

# Run in Such a Way to Win Outline

## *1st Corinthians 9:19-27*

### I. Context.

#### A. Christian liberty/freedom in Christ (Chapters 8&9).

1. The Corinthian church: *How much can I indulge in before it's a sin?*
2. Proper question: *What shouldn't I do so as to not make someone stumble in their spiritual lives?*
  - a. Chapter 8—*"can we eat meat offered to idols?"*
  - b. Chapter 9—*"Is it not my right to be compensated for my work in ministry?"*

### II. The mission: purpose and goal.

#### A. **"To win more for Christ"** (five times in verses 19-22).

1. By making myself a "slave" to all (verse 19).
  - a. "Slave" = *douloo* (gr) = to enslave to another, put into bondage.
2. Our calling as well: **Be imitators of me, just as I also am from Christ** (11:1)

#### B. Three illustrations (verses 20-23).

1. "To the Jew, those under the law, I came a Jew" (verse 20).
  - a. Paul placed himself in "bondage" to the Jew "to save some".
2. "To those not under the law (gentiles) I became a gentile, to win them to Christ" (verse 21).
3. "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak" (verse 22).
  - a. He brought the gospel down to their level.

#### C. Paul's philosophy in ministry (verses 22b-23).

1. "I become all things to all men" (verse 22b).
  - a. This is NOT "when in Rome do as the Romans do."
  - b. This is retaining your Christian convictions while appealing and relating towards others.

- c. “So that I may save *some*”—not all! We are called to be faithful (Matthew 25:23).

### III. The discipline (verses 24-27)

#### A. The metaphor of “running”.

- 1. Galatians 5:7; Philippians 2:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:5

#### B. The Corinthians knew about racing—the Olympics and the Isthmian Games.

#### C. The contestants: The runners (100ad)

- 1. Submitted by contract to strict discipline.
- 2. Agreed to a very strict diet.
- 3. Agreed to train under compulsion at a fixed hour in heat or cold.
- 4. Do not drink cold water or wine just when you want to.
- 5. Ten months of intense training followed by thirty days training under observation. Possible disqualification.

#### D. Two categories of runners: winner or losers—only one will win the race (no bronze or silver medals—Isthmian Games).

#### E. Mode of running—To win! (verse 24).

- 1. *We are to live our Christian lives as if our life depended on it.*

#### F. Only one type of winner—one who is disciplined (verse 25).

- 1. Self-control = vigorous control of appetite and passion.
- 2. What are we “self-controlling”?—Our tendency to be self-centered: putting our interest first, exercising my “rights”, “freedoms” and “liberties” at the expense of others.
  - a. Selflessness is NOT natural—selfishness IS natural.

#### G. Why would we do all this?—for the reward. (verse 25).

- 1. Runners compete to win a “**corruptible crown/wreath**”—Made of celery stalk.
- 2. Christians compete to win a “**incorruptible crown/wreath**”—2 Tim. 4:8—the crown of “righteousness.”

#### H. How is this obtained? (verse 27).

- 1. Through discipline.

a. Putting your body in submission—resisting its propensity to control.

I. What could happen if I fail?

1. You would be “disqualified” (verse 27) *Next week!*

## Run in Such a Way to Win Pastoral Notes

### *1st Corinthians 9:19-27*

Please open your Bibles to 1st Corinthians chapter 9... we will looking at verses 19-27 this morning...this has been my favorite passage in the Bible since high school... You who are or have been an athlete sometime in your life can relate to Paul's words here.

Football and track were my sports in my school days... when my youth pastor read and taught verses 24-27 to us in our youth Bible study... Paul's words resonated with me... **Run in a way you will win!...** if you're going to put all that time and effort in training... **run to win!...**

**Discipline your body..... make it your slave... Put it under submission...**Paul's words are great encouraging, motivational words to a young athlete... but of course... the meaning behind these words is referring to something much larger and far more important than some athletic training and event...these are vital words for our spiritual lives...

