

# Run to Win

by Erlo Stegen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of discipline and self-discipline in our walk with God, in order to run the Christian race and achieve our goal of eternal life.*

**Duration:** 1:14:20

**Scripture:** James 1:19

**Topics:** "Race"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story about a race to win the hand of the princess's daughter. The race had distractions along the way, and one young man got sidetracked by a beautiful golden shoe. He lost focus on the race and ended up losing the prize. The preacher uses this story to teach the lesson that as believers, we must stay focused and not be distracted by worldly things. He references Paul's words about running the race of faith and encourages the audience to be disciplined and trained Christians.

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## Transcript

Shall we pray? Thank you, Lord, for another opportunity to sit at your feet, Lord Jesus. We ask you to be with us. Work by your Holy Spirit that the word which kills would rather bring life.

May it be your day where you work in our hearts. Amen. 1 Corinthians chapter 9 is the text for today.

1 Corinthians chapter 9 From verse 24 1 Corinthians chapter 9 Do you not know that in a race all runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the Games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly, I do not fight like a man beating the air. I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. The Apostle Paul addresses this letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians chapter 9 1 Corinthians chapter 9 Corinth at the time when Paul was alive was a business center in Greece. Paul preached the gospel there and a church of Christians was founded. It grew and was wonderful.

But after a time he left them to continue his journey. Traveling the world planting churches. But when he had left he did not then forget those that had remained behind.

Instead he continually wrote letters to them. And this from which we have read is called the first letter that he addressed to the Corinthians. He never forgot them.

He always remembered them in prayer urging them how to continue on the Lord's way. He was faithful in that. With the desire that each and every one of them would go forward always to achieve the goal.

Not that a person starts on the way and then halfway he turns away or is sidetracked. And he wrote to them teaching them, begging them, beseeching them. Sometimes disciplining them.

Sometimes encouraging them. And sometimes strengthening them. Sometimes comforting them.

We could speak about all his teachings the whole day long. And his beseeching them. And his disciplining them.

And his strengthening them. And his comforting them. But we don't have time for that.

Today I want to look at one point only. How he strengthened them as regards to this chapter. He took the faith.

He took the faith and compared it to a race. Close to Corinth was a very large broad place. Where there were competitions or games.

And until today we still have those games called the Olympics. It starts from then. Once every three years.

They would have this competition. Some would run. Some would race in chariots with horses.

Some would take a heavy object and throw it. Some were javelin throwers to throw as far as possible to see who would win. And they had many types of games.

The one who succeeded. Who came first. Received a prize.

And everyone who competed in the games tried to win this prize. And then the big prize was obtained by only one person. And then Paul says, like them running the race.

Now you in the faith compete in the same manner. But you have to be disciplined. Because if you don't do it, you will never succeed.

God says, if you want to succeed. Then you need to be a disciplined, trained Christian. we do it for something that is heavenly.

Those in the competition would train, doing their exercises, would train for years. So that when the big competition came, they would aim to win the prize, for many would compete, only one would win. Then he says, we who are surrendered to the Lord, in our faith, let us run like they do in their games or races.

Running properly, for the word says that you cannot win the prize if you do not compete according to the rules of the game. So for years they trained so that when that day arrives of the great competition, they would win. It is sad that many Christians do not act in that way.

Some say, we look to be liberal about it, but the way in which they run is by looking around them and saying, look, I am a Christian, I am a Christian. Because they are not focused. Paul himself ran this race too.

Saying, for Jesus' sake, I have lost everything so that I might know him only. He was not sidetracked by the way others were running, he ran in a way to win the race. And when it came close to his death, he was able to say, I have run my race, I am about to receive my crown.

I think you might know the story of that king of ancient times who had a beautiful daughter and every young man wanted to marry her. They wanted to marry this princess. So one day the king said to those suitors who wanted to marry the princess, I am going to test you now.

The one who wants to marry the princess must compete in a race. You will leave from this point, going to a certain point, turning at another point, until finally you run the whole course, which would take two or three hours to run this race. And he said, the one who comes first will receive the hand of his princess's daughter.

But along the race, far away, he took a golden shoe that was sparkling in its beauty. He polished it to look like a mirror, gold that had been very purified. One young man ran enthusiastically, it seemed as if he would win.

He looked sure to become the future son-in-law of the king. But the shoe had been laid on a high place far away. As this young man ran, he noticed something glittering in the distance.

