

# The Victor's Crown

1Cor 9:24-27

## Introduction:

1. In ancient Greece, special athletic competition was held in different cities.
2. Every five years the Grecians would hold the most famous of these games called the Olympia Festival from which is derived our modern Olympics
3. Every two years the Isthmian Festival was held in the city of Isthmus which was located only eight miles from the city of Corinth.
4. The apostle used athletic metaphors to teach Biblical truths since he knew that the Corinthians would have seen these athletic games
5. My wrestling experience in high school was not good
6. A scrawny kid in West Texas attended a small high school. They didn't have a wrestling program, but the kid read a book on wrestling and asked the assistant football coach to enter him in some wrestling matches. The coach agreed to help. The young man was neither strong nor skillful, but he had one enduring quality - he refused to give up. He won every single wrestling match, because he tenaciously held onto his opponents and wore them down. By the end of the season, he was undefeated and made it to the state finals for his weight class. The kids' opponent was a two-time state champ who was a bona fide college prospect. As the scrawny kid faced the state champion, the champion made a couple of quick moves and soon had the little kid from West Texas on the mat. The coach knew that his athlete was about to lose, and he couldn't bear to watch it, so he turned his head away. Suddenly, the coach heard the roar of the crowd and when he turned his head back around, his kid was on top of the state champ, pinning him. He had won the match. The little guy bounced across the mat and hugged the coach and said, "I won, I won, I won!" The coach said, "I'm sorry, but I missed it. I thought you were about to lose so I turned my head away. What happened?" The kid said, "Coach, that guy was good. He had me twisted like a pretzel on the mat. But know me, Coach, I never quit. I refuse to give up. So I opened my eyes and there in front of my face was a big toe. I didn't even know if it is against the rules or not, but I bit into the big toe with all my strength... and coach, it's amazing what you can do when you almost bite off your own big toe!"
7. Theme Statement: Godliness and spiritual discipline are what many Christians need the most but often seem to want the least.
8. Is your life characterized by godliness and spiritual discipline?
9. Let's look at three important highlights of the victor's life.

## I. The Victor's Preparation - vs. 24

- God often gives opportunities to those who are prepared to handle them
- A five-year study of 120 of the nation's top artists, athletes, and scholars has concluded that drive and determination, not great natural talent, led to their extraordinary success.
- It is not always the Christian with the most talent or the most ability that makes the biggest impact for the Lord—it is often the one that has the most spiritual discipline in preparing himself for the race.
- Notice two aspects regarding the victors' preparation.

### A. An Enlistment – vs 24

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

- This passage is clear that not all will run; not all will participate.
  - Only those who make the conscience decision to do so, actually will.
  - Before a person can stand on the winner's platform as a victor - that person must choose to participate.
  - Oh, that God would grant us more Christians willing to get out of the grandstands and into the race.
  - In ancient Greece not just anyone could participate in these games.
  - There were strict guidelines as to who was allowed to participate
  - In order to enlist in these Olympic games a Grecian would have to be proven in three areas of his life
1. To enlist one must have proved his citizenship
    - a) *The athlete could only participate in the highly esteemed race if he could show that he was a citizen of Greece.*
    - b) *In order to run our spiritual race we have to first be a citizen of God's country, we have to be a saved individual—a Christian.*
  2. To enlist one must have proved his conduct
    - a) *The athlete would also have to show that his lifestyle was honorable enough to represent his country.*
    - b) *If we are going to run worthy of the vocation in which we are called, our conduct must be consistent with the person we represent—Jesus Christ.*
  3. To enlist one must have proved his conditioning
    - a) *The athlete would have to prove that he had trained for the event.*
    - b) *If we are going to receive the victor's crown we have to condition ourselves through regular Bible reading, prayer, church attendance and other important spiritual disciplines.*
    - c) *Christianity is not a spectator sport.*
    - d) *The victor first enlisted himself in the race. Are you willing to enlist in the Christian race?*

Now, let's notice the 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect of the victor's preparation.

### **B. An Enlightenment – vs 24**

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

1. Paul is not implying that only one person will receive these heavenly crowns, but just simply enlisting in the race does not guarantee success
2. And just because you are saved does not automatically mean that you will have crowns to place at the feet of Jesus Christ.
3. Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

## **II. The Victor's Participation - vs 25**

- Here we see the intensity by which the victor participates in the race.

### **A. He Devotes Himself -- vs 24**

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

1. This runner wasn't out for a casual stroll. He was running with dedication; he was striving to win.
2. "strive for the mastery" is the word "agonizomia" from which we derive our English word agonize or agony.
3. In order to gain the victor's prize, it's going to take some work.
4. You will have to be willing to devote yourself to the cause.
  - a) Some will get distracted.
  - b) Some will get discouraged.
  - c) Some will get defeated.
  - d) Some will get determined to finish.

