

“So Run!”
1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Introduction:

1. **IE:** In The 2nd Century - During The Earliest Times Of The Christian Church - There Was A Man Named Polycarp - Polycarp Had Been A Student Of The Apostle John - And Had Served As The Pastor Of The Church In Smyrna For Many Years - Now, He Was 86 Years Old! And The Roman Government Considered This Old Man To Be A Threat! Just Before He Was To Be Led To The Arena To Be Executed For His Faith In Jesus Christ, First By Wild Animals & Then By Fire, He Received A Letter From Another Pastor & An Old Friend - Ignatius - In This Letter, Ignatius Wrote: “Be Sober – As An Athlete Of God – The Prize Set Before Thee Is Immortality & Eternal Life!”
 - Ignatius Called Polycarp: An “Athlete Of God!”
 - When Examined By Men – Polycarp Was No Athlete!
 - He Was Old & Weak & Slow!
 - But When Examined By God & His People – Polycarp Was An Athlete Of God – The Greatest Kind Of Athlete!
2. This Morning - I Want Us To Remember:
 - That Every True Christian Is An “Athlete Of God!”
 - You May Not Be Athletic Physically!
 - But You Can & Ought To Be Athletic Spiritually!
 - How Do We Know That Christians Are Athletes?
 - Because Of What We Find In Our Text This Morning!
 - In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27!
 - Christians Are Athletes Because Christians Are In A Race!
 - Read Passage!
3. Paul Wrote To The Corinthian Church About Running A Race:
 - Because They Understood Something About Racing!
 - The City Of Corinth, By This Time, Had Been In Charge Of A Series Of Games For Nearly 500 Years, Called The Isthmian Games! Not As Well Known As The Olympic Games, But Still Very Important & Prestigious! Held Ever 2 Years, Athletes From All Over Greece Would Come Near Corinth In Order To Wrestle, Box, Have Chariot & Horse Racing, But The Most Important Competition Of Them All Was The Foot Race!
 - And The Winner Would Receive A Prize & All The Honor That The People Could Give Him!
 - And Using The Illustration Of A Foot-Race:
 - Paul Reminds Us All About How We Are To Live & Serve In Our Christian Lives!
 - In The Last Several Verses:
 - We Learned About **Who** We Are To Serve - Everyone Needs The Gospel / Good News Of Jesus Christ!
 - Now, We Learn About **How** We Are To Serve!
 - First, The Lord / And Then: Others! How?
 - Like We Are In A Race!
4. How Are You & I Living Our Christian Lives?
 - Are You Living / Serving / Sharing Like You Are In A Race?
 - We Find This Description Of The Christian Life, Not Just Here:
 - But In Hebrews 12:1 - “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us!”
 - And In Philippians 3:14 - “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!”
 - Every Christian Is To Be An Athlete For God!
 - And You Can Be / Must Be - No Matter How Young & Strong Or Old & Feeble You May Be! Remember Polycarp!
 - And Every Christian Is Running In A Race!
 - So - As It Says In 9:24 - Run!
 - “So Run!” And Run Well!
 - What Does It Take For You & I To Run & To Run Well?
 - Four Things! It Takes, Just Like Any Athlete:
 - Discernment / Determination / Desire / Discipline!
 - Discernment / Determination / Desire / Discipline!
 - “So Run!”