I've associated verses 24-27 to an experience I had thirty or so years ago... every time I think either of that story or these verses the two come together in my mind....I've told this before several years ago... but I can't help it... I must share it again... because for me... they go together.

We lived in Carlsbad California, a beach town in north San Diego County... Every year the town hosted "The Carlsbad 5000"... a 10K open invitational run/race... very popular... around 1500 runners/walkers would participate... quite a mix of participants...Olympian runners from Nigeria to the casual runner who had a donut before the race.

The race was to be held in a few weeks and I decided to run in it... along with the rest of my family... I hadn't run or jogged in many years... so I decided to begin running everyday after work...I would stop and run a five mile long boardwalk along the beautiful Pacific Ocean after work.

I decided I needed to know something about running so I read everything I could... I read all the running magazines... *Runner's World*... *Running*... I got into it!... after a couple of weeks of running and reading running magazines... I was an expert!

A few days before the Carlsbad 5000 I did my usual run... Running on the boardwalk... I see in front of me a tall thin man... looked athletic... running... but as I could see... he was running wrong...I knew because I had read five issues of *Runner's World*.

He's running much slower than I was... so I caught up with him... side by side we exchanged hellos then I thought I needed to help this guy "run right"... *to run in a way to win*... right?...so I said "*I've noticed how you are running... I've been doing a lot of studying about running and*

*everything... and you are running wrong... you're running on your toes... and if you run like that for too long... you could damage your feet!...*

He took that all in and said *Thank You...* and then he said...*Actually I'm working out special muscle groups.....Soleus...Flexor hallucis longus...Flexor digitorum longus...Tibialis posterior....Peroneus brevis....Peroneus longus...Hey... I'm late got to run! Got ten miles to go!*

He took off and left me in the dust... guess he didn't need my expertise... obviously he had buffeted his body...placed his body under submission!...made it his slave... Saturday came, the day of the race... I'm ready to run along with 1500 other runners...

The race was always started by a celebrity firing the starting pistol...this year it was Steve Scott... Perhaps the greatest runner America has ever produced... Olympian gold medalist... world records... I remember him being the greatest when I was in high school... Steve Scott!

I'd never seen Steve Scott before... but I knew about him!... He gets up to fire the starting gun... and lo and behold I HAD SEEN STEVE SCOTT BEFORE!... He was the guy I was telling how to run just a few days earlier!

Well... here I am again... telling people how to run...but this time through the God inspired and directed words of the apostle Paul...Great practical words for so much of living our physical lives... great advice for any athlete... but of course... Paul is using a metaphor to get across his greater, more important message....It is vital to put these words in context to understand the message Paul wants us to get.

### **Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27**

For the last two weeks we've been looking at Christian liberty...and how we as Christians should live within our freedom in Christ...We are truly free in Christ... we are no longer under the Law...When before Christ there were food restrictions after Christ there were no longer any food restrictions... Paul is specifically writing to the Corinthian Church who was wondering just how free are they?

*How many things can I indulge in before I cross the line of my liberty in Christ?...I'm free in Christ... how far can I go... before I tick God off?... How close can I get to the edge before I fall off into sin?*

Paul has responded to their questions by showing them and telling them... they are asking the wrong questions.... Instead of asking *how much can I do?....* you should be asking **what shouldn't I do so as to not make someone stumble in their spiritual lives?....**

The issue is not how free you are in the world.... But what freedoms should I give up to win some to Christ?... Today... immature...selfish fleshly Christians are concerned with how much

freedom they're entitled to... Mature, spiritual, godly, loving Christians are concerned with how many freedoms they may gladly set aside to reach others for the gospel.

In chapter eight the question was asked to Paul *Can we eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols?*... We know that idols are nothing... we know that meat is just meat... we know that there is only one God... so we know that eating meat sacrificed to idols means absolutely NOTHING!... So... what could be wrong in eating meat sacrificed to idols?

