

THE WHY OF OUR MISSION: WHO ARE YOU TAKING WITH YOU? 1ST THESSALONIANS 2.19-20

Thirty five hundred years ago the Greeks began to organize the Olympic Games. By 3,000 years ago they were known throughout the ancient world. The winners names were carved in stone and enshrined on Mt. olympus home of the gods. To this day the winners from 776 BC to AD217 are on record. Finally this world evnt was abolished by the Emperor of Rome not to be restarted until moren times in 1896.

Of the different games the New Testament mentions three: racing, boxing, and wrestling. The race is mentioned most frequently.

In each of the three pictures of athletic life as employed in the New Testament there is prominent a special view-point of the spiritual life and effort.

- The race looks forward to the heavenly goal, to the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” to the realm above (Phil. 3:14).
- Boxing points to our opposition to the enemy in us. Paul at least so employs it: “so fight (*lit.* box) I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage” (I Corinthians. 9:26,27).
- Wrestling refers to our fight with the powers of darkness around and beneath us. Thus Paul says: “Our wrestling (Gk. *pale*) is against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness: (Ephesians. 6:12).

This is the picture the New Testament gives us of our mission in life. Listen to Eric Sauer¹ in his helpful book *The Arena of Faith* “Is not the whole an astonishing, many-sided picture of the race and completion of the spiritual life?

- The arena of faith, the training, the self-control,
- the ruthless denial of self, the herald, the entrance to the racecourse,
- the different kinds of contests, the racing to the goal, the boxing, the wrestling,
- the rules of the combats, Christ the umpire, the danger of being disqualified,

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- the appearance of the victor before the exalted throne of the divine Judge on the great day of the distribution of prizes.

It is out of His hands the victors will receive the wreath and the palm.

- The list of the victors ‘the book of life’, the triumphal entry in the homeland, the banquet, the festival,
- the gifts, the place of honor-- in fact, scarcely one essential feature of the whole course of the games has escaped the writers of the New Testament and not employed in their figure of speech.”

Thus the question of life is how will you do as you stand before the Lord on raised platform. As we stand before the One seated and declaring whether or not we kept the rules and sought the prize.

- I. Crowns are for Christians. There are five. Will you get one?
 - A. The CROWN OF LIFE to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and persevere to the end. The perseverance of saints is the proof of salvation. Thus the Faithful Witness who is loyal unto death gets the Crown of Life in Revelation. 2:10; James 1:12. This crown is especially for those endure suffering loving Jesus all the way. This means having the desire that He be glorified through our response to trials.
 - B. The CROWN OF REJOICING is also called the soul winners crown and it consists of people won for Christ. The unselfish Worker who faithfully wins souls gets the Crown of Honor in I Thessalonians 2:19; Phil 4:1. Note the background of this crown.
 1. Acts 16 Phillipi and beaten
 2. Acts 17 was a 97 mile walk
 3. Three plus weeks of ministry
 4. This was the letter back to them.
 5. The only things we can take with us are people! Are you taking anyone with you? Who, your friends, neighbors, children?
 - C. The the UNFADING CROWN OF SELF-CONTROL is for Steadfast Racer that consistently brings the flesh under the Spirit’s control, resisting all that disqualifies. This one gets Imperishable Crown in I Corinthians. 9:25-27.
 1. This is the crown for holy living as in Romans 6:6-14.
 2. This is the crown for focused living as in Hebrews 12:1-2.
 3. Some of the principles of this kind of life may be found in Hans Finzels’ book *Baby Boomers*.
 - a) GUARD AGAINST THE APATHY OF AFFLUENCE
Revelation. 3:17
 - (1) self-sufficiency
 - (2) independence
 - (3) spiritual indifference

- b) VALUE RELATIONSHIPS OVER AND ABOVE FINANCIAL GAIN Phil 4:1; I Th. 2:19-20.
 - c) DREAM ABOUT WINNING THE ULTIMATE PRIZE Matthew 25:21-23 His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. ²³ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (KJV) Luke 21:1-4 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. ² And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. ³ And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: ⁴ For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. (KJV) Philippians 3:14 ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (KJV)
 - d) RUB SHOULDERS WITH THE LESS FORTUNATE TO REMIND US THAT THE MORE WE HAVE THE MORE WE NEED TO GIVE I Tim 6:18-19
 - e) FOCUS ON THE SECRET OF GODLY CONTENTMENT I Tim 6:6-8
 - f) Are you holy and focused? On what?
- D. The CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS goes to those who faithfully watch for Christ each day living with eternity's values as their own. These get the Crown of Righteousness in II Tim. 4:8. Remember Paul is now at the end of his life. He is in the depths of Mamertinum.
1. This crown is for anticipating Christ. Are you?
 2. This crown is for following to the finishing line the course the Lord has given you? Are you?
- E. The CROWN OF GLORY is promised to those who live as an Example to the Flock. Faithful undershepherds get the Crown of Glory in I Peter 5:3-4.
1. This is for ministering to the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ in keeping with the elements of verses 2 and 3:
 - a) willingness
 - b) sacrificial dedication
 - c) humility
 - d) living as an example for Christ
 2. It is for living the life as men and women in I Tim 3:1-13 and I

Peter 3:1-5.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM ? Look at Revelation. 4:9-11 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (KJV)

1. Are you saved? Do you have the crown of life?
2. Are you winning and discipling people? Will you get this crown of rejoicing?
3. Are you Spirit controlled? Will you get the unfading crown?
4. Are you looking for Jesus? Will you get the crown of righteousness?

Are you serving Christ's church, His sheep? Will you get the crown of glory