1. *Run With Discernment!*

- 9:24a - “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?”
 - In Order To Run & Run Well In The Christian Race:
 - You Need To Use Your Mind!
 - And Run With Discernment!
 - Think About Racing In General!
 - And Then, Think About The Specific Race You Are In As A Christian!
- Think About The Participants In A Race!
 - “Know Ye Not – Or, Don’t You Know – That They Which Run In A Race Run All?”
 - In Other Words - Everyone Who Starts In A Race Has One Goal - To Win That Race!
 - There Could Be 20 / There Could Be 2!
 - But They All Run!
 - Even If They Are Not The Favorite To Win!
 - They Still Run & Give It Their All!
 - The “Race” Mentioned Here:
 - Was A Relatively Short Race - One Stadion - From Which We Get Our Word For Stadium - About 180 Meters / Not Quite Half-Way Around A Modern Track! Because Of The Short Distance - The Runner Has No Time To Pace Himself - He Has To “Give It All He’s Got” For The Whole Race!
 - And Every Participant Understands This & Does This!
 - How About You?
 - Your Race Is Short Too! How Are You Running It? Are You Running It? James 4:14 - “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!”
 - Remember This & Run With All Your Mind!
- Think About The Prize Of A Race!
 - “But One Receiveth The Prize!”
 - Even Though Everyone Is Running & Doing Their Best – There Is Still Only One Winner!
 - And One Prize!
 - In Modern Olympics - 3 Prizes - Gold / Silver / Bronze - But Still Only One That Really Matters The Most - The Gold! Why? First Place Means You Are The Best!
 - But Just Because: All Are Runners, But Only 1 Is Winner!
 - This Truth Does Not Discourage / Dissuade The Other Athletes From Running!
 - Instead - It Motivates Them To Run!
 - To Run Harder / Smarter / Train More!
 - Every Runner Wants To Be The Winner!
 - How About You?
 - Are You Running Your Christian Race To Win, Or Just To Place Or Finish?
 - Don’t Be Discouraged! Keep Running!
 - And Run With All Your Mind!
- Think About Your Part In The Race!
 - You May Not Be An Athlete Physically!
 - But You Can & Ought To Be One Spiritually!
 - Because You Are In A Spiritual Race!
 - A Race Of:
 - Submission To The Lord!
 - Service For The Lord!
 - Sharing About The Lord!
 - This Race Is A Greater One Than An Olympic Race!
 - Starts At The Cross / Ends At Your Death!
 - If Saved, You Are Somewhere In Between!
 - Don’t Look Back At Your Failures – Instead – Repent, Confess & Look Forward In Faith!
 - And Keep Running! Toward Christ!
 - Hebrews 12:2 - “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith!”
- In Order To Run & Run Well:
 - You Need To Run With All Your Mind!
 - Especially Thinking About Your Part In This Race!
 - No Matter How Young / Old You Are! Still In It!
 - “So Run!” Run With Discernment!

2. **Run With Determination!**

- 9:24b - 25a - “So run, that ye may obtain!” / “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things!”
 - In Order To Run & Run Well In The Christian Race:
 - You Need To Use Your Will!
 - And Run With Determination!
 - We Find Here A Command:
 - To Run! But Not Just In Any Old Way!
 - **IE:** Just About Every Big City Has A Marathon Or Shorter Race - Thousands Participate - Boston / New York - Though Cancelled This Year - Some Athletes Are Serious About It & Want To Win! Most Are Just There To Try To Finish!
 - You & I Are To Run:
 - Not Just To Finish, And To Get The T-Shirt, But To Win, And Obtain The Prize!
 - As A True Athlete Trains For & Then Runs A Race:
 - You & I, As True Christian Athletes, Must Continue Training For & Running Our Race!
 - Be Determined!
- About Your Goal!
 - 9:24b - “So Run, That Ye May Obtain!”
 - What Is Your Goal As A Christian? Do You Have One?
 - What Should Be Our Goal?
 - 10:31 - “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God!”
 - Is Your Goal To Glorify God?
 - In All That You Are & In All That You Do?
 - Glorify In Your Submission / Service / Sharing?
 - Set This As Your Goal!
 - And Strive For It With Everything You Have!
 - Of Course - This Will Never Be Your Goal:
 - If You Do Not Have Jesus As Your Savior & The Holy Spirit Working In Your Life!
 - But When You Do:
 - His Goals / Purpose Will Become Yours!
 - Be Determined About Your Goal!
 - And Run With All Your Will!
- About Your Grasp!
 - 9:24b - “Obtain!”
 - Means To Grab A-Hold Of Something In Order To Make It Yours!
 - **IE:** Like The Medal Winners In The Olympics Today - They Hold It & Even Bite It - It Belongs To Them!
 - Run & Live Your Christian Life:
 - As One Who Is About To “Obtain” & Receive What The Lord Jesus Has Already Won For You & Is Offering To You Freely!
 - 1 Timothy 6:12 - “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses!”
 - Be Determined About Your Grasp!
 - And Run With All Your Will!
- About Your Government!
 - Or How You Live & Conduct Yourself As A Christian!
 - 9:25a - “And Every Man That Striveth For The Mastery Is Temperate In All Things!”
 - If A Runner Is Training & Running To Win:
 - Then That Runner Will Exercise Self-Control Over Anything That Might Get In His Way Of Becoming The Best!
 - What About You? If You Are Training & Running To Win In The Christian Race:
 - Then You Will Exercise Self-Control Over Anything That Might Get In Your Way Of Glorifying God – In Your Submission To Him / Service For Him / Sharing About Him!
 - Hebrews 12:1 - “Let Us Lay Aside Every Weight, And The Sin Which Doth So Easily Beset Us!”
 - Sometimes This Can Be A Very Difficult Exercise!
 - But To “Strive For The Mastery” Means That You Are “Agonizing” Over Everything You Can To Get An Edge!
 - Paul, As We Have Seen Throughout This Chapter:

