

The Race

by Erlo Stegen

As Christians, we must run the race of life with discipline, playing by the rules and being faithful in our roles, lest we be disqualified and suffer regret in heaven.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:24

Topics: "Unity in the Body of Christ", "Running the Race of Faith"

Description

Erlo Stegen emphasizes that the Christian life is akin to a race, where believers must run with purpose and discipline to obtain an eternal crown. He highlights the importance of unity within the body of Christ, reminding us that our actions affect the entire team, just as sin impacted Israel in the Old Testament. Stegen warns against living a double life and stresses the need for faithfulness in our God-given roles, urging believers to listen to the Holy Spirit as the ultimate guide. He draws parallels between sports rules and God's commandments, illustrating that disobedience can lead to disqualification from the race of faith. Ultimately, he calls for self-examination and repentance to ensure we are running the race effectively and in accordance with God's will.

Transcript

1Cor 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul compares the Christian life with a race.

All of us who are Christians, we are united into one body through the Holy Spirit; we are one group, one team.

As Christians we don't represent SA or Germany or any other country but we represent heaven. We also don't strive for a temporal crown but an eternal, imperishable crown.

Do you realise you represent heaven? Or are you just concerned with the earthly things? It would be good to realise whom you represent.

In soccer there are boundaries and rules. You cannot do your own thing.

So as Christians in the church it is the same. You have to play according to the rules, otherwise there will be chaos. Even Paul said he didn't want to preach to others and be disqualified himself.

If you don't play according to the rules you will be sent off with a yellow or even a red card. The sad thing is that if one member does something wrong the whole team suffers.

Remember in the old testament when Achan sinned. The heavenly referee blew His whistle, and the verdict was that Israel had sinned. Everything grinded to a halt. They first had to sort that sin out before they could continue.

So when you sin remember you don't just harm yourself but all the others suffer too.

Today with the marvellous technology the referee on the field doesn't act alone but is all the time wirelessly connected and advised by other professionals behind the scenes who are also monitoring the game closely.

So the Lord sees everything to the finest detail how we run, what we do and even our motives and intents of our hearts.

Many times the pharisees confronted the Lord Jesus about what He's done or said and He replied that He didn't act out of Himself but did as He heard and was advised by His Heavenly Father. He was constantly in contact with His Father who saw and knew everything and instructed Him how to act in every situation.

According to Hebrews 12 we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses.

If you don't play according to the rules and the heavenly referee blows His whistle you're supposed to stop. You'll be considered a madman if you just keep on playing - in other words singing in the choir, preaching etc., when He has blown His whistle.

Remember also that you are in a team. If you say that you only listen to God and no-one else you act like a madman. What will you think of a player who does his own thing all the time and doesn't listen to any advise from his team mates? He will be thrown out of the team.

Don't you realise that the Holy Spirit has baptised us into one body? We must be like one, fighting the Lord's battles.

This is a life-long battle. We cannot live a double life - act in one way when in church and another way when at home.

Remember that the Heavenly Referee sees everything. Nothing passes His all-seeing eyes.

God has given each one his gift. Be faithful where God has put you. When you're the goal-keeper then don't desire to be a striker and abandon your position.

Some Christians are like that. Others go out and preach and they are called to support them and pray for them. In stead they feel sorry for themselves and so are unfaithful where God has put them and the enemy gets in.

Have you ever let your team down? Have you ever spoken about your team mates behind their back in stead of helping them? Or even worse, are you aiding the enemy by being a Judas while in the church? It is something terrible and to be repented of.

Husbands God has given you rules how to lead your family and treat your wife and children. Woe to you if you don't do according to God's rules. Do you simply react in the flesh when they do wrong or do you act according to the Spirit's leading?

Test your life and see how you have been playing in the past.

Is there maybe regret in heaven over your life?

If you are unfaithful, God's plan will continue and you will be sidelined, like Esau who sold his birthright for a plate of porridge. You know what that plate of porridge is in your life.

You might even be preaching while you're already disqualified and you're still carrying on as if nothing is wrong. Listen to the Heavenly Referee, the Holy Spirit, who leads and directs you. He is constantly in contact with Heaven.

"And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." (Luke 11:27-28).

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/erlo-stegen/the-race/>

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