Paul taught them and us... that there is something far more important than your freedom to eat meat... or anything else... if eating sacrificed meat would in any way make a weaker brother stumble in his spiritual walk... don't eat the meat! ... My brothers salvation... my brother's spiritual life and condition is far more important than my eating steak!

In chapter nine Paul ups the illustration... same subject... but this time... he tells us about his rights... as an apostle he has the right to be compensated for his work in ministry... there are rights connected to being a minister of Jesus Christ... you heard his argument last week...

The bottom line was... in his particular situation... a minister of the Corinthian church... to take a salary from that church might have harmed his ministry... being a gentile church that had come out of the pagan marketplace... associating "motive" with "profit"... might have closed their ears to the presentation of the gospel thinking Paul was preaching for profit.

So... Paul has a right... to collect financial support... he is free to ask for that... but he chooses to forfeit that right... to not exercise his "freedom"... this sets the context for this morning... two parts to this... in light of all that... **1. The Mission**... Paul's purpose and goal... becomes our purpose and goal... and the dedication to that mission. **2. The discipline** to achieve the mission

## **1. The Mission**

### **Read verse 19**

Paul's objective... Paul's mission... Paul's purpose in ministry and life... **is to win more for Christ**... to lead more to salvation... and to do that he says he has **made himself a slave to all** (19)... this is radical thought then... and it still is.

For the Corinthian Church... they had come out of Stoicism which said *The free man is one who does as he wishes without regard for the opinion of others*...

Paul turns that on its head... making himself a slave to all!... slave is *douloo* in the Greek... it means to enslave... bring into bondage... here Paul BRINGS HIMSELF INTO ENSLAVEMENT FOR OTHERS... Paul has willingly and intentionally place himself in bondage... not only to God... not only a slave to Christ... But a slave to ALL PEOPLE....

A slave sets aside his freedoms... his rights... and here it is... the slavery Paul puts himself in runs on an attitude of self-denial... putting others interest above your own.

*Well... that's Paul... Paul had a specific calling from God to be a slave... my calling is to lay on a beach in Hawaii ...11:1 **Be imitators of me, just as I also am from Christ...**this is for all of us.... if you are a Christian you have a calling to win more for Christ...How's this look?*

To show us Paul lays out three illustrations...

### **Read verse 20**

Says the same thing in two different ways... **to the Jew** is the same as **those who are under the law...** What's he saying?... *In my liberty.... In my freedoms... I did not purposely offend the Jews...*

He's addressing his own people group... Paul was a Jew... He understands how important the Law was to the Jews...Many Jews had rejected the Messiah, Jesus Christ... so they were still "under the Law"...

Some of the Jews had come to Christianity but had not come to understand their freedom in Christ... so in effect were also still under the law... but Paul would not offend them in this... He loved them... He cared for them... He placed himself in bondage to them for their salvation.... listen to **Paul's huge heart for the Jew.**

### **Romans 9:1-3**

**9 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my countrymen, my kinsmen according to the flesh,**

Did you catch that?... *I wished that I myself was damned...separated from Christ if that would bring my Jewish brothers to Christ...*Paul was so self-less... so loving of the lost that he "wished" he was able to exchange his salvation for their eternal damnation..... That's a huge sacrifice!... He says in chapter 10:1 **Brothers, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is their salvation.**

Do we have such a heart for the lost?... those we know who are without Christ?....

Again... what is Paul trying to achieve with the Jews?... (20b) **So that I might win some...who are under the law...**he repeats this five times in these verses... 19-21...**so that I might win some...**

The second illustration... are the gentiles... the non-Jew... this is the people group Jesus specifically wanted Paul to reach...Jesus said that back on the road to Damascus...

### **Read verse 21**

He's meeting the gentile on their own ground... he's not coming to them as people under the law because they aren't under the law... these gentile brothers may offer Paul food that his Jewish brothers would see as violating the law... When with the gentiles Paul would eat the food... he is not under the law...