### **B. He Disciplines Himself - vs 25**

25 And every man that striveth 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 beateth the air:

1. They did those things they did not feel like doing.
2. 2Tim 2:5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.
3. If we do not rule our desires, our desires will rule us.
4. I read that John Wesley traveled an average of 20 miles a day for 40 years. He got up every morning at 4:00. He preached 40,000 sermons. He produced 400 books and knew ten languages. At the age of 83, he was annoyed because he couldn't write more than 15 hours per day without his eyes hurting. At the age of 86 he was embarrassed that he could not preach more than twice a day. He complained in his dairy that there was an increasing tendency to lie in bed until 5:30 am.

### **C. He Denies Himself - vs 27**

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.

1. The athlete abstains from those things the flesh craved
2. The Olympic athlete must give up some things to master his sport
3. The swimmer gets up at 5:30 and swim 2 hours before school and then swim 4 hours after school, then do homework etc

We saw - The Victor's Participation

We saw - The Victor's Preparation

### **III. The Victor's Prize -- vs 25b**

- Here we will find the prize that comes with fulfilling this race
- Let's look at two special honors that come with living a godly and disciplined Christian life

#### **A. An Incorruptible Crown - vs 25**

25b ... Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

1. In the days of the Greek games the reward was a literal crown
  - a) *Made of laurel or pine*
  - b) *Not much of a prize today*
  - c) *But the victor was exempted from taxes for life*
  - d) *Children of the victor were given free education for life*
  - e) *The victor was exempted from military service for life*
2. "Corruptible" = wilt or decay
  - a) *A crown woven from laurel or pine would decay or wilt*
  - b) *The crown that the believer wins is not corruptible*
3. The athlete wins a ribbon, trophy or medal
4. Often those are forgotten and end up in a box in the garage
5. We have the opportunity to win a crown that will not fade away
6. Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

#### **B. An Influential Cause - vs 27**

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.

1. The apostle realized that part of the reward was an opportunity to influence others through preaching.
2. This was an opportunity that he considered a great privilege.
3. May we never take our spiritual influence for granted, but rather recognize what a great privilege it is and use it to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion:

1. Derek Redmond was a great runner, but he was an even greater finisher. Derek will be forever remembered for his staggering performance in the 400-meter men's semifinals during the summer Olympics of 1992 in Barcelona, Spain. After years of training, persistence, and self-discipline, Derek was competing on the world stage. His dream had become a reality. Halfway through his 400 meter race, Derek pulled a hamstring muscle and collapsed on the track. Writhing in pain, he watched the other runners quickly pass him and his dream of winning died. But staying down wasn't in Derek blood. Though winning was out of the question, finishing wasn't. As the medical crew arrived with a stretcher, Derek said, "There's no way I'm getting on that stretcher. I'm going to finish my race." In a stadium packed with 65 thousand fans and with millions viewing around the world, Derek slowly struggled to his feet. In spite of the agonizing pain, he began hobbling towards the finish line in last place. Tears streamed down his face and his heart filled with disappointment. Yet, he was determined to finish the race. At that point, a large man from the top row of the stands began to run towards the track. It was Tim Redmond, Derek's father, disregarding security guards, running over people, determined that no one would stop him, he ran to his son's side. At first Derek tried to push him away, not realizing it was his father. He thought someone was trying to get him to quit the race. "Derek it's me." Recognizing that familiar voice Derek said, "Dad, I have to finish the race." "If you're gonna finish the race, then we'll finish it together." With those words, his father took his son in his arms, and together they began to hobble down the track. By this time, the other runners had completed the race, and the crowd realized that Derek wasn't hobbling off the track, but rather he was hobbling towards the finish line on one leg with his father at his side. In total disbelief, 65,000 fans stood to their feet and began to cheer. The roar of the crowd increased with every painful step. Approaching the finish line, Jim Redmond stepped aside to allow Derek to cross by himself. The crowd exploded into thunderous applause and emotional release. Derek collapsed in his father's embrace, and both wept on each other's shoulders, along with 65,000 fans and millions of viewers. Derek had finished a race the world would never forget.
2. This journey begins with a decision to dedicate yourself to God's plan.
3. I believe with all my heart there is not a person in this room who couldn't live an extra ordinary Christian life.
4. Many Christians in the past have received this crown, and you can too.
5. No price is too high, no sacrifice too much, to receive this crown.
6. Will the Victor's crown be your crown?

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