

The Olympic Games Continued

by Phil Beach Jr.

The Olympic Games Continued is a sermon that explores the theme of perseverance and faithfulness in the face of adversity, using the analogy of the Olympic Games to encourage Christians to seek after God's will and to please Him.

Duration: 31:05

Scripture: Acts 20:17

Topics: "Christian Life", "Divine Calling", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the importance of living a life dedicated to fulfilling God's calling, using the metaphor of the Olympic Games to illustrate the Christian race. He highlights the Apostle Paul's unwavering commitment to his mission, despite facing hardships and persecution, and encourages believers to adopt a similar mindset of valuing their lives less than the task of spreading the Gospel. Paul's confidence and purpose stem from his divine calling, which allows him to endure trials and focus on the ultimate prize of eternal life. The sermon challenges Christians to run their race with discipline and integrity, adhering to God's rules, and to be prepared for the judgment at the Bema seat of Christ.

Transcript

■ Turn your eyes upon Jesus Look for in His wonderful face And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace. Praise the Lord. I'd like to invite you to please open up your Bibles to Acts chapter 20.

Acts chapter 20 and we're going to be reading verses 17 through 24. Acts chapter 20, 17 through 24. I'm going to be reading from the New International Version.

Possibly I'll be reading from the King James Version throughout this message. The title of this morning's message, The Olympic Games continue. The Olympic Games continue.

Acts chapter 20, beginning with verse number 17. From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. And when they arrived, he said to them, You know how I lived the whole time I was with you? From the first day I came into the province of Asia, I served the Lord with great humility and with tears.

Although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews, You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you, but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have

declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. Verse 24, place an asterisk if you write in your Bible next to it. If you write in your Bible, draw a line under verse number 24.

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race, complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me, the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Paul just told us about his track record among those who believed in Ephesus. And from verses 17 to 23, Paul describes his conduct, his speech, his actions, and his philosophy that he lived in the presence of the Ephesian Christians.

And Paul expressed a very, very strong compelling sense of calling upon his life. Paul perceived that God had called him, and God had chosen him, and God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit of promise in order for a particular purpose. And because Paul was so persuaded of his divine call, and he was so persuaded of his divine appointment, he was not distressed, nor was he disturbed at the past, present, and future difficulties that he was facing.

Paul displayed a degree of confidence that did not have its origin from earth. Paul displayed a degree of confidence, my friends, that was more than just positive confession. It was more than just a mental positive attitude.

It was more than just an intellectual and mental knowledge of the Scriptures. But my friends, Paul's confidence in light of his afflictions and his troubles was born of heaven. And because his confidence was born of heaven, he was able to possess a quality that both you and I need to possess.

The quality that Paul possessed was the continual awareness that he was a participant in a heavenly Olympic game. He considered himself one of many who were running a race. And I am persuaded this morning the characteristic within Paul's life that enabled him to have the track record of verse 17 through 23 where he wept and prayed and cried and declared the whole counsel of God, where he became aware of the afflictions that were meeting him, that were about to meet him and that had met him.

I am persuaded that the element in Paul's life that enabled him... Listen, this was Paul's race. These were the obstacles that Paul was running up against in his race. And they're the same obstacles that you and I will be running up against in the race of Christianity.

But verse number 24 is the all-important scripture this morning because it is in verse 24 that we find the secret to Paul's success as an Olympic runner. However, you see, Paul just got done saying in verse 22, and now compelled by the Spirit, I'm going to Jerusalem not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

How can a man know that the future course of his life will be characterized by hardships, prisons, stonings, beatings, persecutions, and be able to continue on the course? Verse number 24. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me. If only I may finish the race, complete the task the Lord Jesus has given to me.

You see, Paul had the mentality of an Olympic runner. One who is an Olympic runner considers not the importance of his own life, but his goal, his heart's affections, his aspirations, his plans, and his energies

are spent for the purpose of training himself so that he might finish the race and accomplish the task of running. And I believe this morning that if you and I are going to be effective Christians called by God to run a race, we too must consider our own life worth nothing and have the singleness of goal, the singleness of mind, the singleness of purpose, the singleness of aspiration to finish the race that you have entered the day you believed.

Not only to finish the race, but to complete that particular task that God has called you to accomplish. 1 Corinthians chapter 9. 1 Corinthians chapter 9, we're going to see again Paul's revelation in relation to the race that he was in. 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 24.

Do you not know that in a race all the 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, I repeat, therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, 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 remarkable analogy that the Holy Spirit is giving us in this particular portion of Scripture, in the one that we just read, and in others that we will read, is the surprising, astounding, sobering truth that as in the natural back then, and even to this very day, there was what was called Olympic Games. These Olympic Games were conducted by men who judged the results of those who competed. And as the natural games had a philosophy wherein those who participated were aware of their goal to win the prize, number two, they were aware of the fact that each particular event that they conducted themselves in had specific rules, it had specific guidelines, and thirdly, they were aware that at the end of their race they would be evaluated and someone would sit and scrutinize their efforts and determine how good and how effective and how lawfully they played the games.

