

ALL IN Part 7

“The Race”

Last week we talked about having “ALL IN” Obedience and how that there is blessing when we obey God and the teachings of Jesus. We also, talked about the consequences of choosing to disobey and sin against God. We zeroed in on the concept that the sole motivation for obeying God must be based upon our love for Him that is solely based upon His love for us. Jesus said it clearly, “if you love me you will keep my commands”.

This week we are going attach this message to last weeks message and talk about reward. What will happen if we decide to go “ALL IN” seeking reward and blessing from God?

I Corinthians 9:24-25, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”

Runners Run

As I have gotten to know Kerry Miller I found out that he is an avid runner. He has run numerous 5k’s, a handful of 10k’s, 6 half marathons and 9 marathons in the past 12 years. His motivation for doing these races lies in that 21 ½ years ago he was in a serious motorcycle accident and could not walk unassisted. He shared with me that he gives all the glory to God! To hear the crowds cheering in the last ½ mile or more is nothing compared to the reception he will feel when he walks into Jesus’ arms. He also, loves that he can share these experiences with his family. he regularly thinks of Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things who Christ who strengthens me” as he runs.

The race the Apostle Paul is talking about is a different race. It is not a physical race, but it certainly is a real race.

How do we enter this race? The race is entered through having a relationship with God based on our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

2,000 years ago, Jesus paid the ultimate price for you and me by dying on the cross. Through His death and resurrection our sins can be forgiven, and we can have eternal life. The key is we must believe it through our own personal faith. We cannot and do not become a runner in this race until this has happened.

Ephesians 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”

There is absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves other than to put our faith in what Jesus has already done for us.

- ✓ being baptized won't do it.
- ✓ being a member of a church won't do it.
- ✓ being dedicated or confirmed as a baby or child won't do it.
- ✓ being good won't do it.

Salvation is God's gift and it is completely based upon what Jesus has already done. Personal faith is the key to entering and starting the race.

Training

As Kerry shared he commits 16 weeks of vigorous training before he ever gets to the starting line for the race. He does a training called less is more from Furmin University. It requires training three days each week for the 16 weeks and on 10-mile tempo days he gets up at 4:00am to get it done before he goes to work. On top of that he cross trains 2 times each week for 40-45 minutes.

With that said, I want to examine this question How does a Christian train for this race called life? As Kerry shared it takes a lot of discipline to train for a marathon. Does that apply to the race of the Christian life?

Remember what was said in our text verses: “Everyone who competes in the games (race) goes into strict training.”

Three Basics of Training

Kerry also, shared with me that during the race itself hydration is key. Taking fluids at most of the aid stations is important. He will even set up his practice runs with aid stations that will match the set up for the actual race.

It is the same in the Christian race. We must stay hydrated and energized to maintain vibrant spiritual health. There are three critical aid stations in the Christian life.

God’s Word

Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

God’s word is powerful and is essential to running the race of the Christian life. Christian’s will veer off course quickly if God’s word is not an active part of their lives.

II Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

Notice the word “training” in this verse. We need to be trained to be righteous and we must realize that we cannot do it on our own. God’s word is the trainer for righteousness.

Prayer

Matthew 6:6, “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

The Christian race is based on an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Prayer is that avenue that we can commune with Him and is critical to our training and spiritual vibrancy and health.

Prayer should be as natural as talking to anyone else because He is the one who loves you the most. During prayer we should have a time of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

Fellowship

Hebrews 10:24-25, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

God commands His people to not forsake the assembling of their selves together. We should eagerly desire to be in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We should train together or spur one another on as the scripture states.

When any of these three are lacking our hydration or spiritual health starts to suffer and that condition gets worse the longer it is neglected.

The Race

Good runners know that they must continually stay focused on the finish line or prize and not on the race itself because at times the race itself can become very challenging.

Kerry shared that during his first marathon at about mile 18 he started to cramp and realized he had not consumed enough electrolytes. Then the “Wall part of every marathon is between miles 19-23. That is when training must be relied upon because if you have trained well you will be able to push through the wall and finish the race.

In the Christian race we must also, practice these same principles because there are times in life that we too must rely upon our training. There will be times when the ability to recall God's word will be paramount. Other times it will be the ability to pray with confidence through something that will help. At other times it will be the ability to call upon a faithful brother or sister in Christ that will help pull you through to the finish line.

Philippians 3:13-14, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Look at the keys in this verse about running the race:

Forget What is Behind

The Apostle Paul could have got bogged down in his past life as he was one who imprisoned, tortured and even had Christians of his day killed before he came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. We too can get bogged down in past failures and as Hebrews 12 states: "the sins that so easily beset us". We must get rid of those feelings of failure, confess any known sin and allow God to continually change our hearts through His power. As we do that we will be able to stay focused on the prize and not get bogged down during the race.

Strain Ahead

Sometimes the Christian life is not easy, but we must always remember that our God runs the race with us.

I Timothy 4:7-8, "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸ For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

In the Christian life we can't ever stop training. We need to be constantly practicing Godliness and loving and obeying Jesus by keeping His commands as we talked about last week.

The Finish Line

As we said before, a strong runner always keeps in mind the finish line and the prize. What is the prize and what is the finish line for the race of the Christian life?

John 14:2, "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?"

I Corinthians 2:9, "However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" — the things God has prepared for those who love him."

Revelation 21:4, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 21:21-27, "The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass. ²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Can I just ask you one question? Does that finish line excite you? I am sorry to say that if it doesn't you need to study these scriptures because if you believe in Jesus Christ as Savior the things described in these passages is your finish line and will be your prize. That should excite ALL who believe in Jesus as Savior.

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul described his life this way in his waning days on this earth.

II Timothy 4:6-8, “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

You see this life is not all that there is. Those that know Jesus as Savior have so much to look forward to, but for now each of us must commit ourselves to running the race that He has set before us and know that He will give us everything we need to run and finish our race if we turn to Him.