

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

February 12, 2012 Epiphany 6 1 Corinthians 9:24-27



²⁴ Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. ²⁵ Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. ²⁷ Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

People of God – rescued from The flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I watched a race the other day – a 600 meter race. That's a little more than 6 and ½ football fields! That's pretty far! There were 4 ladies in this race up in Minnesota. One of the women was from Minnesota. Her name is Heather. The race was about half over – when someone cut Heather off – ran smack in front of her. Heather slammed on the brakes and pancaked – fell flat out – like Superman crash landing. I thought – oh, boy, that's the end of that! That's what you would think – and so? But Heather got back up. And I thought – that's really pretty brave – get back up – finish the race – persevere! That's a pretty good life lesson – and so? But Heather didn't just get back up – she started to run – faster and faster and faster. Pretty soon she was catching up to the other runners – and then one by one she passed them up. And just before the finish line she ran just a little bit faster still – and won – she won the race! I couldn't believe it! Now that's a life lesson – and so? Not only to finish the race – but to run so hard as to win the race! Today as we continue to read through the 1st letter to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth – we want to look at the picture of running and boxing – as pictures of our faith! Today God's Word is very practical encouragement:

Run the Race Jesus Won!

- 1. Fix your eyes on the prize, and**
- 2. Go into strict training.**

The Holy Spirit first breathed into the Apostle Paul exactly what to write – to write down the very Word of God – without mistakes and without contradictions – God's Word – God's truth! The Scriptures I read to you today are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Are you familiar with the Holman Christian Standard Bible? If you look at *Wikipedia* they say, the Holman Bible Publishers chose some 100 scholars and proofreaders – from all different countries and all different churches, all of whom were committed to biblical inerrancy – that is the heart held belief – that the Bible does not have mistakes! The translation committees worked very hard to strike a balance between the two prevailing philosophies of Bible translation:

formal equivalence (literal, "word-for-word", etc) and dynamic or functional equivalence ("thought-for-thought"). When you can do both – that's really good! What you want to do is "to convey a sense of the original text with as much clarity as possible". To that end, the ancient source texts were exhaustively scrutinized at every level (word, phrase, clause, sentence, discourse) to determine its original meaning and intention. Afterwards, using the best language tools available, the semantic and linguistic equivalents were translated into as readable a text as possible. It's not easy! After our Tuesday – Good Shepherd Bible Class – where we are reading a chapter a week of a book called, "The Story" – a linear Bible – to get the historical sweep of the whole Bible – we were talking about translations. Words change. I said for example there's a mouse on Debbie's desk. Some people thought that meant a part of her computer – and some people thought I meant the Church mouse – with beady little eyes that likes cheese and peanut butter! Or take for example – back in the day if you saw a pretty girl you would say she was cool – today you would probably say she's hot. If you try and put that into a different language – how do you do that? And maybe just one more example of the difficulty – if you are trying to convey the taunting of an Assyrian General standing outside the walls of besieged Jerusalem – mocking God's people – or if you are Ezekiel – trying to express the absolute gross and disgusting sinful attitude of what were supposed to be God's people – how do you do that – in a way that doesn't offend young children and the Ladies Aid – and yet – clearly contains the original meaning? It's not easy! So – in the coming weeks, months, perhaps years – we will be looking at – talking about – and thinking and praying and discussing all kinds of Bible translations. The Adult Bible Class – beginning Sunday the 19th – we will go through a Translations of the Bible – Bible Study – led by President Schroeder. Here would be a wonderful opportunity to learn and discuss this exceedingly practical Bible Study!

Paul today uses a metaphor. Life is like a race. Paul wrote: ²⁴ **Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize.** ²⁵ **Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything.** However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away. Life is like a race. Heather in Minnesota ran in a race 600 meters – just over 6 and ½ football fields. There is a Marathon – which is what 26 miles plus 3 football fields – and still you are not across the finish line? The life of some people is a marathon – Frieda Knoll – 102 years 8 months and 10 days. She crossed the finish line on her confirmation day. The same day her pastor put his hand on her head and said, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life!" Some people run a sprint – a little baby – born very premature who lives only a few hours. He was baptized. He is safe by Jesus in Heaven. He didn't have all the horrible troubles and painful experiences you have growing up. He went home by Jesus.

