.
7. Paul saw himself as a herald and a runner in the race. He was concerned that he would get so busy trying to help others in the race that he would ignore himself and find himself disqualified.
- It was not a matter of losing his salvation. The disqualified athlete did not lose his citizenship. He lost his opportunity to win the prize.
 - The whole emphasis is on rewards. Paul did not want to lose his reward.
8. EVERY believer can win an incorruptible crown when he stands at the Judgment Seat.
- Given to those who discipline themselves for the sake of serving Jesus Christ and winning lost souls. They keep their body under control and keep their eye on the goal.

In I Cor. 10:1-13, Paul warns us about the dreadful and severe consequences of sin. He challenges us to avoid sin and persevere in our Christian lives. He contends there is a very real possibility that many Christians will not finish their Christian race well.

Note: 1st word of chapter 10 after Paul's verses on running with discipline.

I Cor. 10:1-4 Moreover or For- This connects chapter 10 with the image of the race and the possibility of disqualification of chapter 9. There is the responsibility for godly discipline because there is also the real possibility of disqualification. What Paul considered a possibility in his own life now presents as a sad reality in the lives of God's people, the nation of Israel.

¹Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ And did all eat the same spiritual meat; ⁴ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Warning #1: Privileges Do Not Guarantee Success.

Paul uses the nation of Israel as his example to WARN the more mature believers that their experience must be balanced by caution. These 4 verses clarify that the Israelites who left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years were saved.

A. Israel Was Supernaturally Delivered From Egypt, a picture of salvation, by the power of God. They observed Passover, which was an act of faith.

[In I Cor. 5:7-8, Paul used the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12 to describe the benefit of the cross of Jesus Christ to the Corinthians.]

1. The Christian believer has been delivered from the bondage of sin by the power of God.
2. The saved status of the Exodus generation is seen in the use of the word "ALL" which is used 5 times in these 4 verses. Each one had the same opportunity and capacity to count for God to the maximum regardless of background.

B. Supernatural Direction & Protection

Just as they were "under the cloud," we experience God's protection and guidance.

1. We have the promise of God's guidance and direction by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.
2. Being in Christ, we are hidden and protected in God, our Savior. [Col. 3:3]
3. In Him we are super-conquerors. [Rom. 8:37]

C. Supernatural Liberation

As they "passed through the sea," we have passed from death to life. [John 5:24]

D. Supernatural Identification: All Were Baptized Unto Moses

Just as they were "baptized unto Moses," we have been baptized into Christ. [I Cor. 12:13]

E. Supernatural Nutrition: And All Ate The Same Spiritual Food

Israel ate the manna from heaven. The Lord Jesus is the 'Bread' from heaven who sustains our life and upon whom we are to daily feed by living in the Word, abiding in Him and counting on Him as our source of life.

F. Supernatural Libation: And All Drank The Same Spiritual Drink

We nourish ourselves on the spiritual sustenance God supplies. [John 6:63, 68; 7:37-39]

Paul makes a startling transition from their spiritual privileges as redeemed with numerous blessings, to God's disapproval.

I Cor. 10:5 But [Nevertheless] with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown [laid low] in the wilderness.

- Nevertheless emphatically brings out the contrast between how many were blessed {ALL} versus how many with whom God was not pleased. [MOST of them]
- Over 2 million people came out of Egypt. Yet only 2 adults, Caleb and Joshua, were allowed to enter the Promised Land - their inheritance.
- The rest were "laid low," as in 6 feet under. [carcasses scattered in the wilderness]
- These individuals were tragically disqualified to enter their inheritance by death.
- They did NOT go back to Egypt and get "unredeemed."
- The blood of the Lamb, which had taken them out of Egypt, was IRREVERSIBLE.
- They DID NOT lose what they had!
- They lost their inheritance and the reward God wanted to give them.

Caution: These spiritual privileges did not prevent the Jews from falling into sin.

Warning #2: Good Beginnings Do Not Guarantee Good Endings

Paul summarizes 5 stories from the 40 years of wilderness wandering that show a pattern of disqualification.