With the Jews... he wouldn't eat the same food so as not to offend his Jewish friends.... bottom line?... **food should not be an obstacle in reaching people for Christ!** ....

The third illustration he says:

### **Read verse 22**

Paul is strong... he is mature in the Lord... he has a very strong, well developed conscience... but he realizes many within the church are not as strong, mature and have weak undeveloped consciences.... So what **he does is he takes the gospel down to their level.**

He brought the gospel down to where they could grasp it... understand it... *I made it as simple as I could*... One may KNOW much about the Bible... may have a developed systematic theology... and in their arrogance flaunt it over the heads of the weak to impress them....

Not only abusing God's word... but not doing one good thing with it!..not Paul... no one knew as much about God's word than Paul....yet.....*I know a lot about God's word... but I took the ABC's so my brother will understand it.* WHY? \_\_\_\_\_ so that I may win some to Christ.

### **Paul's philosophy in ministry:**

Verse 22 has been one of the most abused verses in the Bible... many have used it for the very thing Paul is condemning... **I have become all things to all men...** This is important... we are not to actually become pagan if we are with pagans... we are never to forsake our Christian convictions... **this is not a call to rampant liberty to appeal to others.**

It's not a *when in Rome do as the Romans' do* mentality... Paul's not instructing us to go into bars and strip clubs to appeal to the lost... *I'll indulge in your sins so that you so I might reach you for Christ*" ....*You don't become a drunk to save a drunk....you just end up with two drunks*... No!

Listen to Galatians 4:12... Paul speaking to the gentiles in Galatia... **I beg of you, brothers and sisters, become as I am,**... I am in Christ, I am a new creature: old things are passed away...I'm not doing things of my old nature...all things are becoming new....BUT

**I also have become as you are...***I've met you where you are so that you may understand my giving to you the gospel of Jesus Christ!....I have cared enough about you to know WHO you are so that I can become relatable to you!*



St Augustin called this thinking “**sympathetically**”... He wrote: *A person who nurses a sick man becomes in a sense, sick himself.... Not by pretending to have a fever... but by thinking sympathetically how he would wish to be treated if he were sick himself....* Putting yourself in their shoes...

Why do you become all things to all men Paul?...WHY?... (22b) **so that I may by all means save some...** by the way... notice it’s “save some”...not “save all”?... not everyone... SOME... if you are out there sharing the gospel... don’t be surprised if some if not many refuse what you’re sharing.

Jesus pointed to this when He said “**Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**” —Matthew 7:14.... You’re doing good if you save some!... I think this takes pressure off of us as we share Christ... we are not responsible for results!...we are responsible to ONLY be faithful.

Matthew 25:23 **Well done good and** What?... clever, persuasive, charismatic, dynamic, person?... no...Jesus said... **Well done good and FAITHFUL servant....**why be faithful?. **so that I may by all means save some....** We are simply to be faithful.... God does the saving... it’s out of your hands.

That’s the mission... our purpose and goal... what does it require to achieve?... Personal discipline.

## 2. The Discipline

I’ve said in the recent past that the Christian life... the Christian worldview is in direct opposition to the world’s view.... There is an ominous tension between living for Christ and living in the culture... the whole idea of living a life so that I may save some for Christ means fighting gravity!..... to make it one must be disciplined.....spiritually disciplined.

What better metaphor could there be for living a spiritually disciplined life in order to complete the mission than running a race.... Paul loves the metaphor of the race... many think Paul himself was or had been a runner or an athlete of some kind...

Galatians 5:7-- **You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?**

Philippians 2: 12-14-- **Not that I have already [a]grasped it all or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

2 Timothy 2:5 -- **And if someone likewise competes as an athlete, he is not crowned as victor unless he competes according to the rules.**

And now he writes... verse 24

### Read verse 24

“**Do you not know**” is the same as “*Of course you know...*”...you know all about this... running races... The Corinthians knew all about what Paul was going to say concerning running races... Corinth was famous... among many other things... the *Isthmian Games*... basically the games were the Pentathlon... the first event would have been a long distance running event...

