

RUNNING TO WIN

Main reading- 1 Cor 9:24-27

As we read through the new testament we find a few times where the analogy of a race with an ultimate prize is used to describe the walk of those who follow the Lord. In all these, we see a description that suggest that following Christ is a like running on a race course, that requires persistence, endurance and focus to complete the race and win the ultimate prize, which is our crown in eternal glory.

Today, I want to draw out from 1 Cor 9 :24-27, **the issue of running this race in such a way as to Win!**- We have a race that is set before us and all has been provided for Victory- But we need to have a strategy to run well.

THE NATURE OF THE RACE

Any race you enter, you need to understand the boundaries and rules in order that you can create a strategy that will help you run, otherwise you can become disqualified for not running according to the rules, even if you complete the course!!!

Watch Hilder Baci GWR video to 3:00 minutes.

There are some parallels I want us to first draw on from Hilda's race which can help us understand the race we are running in Christ.

1. **The race is not a competition against ...**
 - there is no one actually racing/competing with Hilder as she starts her race- she is on a course by herself! Because although she has a record to beat, the record holder is not even there. She is mindful of the previous record, not the record holder and her competitor is actually herself- she is pushing herself to do her own personal best.
 - ***That is what our race is like in Christ- its not a competition with other believers to get to the finish line- it is a competition against yourself to endure to the end!***- Gal 6:4-*"but let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour"*

2. **Its not about speed, but a consistent pace and efficient performance-**
 - ***it is a marathon, not a sprint-*** we can often find ourselves approaching the race of faith as a sprint- but if we do, we will quickly tire as the course of life stretches before us.
 - Hebrews 12:1 gives us great counsel for the journey- *"lay aside every weight that hinders and sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race set before us"*- **The race requires endurance and it has to be approached from that perspective.**

3. **The boundaries and rules of the race are already set-**
 - Before she commenced her race for the GWR, Hilder would have had to apply to the GWR and let them know the record she wants to beat, they would then have given her all the requirements for her attempt and how she was to do it. If these are not followed, she can cook for a 1000 hours and still not get the prize!! In fact, as we saw in the video, even though she cooked for 100hours, she lost about 7 hours as penalties for breaking some of the rules.
 - We cannot run the race our own way and expect a reward from the kingdom- All the scriptures that tell us about the race and the prize, **also give us the boundaries and rules for helping you end up with a prize- You have to run to Win-**
(**Matt 10: 22-** *he who endures to the end will be saved*, **Hebrews 10:23-** *hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering*, **James 5:11**, *those who remained steadfast*)

are considered blessed, **Rev 3:11**- "I am coming soon. Hold fast to what you have so that no one may seize your crown)

Understanding the nature of the race means you can have a foundation for "Running in such a way as to get the prize"-

But then, you will also need a strategy for running so you can endure to the end of your course!!- **(Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize- 1 Cor 9:26-27)**

THE WINNING STRATEGY

The good news is that for the race we are running, God has provided all that is needed- the boundaries and rules are set, and the resources and support are guaranteed and even the cheerleaders for the race are already there. **All we need is to be able to recognise and engage them effectively to create a winning strategy!!**

The Boundaries and Rules- THE WORD

The word of God is the treasure trove that contains everything that is needed for "life and for godliness"- which has been provided to us through his divine power- 2 Peter 1:3

In Joshua 1:8- The Lord speaking to Joshua just as he was on the verge of leading the children of Israel into the promised land, told him to- "**keep this book of the law always on your lips, meditate upon it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful**"-

This importance of God's word is echoed as the New testament church establishes itself as they clarify the purpose and function of the word of God-

- **2 Timothy 3:16**- all scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is useful/necessary for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.
- **Heb 4:12**- it is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword. It penetrates even dividing soul from spirit, bone from marrow- it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The word of God is what sets the boundaries and the rules for the race. It acts as a mirror to show us what we are like and shine the light on areas where we need work.

YET- except we are actually reading it, speaking it, hearing it, and meditating on it as Joshua was instructed- it is just another book on the bookshelf and has no value to you at all.

- The word of God is active and alive, even if you are not looking at it- but it can only become useful for YOU when you engage with it!!-
- It is also important to know the bible when read without the Holy spirit, **is a collection of stories from a place and a time that is so far removed from our own reality** today that we may struggle to understand how it can describe itself as "**active and alive**"
- It is The Holy Spirit who reveals what the words of the WORD truly mean and how they apply to our collective understanding, but also to your individually race.-
- We cannot expect to understand God's word, without God's Spirit

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALS THE WORD TO BRING IT TO ACTIVENESS IN YOUR LIFE

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is involved with the believer right from the start of the journey. He is the one who convicts our hearts to even understand the call to faith and when we make the choice to heed the call, he brings our own spirit to life- Roman 12:16 calls this “quickenning our spirit”.

- Through our quickened spirit, the Holy Spirit starts to speak to us, guide us and direct us- this is called walking in the Spirit.
- However, walking in the Spirit is not easy, because the spirit of man lives somewhere inside the flesh of man and the flesh is the spirit’s first and biggest obstacle.

My biggest fight as I attempt a walk in the spirit is not with an external threat, but it is ME!!

In Romans 7, the apostle Paul, describes this battle with himself thus-

“the inward man delights in the law of God, but I see another law in my body which is waring against that and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my body” –

Walking in the spirit is an exercise in serious daily discipline. We have to be prepared to lay aside our own agenda, for the sake of following the Holy Spirit’s own.

To truly strategize a winning walk in the spirit-

- You have to first acknowledge the enormity of the battle with yourself-
- BUT also understand the power of the God that has brought your spirit to life and that he is greater than the desires of your flesh!!
- Gal 2:20- ***I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave me himself.***

Seek daily to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit living in you so he helps you to continually build up your spirit man to progressively grow stronger over your flesh.

Finally, a winning strategy requires self examination!!-

SELF EXAMINATION

How do we even distinguish the difference between the works/ideas/perceptions of the flesh against those of the spirit? –

- Unless we know our own fleshly weaknesses, we cannot know when they are obstructing our race.
- 2 Cor 13:5 – *“Examine yourself as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you- unless indeed you are disqualified?”*

We can be in danger of running the race but messing up the rules of the race- carrying ungodly thoughts and patterns without being aware. **In Matthew 7**, Jesus opens our eyes to the possibility of running a race that we think is for him - only to be disqualified at the end-

!!!Vs 21-23- Not everyone that says to me Lord, lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven: but he that does the will of my father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and cast in your name have cast out devils? And in your name done wonderful works? And then I will prophesy to them, I never Knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity”

What a frightening and sad scenario!!!

EXAMINE YOURSELF TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH

- Those that walk in the spirit have a growing relationship with the Spirit,
- an ever-increasing perception and understanding of the word of God and

- an evident progressive growth in the fruit of the Spirit- LOVE, JOY, PEACE,PATIENCE,KINDNESS,FAITHFULNESS,GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL.

CONCLUDE: We are each personally in our own race as we journey in Christ. Although we are connected and affected by others, our own race is unique to us and not a competition with anyone else. Your only competition is yourself- you are daily trying to outdo your own record!!

So we need to understand the **nature of the race**, follow the boundaries and **rules set out by God's word**, engage with the available **help of the Holy Spirit** and make a conscious **habit of examining ourselves** regularly to track our progress. And with that, we have a strategy that will help us to run in such a way as to win the ultimate prize which is a crown in eternal glory.

If possible, invite congregation to a moment of self-reflection- while worship team sing a final reflective song.