- Lived A Life Of Temperance / Self-Control!
- Though He Had Great Freedom / Liberty:
 - He Limited That Liberty In Order To Serve & Share More Effectively!
- And This Is What Any Runner Will Do!
 - Will You? Are You?
- In Order To Run & Run Well:
 - You Need To Run With All Your Will!
 - "So Run!" Run With Discernment / Determination!

3. ***Run With Desire!***

- 9:25b - 26 - "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible!" / "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air!"
 - In Order To Run & Run Well In The Christian Race:
 - You Need To Use Your Heart!
 - And Run With Desire!
 - What Are You Running For?
 - What Do You Want Out Of Your Life? Your Family? Your Church? Your God?
 - Matthew 6:19-21 - "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: / But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: / For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!"
 - Run With The Right Desire!
- Not For That Which Is Temporary!
 - "Now They Do It To Obtain A Corruptible Crown!"
 - It Is Amazing What Athletes Will Do / Give:
 - In Order To Win An Olympic Gold Medal!
 - Which We Would Consider, In Earthly Terms, An Incorruptible Medal!
 - But Which Can Easily Be Melted Down & Forgotten What It Once Was!
 - But Think About What The Winners At The Games Held Near Corinth Would Receive:
 - A Crown - Yes - But A Crown Made Up Of A Wreath Of Pine Or Olive Leaves!
 - Very Perishable! Won't Last Long At All!
 - Other Awards From Their Home City:
 - Money - Would Be Spent!
 - Poems - Most Lost & Forgotten!
 - Sculptures - Destroyed!
 - Don't Desire That Which Is Temporary & Corruptible!
 - Don't Run With These Things In Your Heart!
 - Instead - Run With The Right Desire!
 - Matthew 6:33 - "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness!"
- But For That Which Is Timeless!
 - "But We An Incorruptible!"
 - The "Crown" Or "Prize" That God Offers Christians:
 - Will Never Pass Away!
 - Peter Speaks Of: "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you!" (1 Peter 1:4)
 - Don't Desire That Which Is Temporary & Corruptible!
 - But Do Desire That Which Is Timeless & Incorruptible!
 - It Is The Difference Between Heaven & Earth!
 - And The Difference Between Life & Death!
 - Colossians 3:2 - "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth!"
 - Run With The Right Desire In Your Heart!
- And For That Which Is Triumphant!
 - How Do You Know If You Have The Right Desires?
 - It Will Motivate You To Live The Right Way!
 - 9:26 - "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air!"
 - Paul Says - "Therefore" - Because Of My Desire - This Is How I Live! How I Run! And How I Fight!
 - I Run With Certainty!

- And With Intention! Not With Uncertainty!
- God Has Shown To Us The Path Of Our Race!
 - It Is Found In The Word Of God!
 - **IE:** It Is Like The White Lines That Mark The Boundaries Of A Runner's Lane!
- It Is Like What We Find In Isaiah 30:21 - "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left!"
 - God's Word / Spirit / People Are All Directing You On The Right Path!
- So Run! And Run With Certainty!
 - And You Will Not Only Run Well, But Finish Well!
- I Fight To Connect!
 - Using Another Illustration From Another One Of Their Games - Boxing - He Describes The Christian Life As A Fight!
 - And It Is A Fight! 1 Timothy 6:12 - "Fight The Good Fight Of Faith!"
 - What Are We Fighting Against?
 - Ephesians 6:12 - "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!"
 - We Are Fighting Against Sin!
 - Fighting Against The Devil, The World, And Even The Sin In Our Own Flesh & Life! This Last One Is The Most Important One!
 - So We Need To Fight:
 - Not Like Someone Who Is Showing Off & Shadow Boxing!
 - So Fight! And Fight To Connect!
 - Let Your Fists Hit Your Sin!
 - And You Will Not Only Fight Well, But Finish Well!
- In Order To Run & Run Well:
 - You Need To Run & Fight With All Your Heart!
 - So Run! Run With Discernment / Determination / Desire!