These games would take place every other year... they would have been very knowledgeable about the Olympic games as well... that took place every four years... they would have known what it took to be a contestant in the races...

The Stoic philosopher in that day Epictetus (**Epic-Tee-Tus**) wrote: *Those who say “I wish to win an Olympic victory must first consider the demanding task before them.... Should you desire to participate in the races... you would go through ten months of intense training... the most difficult training imaginable... this is the original agreement from the 1<sup>st</sup> century...*

- You had to submit yourself by contract to strict discipline.
- You had to agree to a very strict diet—giving up “sweet cakes”
- Agreed to train under compulsion at a fixed hour in heat or cold.
- You must not drink cold water nor wine just whenever you feel like it.

After the ten months... you would be admitted to the *candidacy for the games*, 30 days before the games began.... During those thirty days, all athletes were required to attend daily work out sessions to be evaluated, watched and monitored... only after all conditions of training were met could they be considered as participants in the games.

During those 30 days, many of the athletes would be “disqualified”...listen to this:

*“After one trains, now god says to you, come at last to the contest and show us what you have learned and how you have trained yourself... How long will you exercise alone?... Now is the time for you to discover whether you are one of the athletes who deserve victory, or belong to the number of those who travel about the world and are everywhere defeated.”*

Just two categories of runners.... Winners and losers...

It all came down to the one final event... the race... and the event... the race yielded ONE winner... then there were no bronze medals... no silver medals... *no trophies for everyone!*... JUST ONE WINNER.

### Reread verse 24

Paul is saying to us... ***We are to live our Christian lives as if our life depended on it***... simply entering the race... the Christian life with its mission... **to save some**... does not qualify one as a winner... one must not just join the race... but put every effort in it to “finish well”.

Let me say before I go on what this is **not** saying to us... that the Christian life is a competitive sport in which one seeks to outrun the other... putting those people in defeat... Only one winning the prize...

In the Christian race... God wants many winners... He wants His entire church to be a winner!... the prize here is NOT salvation... but usefulness in winning souls... hopefully there are many that have that as the goal of their race... so here... **there is only ONE TYPE OF PERSON WHO WILL WIN THE PRIZE... one who has self-control... disciplined”**

### Read verse 25

I love the Greek word for “**compete**”... *agonizomai*... do I have to tell you what English word comes from that?... *Everybody who AGONIZES self-control* ... we can conclude quickly those who do not exercise self-control will not win the race... you don't win the race shoving down a half a dozen donuts before the race... self-control... one of the *fruits of the Spirit*... Galatians 5:23

**22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control....** ***A good definition of self-control = vigorous control of appetite and passion***..... putting all appetite and passion under submission of the self... you do that... through the power of the Holy Spirit... it is a gift.

**What are we self-controlling?... *our tendency to be self-ish!***... self-centeredness... the tendency and temptation to put ourselves as number one... our interests... our liberties... our rights... our freedoms... ME, ME, ME!...(remember the context of chapters 8 and 9)

Selflessness is not easy... **IT DOES NOT COME NATURALLY**... you have to work at it... it is a constant effort... it is like preparing for and running a marathon... it's THAT hard!

***Why would we do this?***... why does anyone live like this?... as self-less people? there's a reward in it... (25b) **They then do it to receive a perishable wreath... but we an imperishable... or “incorruptible”**. Your translation may say “crowns”... a *stephanos*.

Let's look at the wreaths... or crowns:

**Perishable wreath**—Thousands of hours of training with only ONE winner winning what was actually a wreath made from a celery stalk... sometimes pine branches... but in Corinth it would have been celery stalks that would be rotten in four days!... a perishable wreath is hardly worth it in itself!... nobody trains like that and runs like that just to get a rotting celery stalk....

So as far as a perishable wreath is concerned... there must be a greater incentive for the runner than a celery stock wreath... of course there is... prestige... notoriety... fame... recognition...

