

THE TALE OF TWO CHURCHES
Part III E
Things The Corinthians Were Ignorant of
How To Run The Believer's Course
1st Co. 9:24-27

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of God's plan and purposes is necessary to seeing things the way they really are in the world and in the believer's own life. An absence of such knowledge routinely leaves believers feeding upon the cares of this life. So it was with the Corinthians. Many in the church were consumed with their rights and freedoms over and above the needs of their brethren. The Apostle Paul warned them that they were without knowledge concerning the purpose of God in this life and how to accomplish it. Today, we will consider Paul's emphasis the the Corinthians running this life like one as one would run a race, utilizing the provisions of this dispensation.

I. THE CORINTHIANS WERE IGNORANT OF HOW TO RUN THE RACE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

- A. "Know ye not" is a phrase used eight times in the book of 1st Corinthians. Cf. 1st Co. 3:16 (believers are the temple of God); 5:6 (a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump); 1st Co. 6:3 (saints will judge angels); 6:9 (the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God); 6:15 (bodies are the members of Christ)
- B. The apostle Paul uses an athletic illustration to emphasize the believer's course. 1st Co. 9:24
 1. Paul uses the "stadium" in the Greek game to emphasize the contest of the believer. Vs. 24
 - a) The word "stadio" is defined as "**a Greek measure of distance equal to 606 feet and 9 inches.**" -- Easton Bible Dictionary
 - b) "**An assembly; a place of assembly: especially an assembly met to see games; the place of contest, the arena or stadium; the assembly of the Greeks at their national games; hence the contest for a prize at their games.**" -- Joseph Thayer
 - c) The word "stadio" is used 6 times in the New Testament. Lk. 24:13; John 6:9; 11:18; Rev. 14:20; 21:16 (it is translated "furlongs")
 2. "They which" can better be translated "the specific ones running".
- C. The word for "run" is a trecho which is used to note the running of a race.
 1. The verb form of "*Trecko*" emphasizes running with effort.
 - a) Vines – **Metaphorically, from the illustrations of runners in a race, of either swiftness or effort to attain an end; of persevering**

activity in the Christian course with a view to obtaining a reward.

- b) Dictionary of New Testament Theology – *“to run, Paul uses in figurative sense, by using the verb he expresses how the Christian life as a whole, like his apostolic service is directed towards a goal.”*
 - c) Thomas Sheldon Green – *to run a race, a certain course of conduct, exertion.*
2. There are two illustrations of “*Trecko*” in the book of Galatians.
- a) “*Trecko*” is used to emphasize the apostle Paul’s dispensing of doctrine for this dispensation. Gal. 2:2
 - b) “*Trecko*” is used to emphasize the focus of the believer with reference to living the Christian life. Gal. 5:7

II. PAUL USES A LANGUAGE CONSTRUCTION TO EXPLAIN THE IRONY OF THE OLYMPIC RACES. VS. 24

- A. “They that run in a race run all” is better translated “**On the one hand** all of the runners are running.”
- 1. “Runners”¹ is *trecho* (only occurrence) -- those engaging in a race.
 - 2. “Run” -- they are persistently running. Cf. Rom. 9:16 (used of those trying running to obtain salvation); Heb. 12:1 (believer’s encouraged to utilize patience in)²
- B. “But one receiveth the prize” can be translated: “**On the other hand**, one (is) receiving the prize.”
- 1. “Prize” is the Greek word *brabeion* -- “**The victor’s prize which only one could receive.**” -- A.T. Robertson cf. Phil. 3:14 (Paul sought to obtain)
 - 2. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to have a similar focus concerning the Christian race.
 - a) “So” is the adverb *houtos* -- in this way, or in this manner. Cf.
 - b) “Run” -- you be running.
 - 3. Paul indicates the purpose for running.
 - a) “That” is the Greek word “*hina*” -- in order that, for the purpose that”
 - b) “Obtain” is from *lambano* -- **to receive, obtain.**³

¹ The present act. Participle

² To be a victor was to be immortalized with such immortality as the breath of man can give. To Greeks, therefore, no allusions could be more intelligible, or more effective, than those to these institutions, which have nothing to answer to them in modern times.

³ Aor. Act. Subj. notes the potentiality that one might obtain based upon their running.

III. PAUL USES ANOTHER METAPHOR TO EXHORT THE CORINTHIANS AS TO HOW TO WIN THE RACE. vs. 25

- A. The use of the word “mastery” is “agonizomai”⁴ -- **one engaging in a grueling contest for supremacy** -- K.D.J. cf. Lk. 13:24 (of one striving to enter into the narrow gate); 1st Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7 (of fighting the good fight of the faith)
1. They are “temperate” -- egkrateuomai --
 - a) **“In a figure drawn from athletes, who in preparing themselves for the games abstained from unwholesome food, wine, and sexual indulgence.”** -- Joseph Thayer cf. 1st Co. 7:9 (of containing sexual desires)
 - b) **“He exercises self-denial in diet, in bodily indulgences, and by painful and protracted discipline. The ancient writers abound in rules of abstinence and exercise, to be observed by competitors in preparation for the games.”** -- Charles Hodge
 2. “In all things”
- B. Paul uses the men/de grammatical construction again to note the focus of those who exercise mastery. Vs. 25
1. **(On the one hand)** They do it to obtain a “corruptible” (phthartos -- that which is subject to decay; perishable) crown cf. 1st Co. 15:53,54 (of the human body)
 2. “Crown” is the Greek word “stephanos” -- **“as a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally; but more conspicuous and elaborate than the simple fillet.”** -- Strong’s lexicon cf. John 19:5 (of that put on the head of Jesus)
 3. **(On the other hand)** We (believers) do it to obtain an incorruptible crown. Cf. 2 Tim. 4:8 (Paul expected)

IV. THE APOSTLE GAVE THE CORINTHIANS INSIGHT INTO HIS FOCUS OF RUNNING. Vs. 26-27

- A. Paul ran the race with clarity. Vs. 26
1. Paul did not run as “uncertainly” -- adelos -- **“It signifies ignorantly; I do not run like one ignorant of what he is about, or of the laws of the course; I know that there is an eternal life; I know the way that leads to it; and I know and feel the power of it.”** -- Adam Clarke commentary
 2. Adelos is an adverb describing a manner that Paul didn’t run with.

⁴ Present Mid. Par. -- engaging in a contest for oneself.

B. Paul ran the race with fixed goals. Vs. 26

1. "Fight" is pukteo which is used of one boxing.
2. "Beateth the air" is dero "**to flay, to scourge, to thrash.**" -- Strong's lexicon cf. John 18:23 (of the Lord being beaten)

C. Paul ran the race with self control. Vs. 27

1. "Keep under" is hupopiazō (pres. Act. ind.) is used in Scripture of a persistent, continual attack or antagonism -- K.D. J. cf. Lk. 18:5 (of the widow that wearied the judge)
2. "Bring it into subjection" is to "doulagogeō" -- "**to reduce to servitude or slavery; and probably was usually applied to the act of subduing an enemy, and leading him captive from the field of battle; as the captives in war were regarded as slaves. It then means, effectually and totally to subdue, to conquer, to reduce to bondage and subjection. Paul means by it, the purpose to obtain a complete victory over his corrupt passions and propensities, and a design to gain the mastery over all his natural and evil inclinations.**" -- Albert Barnes cf.

CONCLUSION