4. ***Run With Discipline!***

- 9:27 - "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!"
 - In Order To Run & Run Well In The Christian Race:
 - You Need To Use Your Might!
 - And Run With Discipline!
 - People Don't Like Discipline!
 - Whether You Are A Child Or An Adult!
 - Not Talking About Getting Punished, But About Putting Forth The Effort To Run & Win A Race!
 - Even Athletes - After Training & Winning:
 - Can Forget All The Discipline It Took To Get Them There!
 - But In Our Race - Discipline Is Even More Important! Here's How To Run With Discipline:
 - It Takes Personal Commitment!
 - "But I Keep Under My Body!"
 - Our Own Sinful Flesh Is What Often Causes Us To Slow Down In Our Race!
 - The Devil Doesn't Make Us Do It - He Doesn't Have To - We Do It To Ourselves! James 1:14 - "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed!"
 - So - You Need To Seek God's Help Every Day:
 - To Remain Committed To This Race!
 - To Remain Committed To The Lord!
 - Romans 13:14 - "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof!"
 - So - Run With Discipline!
 - And Run With All Your Might!
 - Stay Committed To The Lord!
 - It Takes Personal Control!
 - "And Bring It Into Subjection!"
 - This Is Spirit-Enabled Self-Control!

- Knowing That Your Own Flesh Is Your Own Worst Enemy:
 - Suppress Your Own Will!
 - And Seek After God's Will!
- Don't Be A Servant To Your Own Desires:
 - But Every Day Remember That You Are A Servant For God's Desires!
- So - Run With Discipline!
 - And Run With All Your Might!
 - Stay In Control Through The Lord!
- It Takes Personal Concern!
 - "Lest That By Any Means, When I Have Preached To Others, I Myself Should Be A Castaway!"
 - Too Many Of Us Care What Others Think!
 - About What We Are Like & What We Do!
 - Like Other Athletes - They Play Not Just To Win, But To Entertain & To Sell Tickets!
 - Paul Did Care About Others!
 - But He Cared About Their Souls!
 - And This Is Why He Preached / Proclaimed Christ To Others!
 - But His Greatest Concern:
 - Was God's Assessment Of His Life & Service!
 - We Need To Care What God Thinks!
 - About Who We Are & How We Are Running This Race! Are We Trusting Christ & His Righteousness? Are We Living For & Serving Him?
 - Who / What Are We More Concerned About?
 - The Approval Of Men?
 - Or The Approval Of God?
 - Paul's Greatest Concern Was That:
 - "It might be found that he was a sincere, and humble, and devoted Christian!" (Barnes)
- In Order To Run & Run Well:
 - You Need To Run With All Your Might!
 - So Run! Run With Discernment / Determination / Desire / Discipline!

Conclusion:

1. For This Is What It Takes To Be An Effective "Athlete Of God!"
 - So: How Are You Living Your Christian Life?
 - Are You Living / Serving / Sharing Like You Are In A Race?
 - Every Christian Is Running In A Race!
 - "So Run, That Ye May Obtain!"
2. And Run The Christian Race:
 - With All That You Are & With All That You Have!
 - Run - With All Your Mind!
 - Run - With All Your Will!
 - Run - With All Your Heart!
 - Run - With All Your Might!
3. Say With Paul This Morning:
 - Philippians 3:14 - "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, / I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"
 - "So Run, That Ye May Obtain!"

Grace Baptist Church
Stephen Elmer, Pastor
 4245 North 200 West
 Greenfield, Indiana 46140
 317-326-2362
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace
www.growatgrace.org
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com