



RUNNING WITH DETERMINATION

November 5, 2018

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27 NKJV – (24) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. **(25)** And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. **(26)** Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. **(27)** But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul uses runners in the Greek games as examples of how we are to live as Christians. The first thing to notice is the utmost tension, energy, and strenuous effort pictured by athletes straining for the finish line in hope of the glory of winning. "This is the way to run," says Paul, "if we want to attain our potential."

This requires steady, intense concentration or focus of the runners. They cannot afford to become distracted by things off to the side of their course. If they do, their effectiveness in running will surely diminish. Keeping focused requires control—not allowing distractions to interfere with the responsibility at hand. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," says Jesus (**Matthew 6:33**). Here, the issue is single-mindedness. James writes, "He who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. . . . He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (**James 1:6, 8**). Controlling our focus can go a long way toward making the run successful.

Paul then says the victorious runner sets Christians an example of rigid self-control: "Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things." It is not only a matter of concentrating while he is racing, but in all areas of life because his whole life impacts on the race. The runner religiously follows a rigorous program within a rigid schedule each day: He rises at a certain hour, eats a breakfast of certain foods, fills his morning with exercises, and works on his technique. After a planned lunch, he continues training, eats a third planned meal, and goes to bed at a specified hour. Throughout, he not only avoids sensuous indulgences, he must also abstain from many perfectly legitimate things that simply do not fit into his program. An athlete who is serious about excelling in his chosen sport must live this way, or he will not succeed except against inferior competitors. He will suffer defeat by those who do follow them.

Keep this in mind, we all run the race and only one gets the prize! But if Jesus is your coach, you will always be a winner. I encourage you to run with determination!

SCRIPTURE READING: COLOSSIANS 1:11-12

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something.