

WINNING THE CHRISTIAN RACE

(ECCLESIASTES 9:10-12)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Good morning...I hope everyone is having a wonderful day.
2. Today, I am going to talk about "How to Win the Christian Race."
3. Are you aware...that when we were born, we were given life... and this life, according to the Bible, is like a race.
4. Listen to what the Apostle Paul had to say as he neared the end of his life.



"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

5. Paul compared life with that of a race.
6. Also, the writer of Hebrews said...



"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb. 12:1).

7. How is life like a race?
 - a. Life like a race has a challenging course (life has its ups and downs).
 - b. Life like a race has a judge or judges. Jesus is our judge.
 - c. Life like a race has a finish line (In the end, we will spend eternity either in heaven or hell).
8. You and I as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are created by God to win this Christian race...to be winners in the Lord...to one day stand in eternity robed in righteousness, wearing a crown of glory, and blessed with eternal honors and rewards.

TODAY, I AM GOING TO SHARE SOME PRINCIPLES ON HOW TO WIN THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

BEFORE I PROVIDE THESE PRINCIPLES, I NEED TO CLARIFY A FEW THINGS.

I. FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE, WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A WINNER?

1. From the world's perspective, winning is based upon...
 - a. Intelligence - The smarter you are the more respect you receive.
 - b. Wealth – The more money you have the happier you will be.
2. From the world's perspective, winning is based upon intelligence, and wealth.

II. FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE, WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A WINNER?



"I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to

the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" (Ecc. 9:11).

1. From God's perspective, winning is not based upon speed (swift), strength (strong), intelligence (wise), and wealth.
2. From God's perspective, winning is based upon our effort to please God.
3. We win when we do the best we can to please God.
4. You see...the world views people as successful if they are the best...number one...head of the class.
5. But God is more concerned with us doing our best to honor Him.



"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Col. 3:23).

6. If we want to win the Christian race...and become spiritual champions, then we must do our best for God.

ILLUSTRATION:

Britain's Derek Redmond had dreamed all his life of winning a gold medal in the 400-meter race, and his dream was in sight as he ran in the semifinals at Barcelona Olympics of 1992.

He was running the race of his life and was nearing the finish line when all of a sudden he felt a sharp pain go up the back of his leg. He fell face first onto the track with a torn right hamstring.

As the doctors were approaching, Redmond fought to his feet and began hopping to the finish line.

When he reached the stretch, a large man in a T-shirt came out of the stands, brushed aside a security guard and ran to Redmond, embracing him. It was Jim Redmond, Derek's father. "You don't have to do this," he told his weeping son. "Yes, I do,"

said Derek. "Well, then," said Jim, "we're going to finish this together."

And they did. Fighting off security men, the son's head sometimes buried in his father's shoulder, they stayed in Derek's lane all the way to the end, as the crowd rose and clapped and wept.

Derek didn't walk away with the gold medal, but he was a winner because he did His best.

7. My friends, from God's perspective, winning is not based upon being number one...We win when we do our best to please God.

III. NOW, I AM GOING TO SHARE SOME PRINCIPLES ON HOW TO WIN THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

A. FIRST, TO WIN THE CHRISTIAN RACE, WE MUST RUN WITH CONFIDENCE (SELF-WORTH).

1. We will never become a champion until we see ourselves as a champion.
2. As Christians, we are champions and winners in the Lord.
3. We are WORTH a lot to God.
4. Listen...the Bible tells us how important we are.



(1 Jn. 3:1) "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

a. We are children of God.

(1) We are related to the creator of the World.

(2) We belong to a royal family.

5. Unfortunately, though, some people walk around looking and acting like failures.

6. They live defeated lives because they do not value themselves.

7. They believe they have to many flaws and imperfections for God to love them.

ILLUSTRATION:

Have you ever noticed the pockmarks, or dimples, covering the surface of a golf ball? They make the ball look imperfect. So, what's their purpose?

An engineer who designs golf balls says that a perfectly smooth ball would travel only 130 yards off the tee. But the same ball with the right kind of dimples will fly twice that far. These apparent "flaws" minimize the ball's air resistance and allow it to travel much further.

You see God understands that we all have "flaws" and "imperfections"...that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God.

Sure we all have some "flaws" and "imperfections," however, we cannot let these things get us down...for even though we are not perfect...God still loves and values us.

8. What I am trying to say is this...To win the Christian race, we must run with confidence (self worth)...we must value ourselves...understand that we are special to God...we are worth a lot to Him...because we are His children.