And he really ran, wondering what is this beautiful glittering object. When he got close, he said to himself, it looks like a lump of gold. When he got there, he turned off the track to go to it.

And he found this beautiful gold shoe. He examined it from every angle, starting with his assurance that this is genuine gold. Then he was distracted while he was looking at it.

Others who were running were now past him because he was busy glancing at the shoe. Suddenly, he woke up to the fact that he was busy looking at the shoe and not running the race. And so he said to himself, let me join the race again.

And then he put all his effort into it. But others had passed him by. One was far in front, close to the prize.

When he got there, he realized he had lost the race. The one who then came first was the one who could marry the princess. He had been distracted by a shoe.

Let's learn from him. We might say we are true believers. But on the way, there are distractions placed there to try and sidetrack us so that we don't reach the prize.

He lost the princess's hand because he had been sidetracked by this piece of gold. Similar to Demas. Paul said Paul said that he had been running well, but on the way, he was sidetracked, loving the world.

Paul said, let us run so as not to lose the heavenly prize. Not to receive an earthly prize like the one that would be in the earthly competition was a type of a plant that was sown into a reef that withered. The Bible says faith is better than gold.

It too will perish and fade and wither. All treasures do fade. But the person who is sidetracked by earthly things is not wise because he loses out on the heavenly prize.

A certain man in America who had been on a mission to America a Baptist minister in America very famous often he loved to preach about heaven calling heaven the no land no death no tears no

sicknesses no trouble That's why he called heaven the no land. He traveled the world preaching about heaven, something precious to him saying we are fools if we lose the heavenly prize. We lose out on things that are just vanity and then we lose heaven.

Speaking about the beauty of heaven. And there was no one like him in his time that could preach about heaven like he could. And then as he lay dying his daughter was at his bedside close to him as he was about to pass away.

He said, my daughter, I have longed, I've been preaching about heaven for a long time trying to express the beauty and the glories of heaven. However far surpasses anything that I had said about heaven. I could not express even half of its beauty.

So if we speak about the heavenly prize we are only touching the hem of the garment if we see heaven and the beauty and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ we are only touching the hem of the garment if we see heaven and the beauty and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ we are only touching the hem of the garment if we see heaven and the beauty and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ we are only touching the hem of the garment then we will fully understand Paul when he says though I am a Jew of Jews, a Pharisee of Pharisees and he listed those things he said I've denied all and cast it aside as dung to gain the Lord Jesus the Bible says that if we are more than conquerors we will be seated with the Lord Jesus on his heavenly throne and the Bible even says we will be like him, the Lord Jesus and the Bible even says we will be like him, the Lord Jesus with a glorified body and the Bible even says we will be like him, the Lord Jesus and the Bible even says we will be like him, the Lord Jesus with a glorified body and the Bible even says we will be like him, the Lord Jesus for when the last trumpet sounds even those in the grave their bodies will rise up to meet their souls and the Church will arise and those who have died before us when they meet with their glorified bodies at the great heavenly wedding, marriage, think how great that prize will be. No more pain, no more disease, no more death, but to partake of the heavenly kingdom of God. The thief on the cross said, Oh Jesus, remember me when you enter paradise.

And Jesus said, Today you will be with me in paradise. Do you see how the heavenly prize cannot really be expressed in words at all? The height, the breadth, the depth, everything about the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, If you've lost anything for my sake or for the gospel's sake, it will be given unto you multiple times in heaven.

If you've lost anything for my sake or for the gospel's sake, it will be given unto you multiple times in heaven. We would be idiots, fools, if we replace the heavenly prize, that which is imperishable, with the things of this world which perish. Paul says he strives so that when the church is caught up, he would be there.

Paul was trying to strengthen them, to keep them from losing out on that which is from heaven. He said, If you've lost anything for my sake or for the gospel's sake, it will be given unto you multiple times in heaven. If you've lost anything for my sake or for the gospel's sake, it will be given unto you multiple times in heaven.

If you've lost anything for my sake or for the gospel's sake, it will be given unto you multiple times in heaven. But this shoe that you take, and the shoe which distracts you, you don't realize, that it too is perishable. It can be robbed, can be taken from you, that earthly thing, that which has taken you aside.

You don't know, next year you might be dead through a car accident. The Bible says, it is utterly in vain, for it passes. For sin, though it might be attractive, takes you and distracts you.

