

J.J.

WIN SOULS FOR CHRIST (Updated)
1 Corinthians 9:24-27

1 Corinthians 9: 22...I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.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

Pray

INTRODUCTION :

In the past month, I was reflecting on 3 people's death.

2 WEEKS AGO, I was in Montreal. Zak and Bexy showed me an old building that got burned where it was used an AirBnB. Six people died in the building. One of them was an 18 year old who went to Montreal for vacation. She was the one who called 911 but it was too late. Her body was the last one found. We were looking at the building and thinking about the people who died there. We were talking amongst ourselves, "I'm pretty sure that the 18 year old girl, never thought that when she went to Montreal, that is going to be the place where she will breath her last breath." We were wondering was she saved? Does she know the Lord?

Afterwards, we went to Cornwall to attend Chicay's friend's husband's funeral. Chicay's officemate was a strong Christian and for years she was telling her husband to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and the husband did not. When they retired 2 years ago, they bought a boat, a new house and etc. After 1 year, the husband had pancreatic cancer. By God's grace before the husband died, he received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

The third one was Tom Ong. He was my schoolmate who I invited to give his testimony in 2019.

He was a former alcoholic and his family left him until he received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He stopped drinking and his family became whole again. In fact, God used him to bring his whole family to the Lord. I was shocked that he passed away. But I know I'll see him again. His FB posts would always be the Celtics, food in the Philippines, 80s and mostly Bible verses. His post says, "I'm a sinner forgiven by God."

At the end of the day, their bodies might have passed away. The girl's body was burned turned into ashes, accidentally. Vince and Tom's body were turned into ash by cremation but their souls live on. I fervently wish that the young girl received Jesus Christ before she died.

As a church, it is important for us to remember the reason why the church is still here and that is to WIN SOULS FOR CHRIST.

Quote : Soul-winning is the chief business of the Christian minister; it should be the main pursuit of every true believer. – Charles Spurgeon

WIN SOULS FOR CHRIST It's very important that we teach that. It's important we win souls for Christ. **Paul calls "souls" as the prize**

Why? I said earlier, the 18 year old girl and 5 others burned in that building. Vince and Tom was cremated, their bodies burned into ash. BUT THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE CHRIST, WILL BURN FOR ETERNITY IN HELL.

Look at how hell is described.

*Mark 9: 47.... be thrown into hell, 48 where
"the worms that eat them do not die,
and the fire is not quenched.'*

NOW IF WE GO BACK TO THE PASSAGE WE ARE STUDYING, Almost immediately after reading the passage, you will notice the allegory that Paul uses is sports.

When Paul is talking about runners running and boxers boxing, we can be sure that the Olympics is one of the things on his mind. There were four major pan-hellenic games during his time. There was the Nemean games, Pythian games, the Olympic games which was the first one that started and there was the Isthmian games which was held in Corinth every three years.

So when Paul is talking about sports, the Corinthians are very well aware of the allegory and the training, discipline, glory and victory that comes with it.

This time, when he talks about the disciplines of running and boxing, he is connecting it with "evangelism" or winning souls. Look at the previous verses.

1 Corinthians 9: ¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

Etymology : win; gain KJV “kerdaino” to get; to win him over; to acquire
In short : He wanted to win people over to Christ...to win souls for Christ.

What does it take to WIN SOULS for Christ?

I. DESIRE

²⁴Do 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.

Etymology : race “ stadion” where we get the word stadium

What is the prize? Based on the context and the previous passage we just read, **the prize is a soul for Christ**

In fact, this prize is so important and we know it's important in heaven that when we win a soul for our Lord, this is what happens in heaven.

Luke 15:10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Illustration : If you are a basketball fan...you remember that winning shot from Kawhi Leonard against the 76ers going to the NBA finals. He shot the ball at the buzzer for the win, but the ball didn't immediately go in. It bounced three times and the world was waiting with bated breath and then it went in and the whole Air Canada Centre and even the ones watching in their homes was in pandemonium. I believe this is what happens in heaven when a sinner repents.

WHERE DOES THE DESIRE COMES FROM?

The desire comes from knowing that the person you are talking with tomorrow whether it be your friend, your workmate, your parents and your loved ones or your enemies **will spend eternity in hell if they reject the forgiveness of God** brought by the death of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross.

That's why the Word of God says,

²²...I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Illustration : Some time ago, a teenager, Arthur Hinkley, lifted a 3,000-pound tractor with his bare hands. He wasn't a weight lifter, but his friend, Lloyd Bachelder, 18, was pinned under a tractor on a farm near Rome, Maine. Hearing Lloyd scream, Arthur somehow lifted the tractor enough for Lloyd to wriggle out.

It all starts with the desire BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT SOUL OF A PERSON IS AT STAKE.

Story : Last Sunday while Rebecca was here, she was telling the story that she was sharing the Gospel to Josh and she was in tears already that Josh doesn't understand that his soul will go to hell if he doesn't accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They kept on discussing it until the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of Josh and he believed in Jesus as the only way.

There was a time that Josh had to immediately go back from Montreal to Brampton because his grandmother was dying and he wanted to go back so that he can share the gospel to her.

Now if you have the desire, what you need in to do in order to win souls is....

II. DEDICATION

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.

Dedication means you are committed to it 100% even if the road becomes harder.

Example : You cannot say to your husband or your wife, I'm only 85% dedicated to you. When the going gets tough, I think I'll leave you.

When you are dedicated to a task or to a goal, you are ready to stick to it, even if sometimes things get tougher.

Etymology : agonizomai (to struggle; strenuous zeal) egkrateuomai (self-control)

Soul-winning is a tough business. If you show you are a follower of Christ and invite people to church or try to share your faith, expect that sometimes you will be ridiculed or teased or insulted at the very least or persecuted or killed at worst in countries that are hostile to the Gospel.

