

OUR YEARLY RACE

1 Corinthians 9:27

INTRODUCTION

- A. PH 3:13-14; HE 12:1-2.
- B. These passages compare the Christian life to a race.
 - 1. Each New Year we run another leg of the journey.
 - 2. Each New Year brings us closer to the goal.
- C. All “runners” long to win!
- D. What do I need to win the race?
 - 1. To receive the crown, one must begin the race.
 - 2. One cannot win a race that he/she does not run.
 - 3. To receive the crown, one must keep at the race.

DISCUSSION

- I. WE NEED DISCIPLINE. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. (2 TI 4:7; GA 2:2; CO 2:18; 2 TI 2:5). The figure is an athlete running a race and the topic is a believer living the Christian life. The point of comparison is doing something so as to succeed, exerting all of one’s strength, fully resolving to succeed, the need of greatest self-denial in preparation and the greatest effort in participation.
 - A. Astronauts said to have the right stuff!
 - 1. They are chosen carefully.
 - 2. They go through rigorous training.
 - 3. They become disciplined people.
 - B. Christians must also be disciplined.
 - 1. Disciplined in devotional life.
 - 2. Disciplined in what we think.
 - 3. Disciplined in what we say.
 - 4. Disciplined morally.
 - C. We must achieve self-control. 2 TI 2:3-5. “Striveth” - This action was not restricted to the actual race, but began 10 months prior to the race and entailed sustained exercise and self-denial of things that would add to the weight of the body. This activity included running, fighting, wrestling, and any other sport. (Agonize).
 - 1. “Temperate in all things!” (“control oneself, abstain” – “exercise self-control; starve oneself”). This includes self-denial in diet, physical indulgences, and self-discipline. This includes the training involved.
 - 2. This comes from our inner spirit (our spiritual man). GA 5:21-22. The Christian should not only forego definite sinful activity, but everything else that hinders his spiritual progress.
 - 3. 2 PE 1:3-12.
 - D. We must be led by our spiritual man and not by our fleshly man. Mt 26:41; Cf. MK 14:38.
- II. WE NEED DIRECTION. Philippians 3:13-14.
 - A. We cannot win by looking back.
 - 1. “Forgetting those things which are behind.” From the time we obeyed the Gospel, we were certain that existence had meaning, and this life, in self-surrender, had a goal.
 - 2. Leaving the past behind.
 - 3. Forgetting old wrongs and wounds. (Forgiveness).
 - 4. Every day, begin where you are. Look at vs. 12 – Paul calls for a balance between a false humility and over confidence.

- B. “Reaching forth unto those things which are before.” To take no thought of tomorrow does not mean that we have no aims in life, no goals toward which we are moving. It means that the focus of life is in the here and now, and our energy is expended in living to the fullest the life Christ gives us today.
 - 1. Seizing opportunities to serve Christ.
 - 2. Stretching forward with anticipation.
 - 3. Eagerly welcoming all spiritual changes.
 - C. Pressing “toward the mark.”
 - 1. Making the best use of time for service.
 - 2. Always living for the glory of God.
 - 3. Always expecting the Lord’s return.
 - 4. Living with eternal rewards in mind (the prize).
 - 5. Rewards received at the upward calling. RE 22:12.
- III. WE NEED TO BE DRESSED FOR THE RACE. Hebrews 12:1-2. In chapter 12 we see the importance of making every effort to move toward the goal of holiness—and learn how to respond to the loving discipline of the God who is committed to bring His children to a godly maturity.
- A. “Lay aside every weight.”
 - 1. Runners dress lightly. (Boots in Basic Training vs. Vietnam). Habits that hinder!
 - 2. No extra weight to slow them down. We are easily ensnared by sin, that self-centered orientation that adds weight to the spiritual athlete.
 - B. What weights have been hindering our progress?
 - 1. Cares?
 - 2. Unwilling to forgive?
 - 3. Given to negativism?
 - 4. Fears?
 - C. Winners lay aside weights that drain their energy.
 - D. Isaiah gives us a clue as to the nature of our race. IS 1:16-17.

CONCLUSION

- A. How did you do in last year’s race? Were you a winner?
- B. Rewards for winners will make every effort worthwhile.
- C. It will be worth it all when our end comes.