I Cor. 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

I Cor. 10:11 "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

These 2 verses bracket the context for the history lesson in verses 7-10.

Notice the sins that led to their disqualification for their reward.

Key Point: The SOURCE for all 4 of the sins = Craving Evil Things

This episode in Numbers 11 was about 1 year after the Exodus. Israel had been given the law, they had built the tabernacle and they had begun their journey. What were the evil things? Fresh vegetables! They were sick and tired of manna.

They wanted to go back to Egypt where there were cucumbers, garlic and onions.

Consider: Am I guilty of "craving" a new car, a larger home, a new partner, a new wardrobe, etc.? In light of eternity, these cravings are on the same level as cucumbers, garlic and onions.

Truth: Craving evil things to satisfy my flesh can keep me from finishing well.

Sin #1 = Idolatry

⁷ Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. [indulge in pagan revelry]

1. The idolatry referred to took place during the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai in Ex. 32.

a. Moses spent 40 days on the mountain. The people became fearful and restless.

b. They distrusted that God even existed.

c. Asked Aaron to create an alternative god for them. In great weakness, Aaron gave in.

d. With the creation of the golden calf, an orgy with eating and drinking ensued.

e. The Corinthians were guilty of idolatry through their temple feasts. [I Cor. 10:14-22]

Eph. 5:5-6 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, Nor Covetous Man, Who Is An Idolater, Hath Any INHERITANCE In The Kingdom Of Christ And Of God.

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

- Idolatry is putting anything or anyone in God's rightful place in my life.
- Consider: Our Christian experience can be an idol. Many fear an intimacy with the living God. The busier we stay in Christian activity, the less we have to deal with God on a personal level. So success in ministry can be an idol. Many expect and desire that their Christian experience and activity give meaning and purpose to their lives.

Sin #2 = Immorality

⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

1. The sexual immorality of God's people continued through their wilderness wandering.

Num. 25:1-9 practiced immorality when they participated in a Moabites' religious feasts.

2. The Corinthians were guilty of sexual immorality.

One member was having an affair with his step-mother. [I Cor. 5:1-2]

3. Others had to be commanded to flee sexual immorality. [6:18]

- Beware of the lure of the internet.
- Spend time in God's Word. We all have the same amount of time daily.

Sin #3 = Testing God

⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

1. In Numbers 21, they tested God by taxing His patience.
2. Continued to complain even though He faithfully provided for them. [Num. 21:4-9]
3. His provision of manna and water was inadequate and they despised it. [21:5]

Result: God destroyed them with serpents! Result of a lack of faith!

4. The Corinthians had given evidence of being dissatisfied with God's provision.
 - Disgruntled with God's servants [I Cor. 1:12]
 - Repulsed God with their sinful arrogance [4:18; 8:1]
 - Dissatisfaction with the Lord's supper by participating in pagan feasts [10:14-22]
 - Divided over class distinctions [11:17-34]

Sin #4 = Grumbling

¹⁰ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

1. The image of grumbling characterizes the entire wilderness experience [Ex. 15-Num. 17]
2. This sinful behavior began 1 month after the Exodus.
They grumbled incessantly for about 2 years.
3. Then God declared that all those 20 and up would not be permitted to enter the Promised Land, their inheritance.
4. They will spend their days wandering in the desert until the last rebel died. [Num. 14:26-35]

Consider: Paul's link with testing God demonstrates that grumbling is particularly associated with putting God to the test. [Ex. 17:2-3]

Their grumbling about food seemed to kindle His anger against them.

- He sent fire that consumed some of the people on the edge of the camp.

In Num. 16, Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. This resulted in Korah leading a rebellion. God took the lives of 15,000 of His chosen people because they were complaining about the way He was caring for them. This reflects a theme of ingratitude for all His blessings.

They wanted more. His presence, provision, availability and His power weren't enough!

It seems there comes a time in the lives of some rebellious believers when God "pulls the plug" and assigns a death sentence.

I Cor. 10:12-13 Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:

but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;

but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Jude 1:24-25 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵ To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.