Anything that causes you to lose your focus on your race is sin. And you are breaking the rules, for we have to run according to the rules of the word of the Lord. Jesus says, He said, he who believes in me as the scriptures say, those are the rules.

If we do not run, according to the Bible, the word of the Lord, we lose in this world and the one to come. You should be reading the Bible every day, all the time, day and night, so that your life would be in accordance with the word. How awful it would be, you run the race, but you are disqualified, you don't succeed.

What thrills me is that each one of us can win the prize, if we run to win the prize, so as to win. I heard of something that happened in a certain church. There was a troublesome woman.

She was a harassment to the church. For what reason? Because of her tongue. After all, you women are gifted.

You are gifted with the tongue and being able to gossip. And so, there are also, unfortunately, men who are just like that. You could say they should rather wear the dress because they too gossip.

I mean it in a spiritual sense. Now, this particular woman who was troublesome, Her slander caused friction. It turned things upside down, caused people to be at loggerheads with each other.

So, the pastor was busy trying to put out the fires because there was friction. She had muddied the waters. Even when the preacher approached her, nothing helped.

Finally, he was disappointed. And desperate, not knowing what cure there would be for this woman. For she was like the old serpent with her tongue.

And she was actually a serpent's child. So, one day, he called her and said, Mrs. So-and-so, I want you to visit me. And he said, now, Mrs. So-and-so, do this for me.

Here is a chicken. I want you to walk with it. The distance from here to Mapumulu is about 20 kilometers.

On the way, I want you to feather it. Pluck the feathers. Pluck all the feathers out.

And then come back without one feather still being on the chicken. She said, Pastor, I can do that. So, off she went.

Now, it was gusty with wind on that day. She got there. She came back.

The pastor said, Lady, did you do what I'd instructed you to? She said, Pastor, I've done it completely. Here's the chicken. He inspected it.

He examined it and said, you've really done it. But now, Lady, But now, Lady, I want you to return, go the same way that you went, and collect every single feather. But, Pastor, I can never achieve that.

For those feathers would have blown with the wind. They've scattered everywhere. Nobody could collect those feathers again.

Then he said, He said, Now, Lady, when you gossip and tell a story, even though you tell it privately, you tell somebody else, don't tell a soul, but she will also go to some other lady and say the same, and don't tell a soul until it spreads everywhere. The Bible says if you want to run according to the rules, be quick to listen and slow to speak. And if a person sins, don't gossip about them.

Go directly to him. Challenge him and say, this is what I hear. This is what I notice.

Speak directly. Should he not want to listen, then call a second person and speak to that person. Should he still not listen, call a third, and should they still not listen, then stand him before the church.

Now, gossipers, do you do that? Or can you speak about someone else by name, though they're not in your presence? If they are there, you are quiet. Today I tell you, you are not on the way to heaven. You are self-condemned.

You are not running according to the rules. You are running, but you're disqualified. You won't get the prize.

You won't get the prize. Now, I challenge you directly So that you would run according to the rules of the race. Now, if you gossip about somebody else using their name, if you don't have the strength to go to the person directly, well, go then to your leader, to the pastor.

Paul even takes note of the fact that there was division in the church, and he had heard it directly from the house of Chloe. Now, you say, but I'm afraid. The thing is, you're not keeping the rules.

John Knox of Scotland, Because you fear man more than God. Now, John Knox of Scotland, it is said of him that he feared no man because he feared God alone. Do we fear God like that, that we don't fear any man? That's the question I place before you.

But if you say, but I'm afraid, they might kill me, they might sue me, they might put poison in my food. Paul said, I've heard from the household of Chloe that there is division. One person says this.

In other words, those of Chloe's household felt they could not keep quiet with this. That's why they went directly to Paul. Now, there were those that claimed that they belonged to Peter or to Paul or whatever.

The thing is, they weren't like them. They didn't run according to the rules. You run, but not in the right way.

Not as if though you are really in a competition. It would be good that everyone would examine himself now. How are you living? Some in the Paul's time would have certain type of games where they had armor and swords and their gladiator games were a matter of life and death.

The Bible says you have not resisted sin till the shedding of blood. You come to the point where you say, I'd rather die than commit the sin. I'd rather die than lie.

I would rather die than that the temple, my body should be abused. In the wrong way. You say you run.