²⁴ **Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize.** ²⁵ **Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away.** When I was in High School – I had a classmate who would run the mile race. The starter's pistol would crack and he would take off running. If you didn't know better you would surely say he was running – way too fast – that he needed to pace himself – that surely he would burn out! But he didn't. Somewhere near the second lap on the quarter mile track he would catch up with the pack – and then he would steadily pull ahead. That was the time most if not all the other runners gave up. You could see it in their faces – and you could see it in their stride. They were giving up! And then – when the race was mercifully over for those quitters – my friend would run another lap – just for fun –

because he could – because he was that strong! How glorious was that! Run in such a way as to win the prize!

However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away. Earthly glory is fast fading! Even the ancient Romans understood that. When the Roman legions conquered someone – they would hold a spectacle – a victory parade that celebrated crushing their enemy – the unconditional surrender of their enemy. The parade began with the magistrate and Senators – as many as 300 in their white togas with their wide purple stripe of office across their left shoulders. The Senate was followed by the plunder taken from the enemy – their armor and weapons of war and their riches. Great floats were constructed to display the spoils of war – strange animals and plants – models of the great cities they had conquered – reenactments of the battles. The defeated king followed the animals – the irony of his still wearing his royal robes – although he no longer held any earthly power. Finally the victorious general – with his body guards – huge amounts of incense being burned – dancers and musicians and drummers and trumpeters – would announce his arrival in the triumphant chariot – pulled by 4 white horses. He would wear an all purple toga – embroidered with gold. The general carried an ivory scepter with a Roman Eagle on top and an olive branch. His face was painted with a kind of red stain. Was this the blood of all his enemies – or perhaps a blush at the glory due a Roman god? A slave held the crown of Jupiter – over the triumphant general’s head. And yet all the way he whispered again and again – “Remember, you are just a man!” Remember, you are just a man! The winners of the Super Bowl wear huge rings – covered with diamonds – rings that truth be told – are gaudy. Remember, you are just a man! A few years from now – few will remember what the Roman numerals were for this Super Bowl. Few will remember for sure who won this Super Bowl or that! What really matters – what has lasting – even eternal value is the fact Jesus died and rose again to forgive us – that we might have the crown of eternal life. In all of life that’s all that matters – that’s all that counts! Jesus died for you!

²⁶ **Therefore I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air.** ²⁷ **Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.** I read the other day about a man who is trying very hard to become a professional golfer – part of the PGA – Professional Golfer’s Association. Playing golf is very complicated. One of the complications is – it’s a game of trust – a game of honor. You are expected to be honest – to always tell the truth – to not cheat – even though in some ways that would be pretty easy. You are on your honor. You dasn’t cheat! There are very specific rules about what golf balls you can use. They have to be the approved golf balls – and they have to have little printing on them – that shows they are the approved kind! Well – this man named J.P. Hayes was playing in a tournament where – if you did well enough you got to be on the tour – not just permitted but invited to play in very prestigious tournaments where you could literally make a very handsome living – playing golf! It was during this qualifying play that J.P. realized he still had some 4 prototype golf-balls – unlabeled experimental – undeniably illegal golf-balls that he had been using – albeit only for a few minutes. A fact that absolutely no one else knew! I’m afraid I would have thought – no one besides Jesus and I will ever know – and what’s the harm – and I can’t stress this part too much – if I tell anyone I’ll be disqualified – and if I keep quiet – literally do nothing I’m in! What would you do? J.P. admitted – confessed the purely accidental honest mistake – and he was out! Disqualified – stamped on his score card – with a burgundy red stamp! **Disqualified!** Paul disciplined himself – so that after preaching to others, he himself would not be disqualified! Think about what’s at stake! Heaven or Hell! There is no other possible outcome! Only because our

Heavenly Father is good – are you and I blessed to know – we are saved by grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone. We are saved for sure and certain because Jesus died and rose again to forgive us. Run the race Jesus already won to forgive you! Fix your eyes on the prize and run as fast as you can – as far as you can – until you too cross the finish line into Heaven! Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony L. Schultz