Recently, the 24th Olympiad has been completed. 8,000 young athletes from over 110 countries were in Korea to compete for excellence. There were times of great emotional joy years and years of hard work had finally come to the time of testing.

There was excitement and what we have so commonly heard as the thrill of victory. But my friends, I would like to remind you this morning that in these Olympic Games that we just recently passed there was not only the thrill of victory but as we have also heard, there was the agony of defeat. For you who followed the Olympic Games, I didn't, but I do listen to the radio at times and try and keep up with what's happening.

There was a young man from Canada who had competed in the 100-meter race and my friends, this young man from Canada competed in the race and he won. And he was considered to be, and I quote, the fastest man alive. He scored in the 100-meter race under 10 seconds.

That's fast. But the problem that this young man had was twofold. This young Canadian athlete forgot two things.

The first thing he forgot, there were rules to the Games and they needed to be followed. The second thing he forgot, there was a board of men who were appointed by the Olympic Committee to ensure that the rules were upheld. I would like to invite you to turn your Bibles to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5. You see, this

young fellow from Canada did an outstanding job by the way he represented the entire nation of Canada.

He was disqualified. His prize was taken from him, David, and he was sent home in shame as a disgrace. Quite a burden to bear for a young athlete, isn't it? All the years, all the time, Fonda, that he put into his training.

I'm sure he trained 8 hours a day, 7 days a week. You see, the Olympics aren't play games, they're serious games. He was disqualified because after having a test in his system, he was discovered to have been using steroids, which are drugs to make your muscles bigger and stronger.

And see, my friends, one of the rules in the Olympic Games was you gotta win without the help of synthetic chemicals and drugs. See, that's one of the rules. And what he forgot, he forgot the rule, maybe he didn't forget the rule, but one thing he did forget, and I want you to listen closely, he forgot about the Olympic BEMA seat.

The Olympic BEMA seat. I'm glad someone asked that, what's that? That was my next question, what's that? The Olympic BEMA seat was the place of judgment where those who competed in the Olympic races were judged and scrutinized and there they were determined by this judgment bar whether they had done it lawfully. 2 Corinthians 5, beginning with verse 6. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord.

We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please Him.

First we see Paul telling us in 1 Corinthians or in Acts chapter 20 verse 24 that he counted his own life nothing because his only desire was to accomplish the goal and finish the race. Next here we see that Paul is telling us that he made it his goal to please the Lord. Do you notice a pattern in the Apostle's life? The pattern in the Apostle's life was that he became fully persuaded that he did not exist in this world to please himself or to carry out his own plans or to do what he wanted to do.

But he perceived a higher calling than the call that was upon him by virtue of being in the world. You know what the call is upon each and every one of us? Just because we are in this world? It's the call to seek after the things that please us. It's the call to indulge in the flesh.

It's the call to become like the world system. It's the call to fashion ourselves according to the ungodly philosophy of humanism and self. But Paul perceived a higher call than that earthly call that was upon him.

Verse 9, so we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. Listen very closely to verse 10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

The bema seat of Christ. Now this term, bema seat, is a term that was familiar in Paul's day. The bema seat was the place of judgment.

And there are several applications that could be derived from understanding what the bema seat was. Civil affairs were brought to a particular bema seat. According to one author that I read, the actual Greek Olympic Games that were actively taking place during the time when Paul lived had what they called a bema seat.

And that place, in fact, was those men who were appointed, and it was their job to check out, look over those who were in the games and see what they did, and how faithful they were, and whether they played by the rules. And the Holy Spirit, knowing the importance of that natural truth, inspires Paul to write to Christians who are called into the heavenly Olympic Games that someday we too will be called to stand before not the bema seat of man, but the bema seat of Christ. There, well, let's see, let's read on.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. The bema seat of Christ is the place where everything is uncovered. And there, listen closely, there's going to be some who everyone thought were winners, and they end up losers.

And the ones who didn't score very highly will be winners. As the Canadian young man who seemingly, and I say seemingly, won the race and received the prize and was honored by all men, after he left the bema seat, he was stripped of his prize, he was shamed and was sent back to Canada without anything. Quite interesting, huh? The prize was given to one who, though he was not as quick as the Canadian fellow was, yet he played according to the rules.

You ever like to find shortcuts? A couple people shake their heads. Let me tell you something about shortcuts, church. He who finds a shortcut that is not according to the rules will ultimately find himself on a dead-end road.

I'd like for you to turn your Bibles to 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy chapter 4, beginning with verse number 6. 2 Timothy chapter 4, beginning with verse 6. I am already being poured out like a drink offering and the time has come for my departure.

What does Paul think about as he approaches death?

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