

Title: Run to Win
Text: 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27
Date: February 6, 2011
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

It is in our make-up to love a good competition. Tonight, most of us will watch the Super Bowl. The big game! The two teams that outplayed every other team in the NFL this year will meet head-to-head. Every coach on the sidelines will be trying to outwit the coaches on the other sideline. Each player on the field will face a player opposite him and each will block, and fake, and hit and give his all in a struggle to win the coveted prize. Only one team will win!

The apostle Paul used sports to illustrate what is utmost importance.

I Corinthians 9: 24: Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25: And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26: I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 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.

What is most important to you now? What are you running to obtain? Are striving to being liked, to fit in? Do you know the majority in this world are running after vanity? To have your mind set on things of this world is death.

Romans 8: 6: For to be carnally minded [is] death; but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

The prize the world is running after is like a drowning man striving to grab hold to a stone in the middle of the ocean.

Let's see what you are striving for. Let's be honest with ourselves. What does it take to fit in with this world? How vain do you have to be to fit in with the world?

I. You must dress like the world.

The only garments that are must in this world is the perfect, spotless garments of Christ's righteousness.

Exodus 35:19: The cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.

God will not receive you unless you put on the sackcloth of repentance. But that is not popular with this world.

Psalm 69: 11: I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.

God will not receive you unless by faith in Christ you put the best robe, the robe of Christ for your perfect acceptance. Are you running, striving, to be dressed in this world's dress or in the robe of Christ's righteousness?

II. You must sing this world's music to fit in.

There are only two kinds of music in this world: The song of those drunk with this world or the song of the righteous.

God will not receive you unless approach him singing his praises... the same song which God put upon Moses lips:

Revelation 15:3:...the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. 4: Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

But the song of the righteous is mocked by this world.

Psalm 69:12: They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I [was] the song of the drunkards.

Which song do know the words too? Which song do filter into your ears and into your heart? Are you striving and running after the songs of the drunkard are the song of the righteous?

III. Sadly, this enticement of the world is not confined to the outwardly profane, but is worst of all in religion.

So many churches in our day are serving the cult of whatever is popular with man, especially with young people. All sorts of enticements by which the young and old have replaced the pure word of the gospel of Christ and him crucified for going along with the crowd--to be wherever their friends are there.

It is man's natural desire to be attracted to religion for every thing but Christ. That is one of the reasons why our Lord was so instructive that we not do anything in religion to be seen of men. Sinners are attracted to a show in the flesh.

Paul warned this would be worse and worse:

2 Timothy 3: 4:...heady, highminded, {so much of what claims to be the gospel is philosophy} lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5: Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6: For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7: Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth....13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 14: But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;...4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Application: Just any religion will not do! The Pharisees and scribes were exceedingly zealous in religion, they did many wonderful works, they compassed land and sea to make converts--all in the name of God, in the name of the Messiah to come--but Jesus saith unto them, "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Oh, here the word of the Lord, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The ONE THING NEEDFUL IS CHRIST: Martha was cumbered about much serving...Mary sat at Christ's feet--the Lord said, Luke 10:42...one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Christ is the ONE FRIEND we need--Christ Jesus, is that friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Our Lord said to those who forsook all and followed him:

John 15:15: Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

IV. If left with this carnal mind it will continue the rest our lives: your occupation in this world, honors among your peers, possessions, houses--will be by which you judge your life a success,

- Our lives will be nothing more than idolatry--
- A status symbol to stand above the next person
- A life spent trying to fit in with a world of iniquity

Application:

- Wrestle to enter in to Christ
- Strive to enter in at the straight gate
- Give your all to know Christ
- Ask God to bring your whole being into subjection to Christ
- Arm yourselves with the mind of Christ
- Paul says "run, that ye may obtain--that ye may win!"

Here is what Paul wanted to win.

Philippians 3: 8: Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Illustration: Our company influences the way we will go—

When I was young, I loved outdoor sports (hunting, fishing) my closest friends loved the same—

- It was all we talked about
- All we did,
- All we looked forward to—
- It became an idol to me.

God graciously separated me from my idols and continues to separate me by his grace. The Lord graciously gave me brethren whose minds are fixed on Christ. Being in the company of those who are like minded--I find that I do not miss those things that I never imagined I could do without.

Matthew 6: 31: Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Amen!