

Run Hard

1 Corinthians 9:24 - 10:22



Disqualified?

After walking for nearly 90 minutes, Jane Saville could hear the roar of a jubilant hometown crowd awaiting her entry into Olympic Stadium. Then the stadium suddenly went silent.

Saville had a comfortable lead in the 20-kilometer walk, and was only about 150 meters from an Australian gold medal, when disaster struck. A race judge waved a red card at Saville, signaling her disqualification.

After entering the stadium tunnel in anticipation of a hero's welcome, she turned around and walked away in tears...

Imagine this...

After preaching the gospel for nearly 40 years, Paul the Apostle could hear the roar of a jubilant heavenly crowd awaiting his entry into glory. Then, the heavens suddenly went silent. Paul had a comfortable lead in the 2000km Gospel-preaching, and was only about 150 metres from the gold medal when disaster struck. A race judge waved a red card at Paul, signalling his disqualification. After entering the stadium tunnel in anticipation of a hero's welcome, he turned and walked away in tears...

It's inconceivable. We've heard the slogan, "Once saved, always saved." We learned the doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints." And yet Paul, it seems, can see this horrible picture quite clearly in his mind's eye.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

- How do Olympic athletes train, and for what reward?
- How does Paul want the Corinthian Christians to run?
- What training is involved, and what reward?
- What is Paul's fear?

But how can this great race be lost? How can a Christian be disqualified? How can a Christian's run be aimless? How can a Christian spend his or her life just "shadow-boxing"? That's what Paul goes on to explain in chapter 10. Paul says, "I beat my body and make it my slave so that **I won't be disqualified** for the prize." And he wants the Corinthians to do the same. "For I do not want you to be ignorant," he says, of some of the hazards you're facing in the race...

Learning from Past Mistakes...

The Corinthian Christians have a lot in common with Israel. But that means they should learn from Israel's past mistakes. Israel was red-carded four different ways...

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-10.

a. God saved Israel, and even "baptised" them by leading them through the Red Sea as Moses took them to the promised land in the book of Exodus. Did this mean they could be complacent?

b. List the four red cards that Israel were given in the wilderness...

Red Card 1 (v7) _____

Red Card 2 (v8) _____

Red Card 3 (v9) _____

Red Card 4 (v10) _____

c. Why did these things happen? (v6, v11)

d. How would you describe the attitude in verse 12?

Putting it together...

Read **John 10:27-29**. Do the words of Jesus here contradict what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 10? How can these teachings be held together?

e. What's the GOOD NEWS in 1 Cor 10:13?

Read verses 14 to 22.

a. In what particular way are the Corinthians tempted to follow in the footsteps of Israel?

b. What three way comparison is being made in vv16-17 || v18 || v20? (What key word links all three?)

c. Verses 21 and 22 make it personal. Think back to what we saw in Hosea. What point is being made here?

What about you?

The Corinthians are being warned about "two-timing" with Jesus. They want the benefits and security of Christianity, alongside the "freedom" of their old idol-worship. The results will be disqualification!

a. In what ways do we "arouse the Lord's jealousy" by flirting with other options?

b. In what ways could you "run harder" and "train" so as to be more effective in the race?

c. As Christians, we have great security in the grasp of Jesus. But how can we avoid being complacent?

The Golden Calf

¹ When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods ^[1] who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

² Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." ³ So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, ^[2] O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." ⁶ So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. ^[3] Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

from Exodus 32:4-6

see also Numbers 16:41, 25:1-9, Exodus 17:2