There is a reason why Paul uses sports and athletes as a metaphor in winning souls. It's because athletes know it takes dedication in order to win.

Look at the quotes of great athletes.

In Basketball :

“I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” – Michael Jordan

In Baseball :

“Stubbornness usually is considered a negative; but I think that trait has been a positive for me.”- Cal Ripken, Jr.

In Football :

“It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up.” – Vince Lombardi

In Hockey :

“You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.” – Wayne Gretzky

But why are they dedicated to it? IT'S BECAUSE THEY WANT TO WIN A TROPHY, A PRIZE, A RING.

Do you know the word “athlete” comes from the word “Athlon”, which means “prize”

That's why Paul said :

They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Let me explain what is this crown that Paul is saying :

The Olympic winner receives an wreath around his head. It doesn't last. **Today, we wear medals. IT'S GRADUATION TIME IN THE PHILIPPINES.** Most of you know the feeling of wearing a medal around your neck or the feeling that your son or daughter is wearing a medal. You feel the honor and the glory and joy of winning. You are proud of it. You post it in Facebook.

But what is the medal that Paul is talking about? If there is Facebook in heaven, what will he post about for our Lord Jesus Christ to see.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

You see the dedication of Paul and the other missionaries here so that the Thessalonians will be saved. It's not a one time crusade. They worked hard at it. Then look at what he wrote in verse 19 and 20

19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

Did you see this? When the Lord comes, it's not the amount of money, nor our titles, nor our education, nor our Benz or BMWs, nor our houses that we can boast before the Lord. **IT'S THE SOULS THAT WE HAVE DEDICATED OUR LIVES TO WIN.**

Now, if a person has the desire and has the dedication (saying he's all in through thick and thin), then the last piece of the puzzle is the “discipline”

III. DISCIPLINE

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

Do you notice how Paul switched his subject from preaching to others and now he's preaching to himself?

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.

In short, he's practicing discipline on Himself.

ESV : But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

The Greek term Paul uses for "discipline" here is *hypōpiazō*, which literally refers to beating something black-and-blue. In common use, it implies giving someone a black eye! Paul says he "beats up" his body, like a boxer, to toughen himself for the sake of his spiritual stamina.

Illustration : Kobe Bryant admitted that he wasn't the most athletic and the fastest basketball player but he wanted to be the best basketball player, so in order to do that he had to outwork everyone and he had to discipline himself.

He has what you call the 4 a.m. rule.

"Since his high school days, Kobe would wake up at 4 a.m. to focus on his craft. By the time his peers would join him to workout at 8 a.m., he already had a 4 hours advance.

At first, the impact wasn't visible. He wasn't substantially above his peers. He was a good player but nothing more.

Over the years, Kobe kept doing it. He kept waking up at 4 a.m. to get his workout, day in and day out. He never stopped.

The distance between him and his peers started showing. It wasn't magic. He had simply outworked them all. He then went on to become the legend we all know." - Aliou Sidibe

Of course, we all know Paul is only using sports as a metaphor so what is he disciplining himself about?

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

What is he preaching about? HE'S PREACHING ABOUT CHRIST!

NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY : WHAT IS HE DISCIPLINING HERE? HIS BODY. THIS IS THE ONE SEEN BY OTHERS OR HEARD BY OTHERS. NO ONE CAN SEE YOUR SOUL OR YOUR SPIRIT BUT THEY WILL SEE INSIDE OF YOU FROM WHAT COMES OUT OF YOU!!!

HE IS DISCIPLINING HIMSELF SO THAT HIS OUTSIDE LIFE, THE ONE OR HEARD BY OTHERS (OUR BODY AND OUR WORDS) WILL REFLECT THE ONE HE'S PREACHING ABOUT!!!!

When we preach (or tell others about Christ) what part of the body we use? THE TONGUE!!!
Look what James said :

James 3: 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

AND WHY IS HE DOING THAT?

I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Etymology : disqualified, castaway (KJV) “adokimos” not standing the test, “properly used of metals and coins”

And where are we disqualified from?....THE PRIZE

What is the prize again? WINNING SOULS FOR CHRIST!

Paul is saying , I DISCIPLINE EVERYTHING WITHIN ME, MY THOUGHTS, MY ACTIONS, MY WORDS... SO THAT I WON'T BE DISQUALIFIED FROM WINNING SOULS FOR THE LORD.

Illustration : When native converts of the island of Madagascar used to present themselves for baptism, it was often asked of them, “What first led you to think of becoming Christians?” The answer usually was that the changed conduct of others who had become Christians was what first arrested their attention.

SAMSON : Let's make sure we are controlling our thoughts, our actions and our words that we should be qualified to win souls. And even if you have fallen, God is a God of second chances you can be used like he used Samson even for the last time again.

CONCLUSION :

WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?

Missionaries went into a village in China and they shared the Gospel and the whole village never heard the Gospel and everyone started repenting and there was revival. And one of the village elders approached one of the missionaries who became a believer and said, “This is such good news!” And then asked, “When did this happen?” Did this happen 2 weeks ago? 2 days ago?” The missionary replied, “No, this happened 2000 years ago.”

The village elder's face fell and it confused the missionary. The village elder then said, “What took you so long? This happened 2000 years ago? What took you so long?”

Our family, our friends, nations need to hear the Gospel from churches like us. Even though we are not perfect. God can use anyone here as long as their heart is for the lost because that's the heart of our Lord.

May we have the same desire, dedication and discipline (to get up again and again) to win souls for Christ.

**LET'S WIN SOULS FOR CHRIST!!!
AND IT TAKES DESIRE, DEDICATION AND DISCIPLINE**

S.G.D.