9. When we start valuing ourselves the way God values us... then we will be on fire for the Lord.

10. We will live passionate spiritual lives and will be on our way to winning the Christian race.

B. SECOND, TO WIN THE CHRISTIAN RACE, WE MUST RUN WITH THE RIGHT MOTIVATION.

1. Why do we want to be a Christian?
2. Why should we live our lives for God and follow His will?
 - We want to go to Heaven.
 - We want to avoid Hell.
 - The Christian life is the best life.
3. These are all excellent reasons to want to live our lives for God.
4. However, one of the greatest motivating factors for living our lives for the Lord is the GRACE OF GOD.

 "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).
5. The apostle Paul was motivated to live his life for God and work hard in serving Jesus Christ because of the GRACE OF GOD.
6. To Paul, the greatest thing in all the world was the grace of God, the fact that God loved him so much...that God forgave his terrible sins...that God allowed him to follow and serve His son...that God allowed him to proclaim the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. All that Paul was and all that Paul did was by the grace, the undeserved favor of God. As he himself declared: "by the grace of God I am what I am."
8. A big motivating factor that should inspire us to live good Christian lives...to run the Christian race... is the grace of God.
11. What is the grace of God?
 - a. Simply...the Bible says that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).
 - b. When we sin, we deserve death (because sin is an offense against God and must be punished).
 - c. However, God had a plan to help us be forgiven of our sins. God, mercifully sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to take away our sins.
 - d. Paul says, "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).
 - e. Because of our sins, we deserve spiritual death.
 - f. However, Jesus died in our place so that we may live forever. Jesus gave His life to give us life.

ILLUSTRATION:

On August 16, 1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport, killing 155 people.

One survived: a four-year-old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia.

Cecelia survived because, even as the plane was falling, Cecelia's mother, Paula Chican, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.

Nothing could separate that child from her parent's love—neither tragedy nor disaster, neither the fall nor the flames that followed, neither height nor depth, neither life nor death.

Such is the love of our Savior for us. He left heaven, lowered himself to us, and covered us with the sacrifice of His own body to save us.

12. Why should we live our lives for God and follow His will?
13. We should live our lives for God because He loved us so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross to save us from our sins!
14. The grace...the undeserved love that He shows us should motivate us to run the Christian race with all of our hearts!

C. THIRD, TO WIN THE CHRISTIAN RACE, WE MUST TURN SETBACKS INTO COMEBACKS.

ILLUSTRATION:

In 1996, Lance Armstrong was diagnosed with cancer. Doctors gave him only a 50% chance of survival since the cancer had spread to his brain and lungs.

But after four rounds of chemotherapy and two operations, Armstrong turned his setback into a comeback.

Only three years after being diagnosed with life-threatening cancer, Lance Armstrong won one of sports' most grueling cycling events--the Tour de France.

1. In our lives, we will experience setbacks...some setbacks may be emotional and some may be physical and some may be spiritual.

2. When they come, we shouldn't become angry and bitter, instead, we must turn our setbacks into comebacks.
3. The Christian life is by far the best life to live, however, it is not a problem-free life.
4. Troubles will arise.
5. However, we can triumph over our problems...we can turn setbacks into comebacks just like Lance Armstrong did.
6. Why do we experience trials and tribulations?
7. We experience trials and tribulations in order to grow and mature in our faith.



"Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:4).

8. Our suffering develops perseverance; and perseverance will build maturity and maturity will produce character.
9. So suffering is designed to make us better people.
10. How should we handle difficult times?
11. How can we rebound from setbacks?
 - a. Pray and believe that God is with us.
 - We must give our problems to God in prayer and trust that in His own time and way, He will help us.
 - b. Choose to be joyful.
 - A joyful attitude is essential when rebounding from setbacks. James says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (James 1:2).
 - When setbacks come, give thanks to the Lord and adopt a joyful attitude.
 - c. Never give up.
 - No matter what happens, we must never give up on our faith. Things will always get better.

CONCLUSION:

1. **Brethren, to win the Christian race, we must run with confidence, run with the right motivation, and turn setbacks into comebacks.**
2. **If we do these three things, we are on our way to winning the Christian race.**
3. **If you are not a Christian, you are not even in the race.**
4. **You have no hope to stand in the victory circle to receive your crown of life.**
5. **So I would like to encourage you to give your life to the Lord today, by believing in Jesus, turn away from your sins, confessing your faith in Jesus and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.**
6. **If you would like to give your life to the Lord, please come now as we stand and sing.**