

RUNNING THE RACE TO ACHIEVE ULTIMATE VICTORY

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Analogies and Metaphors Used by Paul:

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours". 1 Corinthians 9:24 AMP

Ephesians 6:12 (KJV): ...*"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places"*. The word "wrestle" is "pale" - NOT Pale....but "pah-lay" from the root word palestrum. This is specific meaning to the churches in those major cities where Paul planted churches. The Palestra was a multi-level combat sports arena in the ancient Greek culture where all kinds of wrestling and physical contact sports occurred. Paul used that actual example to illustrate to the Ephesians (and us) that we face a level of demonic structure in the principalities of hell which is totally unfathomable!

Hebrews 12:1: *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."*

Athletes throughout Greece would converge on the Isthmian Games every two years during the spring. (Olympics every 4 years...in Athens, Greece)

The athletes would compete in foot races, wrestling, boxing, throwing the discus and javelin, the long jump, chariot racing, poetry reading and singing. (You did not know singing was considered an athletic event, did you?). According to several inscriptions that are contemporary to Paul, women competed in these games as well. The inscriptions mention women winning the 200-meter dash as well as the war-chariot races.

Since there were no permanent accommodations at the site, the people

stayed in tents in the surrounding fields. Fixing or selling tents would have given Paul and his new found colleagues, Aquila and Priscilla, ample employment as well as opportunities to share the gospel with those attending the Games (Acts 18:3). Joining him also were two of his disciples, Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

2 Tim. 2:5: Paul states, *"If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."* Most likely Paul had in mind the oaths that the athletes took in the underground cave of the Palaimon. Here, the athletes swore that they would follow the rules in their training as well as not cheat in order to win the Isthmian crown.

In 1996 Olympic games, there was a sports shoe company that advertised the slogan, "You don't win the silver medal, you lose the gold."

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: *"Don't you realize that the runners in the Stadium, all of them run, but only one gets the medal? You are to run in such a way as to win. Everyone who is in athletic training exercises self-control (but they do it to win a medal that will fade away...!); so I am running in such a way as not to be without purpose. When I box, I do it in such a way as not to land my blows on empty air - instead I let my body know who is boss, and I make it my slave..."*

The point here is that the Corinthians must be serious about their mission, as serious as athletes are about their training (and as Paul is about his preaching).

2 Timothy 2:3 (NKJV): *"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*

Revelation 2:17: *"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person **a white stone with a new name** written on it, known only to the one who receives it."*

We, as Christians, should put every effort to win the prize of the high-calling of God. God expects it from us. We should expect nothing less from ourselves.

Practice doesn't make perfect; but, it helps us to understand that God expects us to honor him by living life with a "Spirit of Excellence" in our endeavors to be all we can be for Christ.