You say you're on the way to heaven, but in actual fact you belong to Sodom and Gomorrah committing the sins of homosexuality, lesbianism. You will receive their reward. If we run according to the rules.

We will resist sin to the point of shedding blood saying, I would rather die than commit this sin. Think of John the Baptist. His king, Herod, had sinned.

Had taken his brother's wife. John the Baptist directly challenged him and said, King, what you have done is wrong. That you should take your brother's wife, committed adultery with her.

But Herod, Herod didn't do the right thing. Instead he went to his wife and he told her what John the Baptist had said until her hatred came to the point of wanting John beheaded. Hatred in her heart resulting in murder.

We had seen her daughter dancing. It is terrible if a person has a grudge. Awful.

Evil. But John the Baptist said, I can't do that. But John the Baptist said, I cannot keep quiet with this.

I don't fear death. Instead of fearing death where a person says, I'm afraid of dying, I'd rather keep quiet about this and hush it up. I remember I had spoken about a certain story on the 7th of September 2007.

On the 7th of September 2007. About something which was a discussion among the Jews. The Jews who believed in Jesus.

They were believing Christians, these Jews. There was a certain rabbi of them. Their rabbi was called Susia.

He wasn't just a teacher of the law like the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, you come at night, you don't know these things, yet you are a teacher. He was a teacher of teachers. One day rabbi Susia stood before his students teaching them.

And he said, and God said, the moment he said that he began to tremble. From his head to his feet he began to shake. Till he walked into one wall, then into the other wall.

But they thought he had gone insane. Driven insane by the words, and God said. Till they took him to another room and locked him up there.

Until he shouted out, crying out, God said. And it was revealed to him that God who is so great speaks to him. The Israelites thought that they were building a building for God.

That is why the Lord said, can you build a home or house, temple for God? When heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool, with such a great God, how can you build for him? We can never describe the real greatness of God. There are stars even bigger than the sun. In the universe there are some suns whose light hasn't yet reached earth.

The light, the light of the sun, the light hasn't yet even reached here. And if you ask the educated ones, what is the speed of light? The speed is so phenomenal per second. And Jesus said, so you want to build a house for God? Doesn't the Most High say, the heavens are my throne? And the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house which you could build for him? Where is a place for me to rest? For all these things I have created with my own hand. But God says, the one to whom I will look is the one of a contrite and broken spirit and who trembles at my word. When you hear the word of the Lord, does it shake you? Do you tremble at his word? Easily and so flippantly we say that the Lord has spoken to me.

This is what he said, and yet the Bible says that he'll look only to the one who trembles at his word. Do we know that? Do we truly fear the Lord? He who is the Most High? What is lightning? Or thunder? What is thunder? If you compare it to God. If there is a storm and thunder and lightning, some are so suspicious they'll take certain measures and use glasses for things.

To tremble at this storm, this lightning, this thunder, which is just from the sky. What about him who made the sky? Do you tremble at his word when he uses lightning as his rod? When God speaks, it should cause you to tremble that you say, I cannot continue with this sin any longer. Dear friends, fathers, mothers, young people, Are you familiar with this? If not, don't even tell me you are part of this race, participating in this race to heaven.

Instead, you belong to Satan. We are running. But we must run according to the rules.

I'm ending. For time has gone on. As I went back to the house of Jesus, I called on my father, to come down from the sky.

To come down from the heaven. I ask you now, are you running in the heavenly race according to the rules of this book? No. The one who runs in the heavenly race is such a crucifixion.

If not, this is your opportunity to repent, to get right with God, confessing your sin. How terrible it would be if you leave the service and you continue then with your lying, with your immorality, with your gossip. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, if you look at a woman lustfully, you have already committed adultery with her.

If you gossip about your brother, shall hatred kill him? You have killed him. You have murdered him. You have spilt his blood.

I wonder whether you tremble at the Word of God, for if you did, it would cause you to tremble and shake to be one who is so overwhelmed you would end, you would repent and turn away from that sin completely. Shall we stand and pray? If your knees are not too weak, if you could stand. Lord Jesus, we ask and I ask that this Word of yours would not be in vain to us.

May your Word cut to the heart, cause us to tremble and shake so that we would run to the cross, humbling ourselves at the cross, to be washed by your blood, changed by your power, so that we would run the heavenly race in the right way, to win the prize. If we lose out, lose that prize, we will regret it for the rest of eternity in hell. Amen.

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