

GROW
The Right Race
1 Corinthians 9:25 – 10:33

Paul was a passionate follower of Jesus Christ. He was an amazing MODEL for anyone who wanted to know what real, effective discipleship looked like. He was a man who loved God and people deeply and who spoke God's truth to people clearly. He did not mince words! He did not soften the blow for those who needed a desperate warning. In our passage today, we will be given a much needed warning that applies to us as if he had read this morning's newspaper. This "old letter" is still making headlines.

How many of you are concerned about or confused by the number of spiritual leaders and Christians in general that are [giving way to immorality and sin of all kinds](#), or are simply [sinking into an APATHETIC sort of Christianity](#) that looks little to nothing like Christ in practical, daily life? I am horrified by it, and I am not alone. But instead of sticking my head in the sand or giving into mediocrity or fear, I want to LEARN from God's Word about how to protect myself from the very same fate. Are you interested as well? . . . Then let's get started.

1 Corinthians 9:25 – 10:13 NIV

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that **after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.**

How am I PROTECTING myself from being DISQUALIFIED?

~This is NOT about LOSING your SALVATION!

-Moses was disqualified along with most of the Israelites, but he was saved!

*Paul is talking about LOSING his PLACE in the RACE before the FINISH, as well as his potential REWARDS in heaven after his death!

2 Timothy 4:7-8 NIV

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown 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 longed for his appearing.

*He was also talking about the TRANSFORMATION of his life and body, both HERE on earth and FOREVER in heaven!

Philippians 3:10-13, 14-17 NIV

10 I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained. 17 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and **just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.**

If you and I want to GUARD AGAINST becoming disqualified from the race, then we need to make sure that we are getting every bit of help that is offered to us right now! We also need to PAY ATTENTION to what is happening within our own hearts on a day-to-day basis. Here are some further questions that will help us to stay in the race.

1. Am I LEARNING from those who have SUCCEEDED or FAILED before me?

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 NIV

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, **God was not pleased with most of them**; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 **Now these things occurred as examples** to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did--and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test Christ, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 **These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us**, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

The Children of Israel: 5 Failures

***The Failure to curb their CRAVINGS in gratitude to God. (Vs. 5) Numbers 11:4**

4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat!"

-Dissatisfaction with God's provision

-Dismissing the importance of their influence on other believers

***The Failure to WORSHIP GOD as their True Source. (Vs. 6) [Exodus 32]**

- Assuming that POWER comes from sources other than God!
- *GREED for Money, Fame, and Position.

Colossians 3:5 NIV

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and **greed, which is idolatry.**

***The Failure to maintain MORAL BOUNDARIES. (Vs. 7) [Numbers 25]**

- Worshipping SEXUAL PLEASURE

"**Idolatry**," the sin of the mind against God (Eph 2:3), and **immorality**, sins of the flesh, **are associated**, and are traced to lack of the acknowledgment of God and of gratitude to Him. An "idolater" is a **slave** to the depraved ideas his idols represent, Gal 4:8, 9; and thereby, is a slave to diverse lusts.

***The Failure to embrace God's daily GUIDANCE. (Vs. 8) Numbers 21:4-5 NIV**

4 They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; 5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"

- REBELLIOUSLY questioning God's specific guidance in our lives

***The Failure to accept God's Spiritual LEADERS. (Vs. 9) [Numbers 14]**

- Rejecting the spiritual leaders that God has given you.
- *Do you struggle to SUBMIT to leadership in your life?
- Attempting to establish your OWN spiritual leadership.

2. Am I keeping my GUARD up? 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 NIV

12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

- Don't ever simply ASSUME that you are always SAFE!
- Don't fail to accept God's ESCAPE ROUTES from temptation when they are given!
- *Sometimes they come BEFORE the real temptation begins. [Wal-mart]
- *Faithfulness BEFORE temptation brings strength DURING temptation!

3. In what ways am I disciplining my BODY for the sake of the Gospel and my own spiritual growth? (9:25a, 27a)

25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. 27 . . . No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave

- ~TRAINING vs. TRYING

"Any activity I can do by DIRECT EFFORT that will allow me to do an activity that I cannot NOW do by direct effort." **John Ortberg** – **The Life I've Always Wanted**

- *Spiritual DISCIPLINES: Fasting, Solitude, Learning Scripture, Silence

*Spiritual COMMITMENTS: Discipleship, Biblical community, Ministry involvement

4. What types of PRIZES am I striving to obtain? 9:24 -25

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

*What TEMPORAL prizes am I expending great energy to obtain?

[Money, Power, Fame, Pleasure]

*What ETERNAL prizes (crowns) am I striving to WIN?

[Crown: Rejoicing, Righteousness, Glory, Life]

-Temporal prizes that can be LEVERAGED for ETERNAL PURPOSE:

Friendship and Influence, Financial Resources, Joyful Experiences

5. In what ways am I spiritually just “beating the air?” 9:26

26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.

*RUN with PURPOSE.

-Running implies URGENCY!

-The word “aimlessly” means without a GOAL.

*HIT your TARGET by first AIMING at it! [My experiences as a BOXER – John Stine]

-Do I even know WHO or WHAT I am FIGHTING AGAINST?

*Spiritual Warfare: Our enemy IS aiming for you!

*Spiritual Weakness: My own vulnerabilities and strongholds

My goal is to HONOR CHRIST throughout my life and to FINISH the RACE for his glory (and some amazing rewards)! What is your goal?

Let's pray.