**endorsements!**... 2022 Lionel Messi... Soccer star amassed 130 million dollars last year... I'm sure he got a trophy or two...a wreath.

The wreath is nothing... for the games... it was what came WITH the wreath....

But the problem with all that?... it is all temporary...the wreath itself is temporary and all that comes with it... fame fortune and status fades.... in a couple of years... someone will make 200 million in endorsements... the record books will be updated and in ten years only a handful of sports historians will know the name Lionel Messi....

For the Christian... the wreath is everything...

**An imperishable wreath**—a reward that will never perish... will continue to be honored through eternity!...that's a game changer!... that makes THAT wreath extremely valuable to get!...the reward itself is what's valuable!... you're doing it for the reward of the wreath not for fame... or recognition or for endorsements.... You are doing it for God and His great reward.

Listen to this...2 Timothy 4:8

**8 in the future there is reserved for me the crown...Stephanos... of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.** (His second coming).

One who desires this crown...a righteous crown must live life with the same determination as running a race requires:

**Read verse 26**

*I don't run meandering all over the place... I have my eyes focused on the goal... the finish tape... fixated!*...Paul carries this idea in Philippians 3:14... **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

The goal of the prize is to become like Christ in heaven!... the upward call of God is that time when God will call each believer up to heaven... IN HIS PRESENCE!...the moment we will receive that imperishable *Stephanos*... crown...wreath.

What often... most always prevents us from running in our Christian life in a way that we will come out victorious are all the "**encumbrances**" we put on ourselves... things that weigh us down...usually selfish desires... "stuff"

Paul tells us a couple of times... **all things are lawful for me but not all things are profitable**... not all things have a benefit for us...you fill your house with clutter and you go in and start thinking about cleaning it all up.... It's causing you stress.... You pick up item one out of 7 million... *I can't get rid of this... it's too good! It cost fifty bucks!... I'll keep it....* 7 million items later you haven't gotten rid of anything..... it's all "GOOD" stuff?..... so I will live in stress!

Those things are incumbrances.... Impediments preventing you to live the way you really want to live!... we do that in our spiritual lives as well...

Hebrews 12:1 **...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...** A runner runs in thin shorts and a light tee shirt... you don't run in a sheepskin full coat and galoshes...

Paul continues...

(12b) **I box in such a way as not beating the air...** he switches sports but they are related... the picture here is "Shadow Boxing"... punching holes in the air with your fists... WORTHLESS!... for a boxer... the hands need to build up resistance to pain.. resistance to the constant striking of your object....

Boxing the air achieves NOTHING... is worth NOTHING!... to train for boxing you need to be sparring with a real person... someone who hits back at you... this is a picture of the Christian who keeps learning spiritual things... learning the Bible... but never putting his acquired knowledge in to practice...that is like beating the air....

To win the race... you understand where the finish line is... you know the exact direction you must go to get to the finish line... you understand the devotion required to the challenge ahead as you run the race...

You don't run aimlessly... you don't beat the air...

### **Read verse 27**

Man... that is great advice to ANY athlete!... It is greater advice for ANYONE living the Christian life!... Paul says he must "**Discipline his body**"...I like the translation **I buffet my body**...literally it means to "**hit under the eye**"...causing a black eye... he's saying... I beat my body... punching my body... turning it black and blue into submission... Now Paul is not advocating self-flagellation...he's emphasizing the difficulty of all this...

He makes his body come into submission to him....

For the athlete this means resisting all the indulgences the body continuously demands... the body says relax when you should be working out.... The body says "*I need another bowl of ice cream*" when you should be having a spinach and kale shake!

The same greedy body is trying to control your Christian walk... we literally need to take control of our selves... our bodies... or it will take control of us..... why do all this?.... for Paul...

**NOTHING WAS TO DISPLACE PAUL'S ULTIMATE MISSION IN LIFE... SO THAT I MAY WIN MORE FOR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.**

**So that after I preached to others.... I myself will not be disqualified....** Which we will look at next week.