



Win Your Race

- I. Introduction. There were several different false teachings that arose in Christianity during the first century. The most obvious (and one Paul addressed in 3:1-11) was salvation through works. Another false teaching that was related to works righteousness was the belief that once you were saved you had attained perfection; therefore, no ongoing discipleship was needed. Paul addresses this false teaching in Philippians 3:12-16.

- II. Addressing the Text
 - A. The salvation mystery. There is a tension in scripture with regard to salvation. Although salvation is a historical event for the Christian (you were saved by grace); it culminates at the second coming of Christ when we are taken to heaven. During our lives on this earth, Paul says we are “putting our salvation to work” (Phil. 2:12). Some believers falsely believed that because salvation was a past event, there is no “putting your salvation to work.” We are saved and therefore perfect through Christ. We punch our ticket to heaven. We need to put no effort in while we are living on this earth. Paul addresses this false doctrine through the use of an Olympics metaphor. Notice his conclusion in 3:16- it phrases this tension very well. “Let us live up to what we have already obtained.”
 - B. Life is like an Olympic race...sort of. We all run the race. The race is a marathon. But unlike the Olympics, all we have to do to win is finish the race! Paul is encouraging all of us to finish our race! Some believers had received grace, been saved, and been redeemed. Now they wanted to sit on the sidelines. Christianity is not a spectator sport. In verse 12, Paul says, “I have not already obtained the finish line or finished (been made perfect) my race. The phrase “been made perfect” can be translated as “finished” or “completed.” I have been completed by Christ at the cross, but I have not completed the race that he has called me to run. So, I keep running hard (press on) to finish the race.”
 - C. The phrase “take hold” is used 3 times in verse 12-13. “Take hold” literally means to apprehend. “I am apprehending that which Jesus apprehended for me. But I haven’t fully apprehended it yet because I haven’t finished my race.” When Paul repeats a phrase, it holds an important place in his thought process. He is pushing his agenda against this false doctrine. “God took hold of me in salvation; now I must take hold of God to empower me to finish my race. I’ll fully take hold of him when I finish my race.”
 - D. Paul says, “I do one thing in life: I keep running hard (press on) to finish the race so that I can win the prize of being with Jesus in heaven for eternity.” Jesus is the prize. Paul uses the phrase “press on” twice in these short verses. Notice the laser focus of Paul’s life.
 - E. In what way is your spiritual life like running a marathon? In what ways do some Christians in our culture treat their salvation as a “spectator sport?” How do we motivate them to jump in and run their race?

III. Three Steps to Win Your Race

- A. Look up- vs. 12. God has a design for your life; He has a race for you to run. Align your life with God's design and run! Look up to Christ as your guide and leader for this race. Jesus apprehended you in salvation; now it is your turn to apprehend him for the race of life. This is where you will find your meaning and purpose. This is the key to joy and contentment. Remember this: Everyone has a different race. One of the ways Satan will try to sabotage you is to get you focused on other people's races. God has a unique race for you to run. Stay focused on Christ and your race; don't be distracted by comparing your race to someone else. It doesn't matter which race you run; it matters that you run the race. In the big picture, all of us are running the same race. We are to use our lives to help people say yes to God. But we are unique in how God has called us and equipped us to run that race. What race has God called you to run? In what ways does Satan try to distract you from running your race? What are some tools at your disposal to help you successfully run your race?
- B. Look in- vs. 13. One of the keys to winning your race is overcoming your past. Paul says that he let go of his past. He had to in order to embrace his future. Satan wants to sabotage your race through crippling you with your past. He does this in two ways:
1. Torment you with the past- You will never move forward with your race until you forget about your past. The blood of Jesus wiped away your past. Don't let Satan or others use your past to keep you depressed, defeated, or disgusted. Let it go. You are free from your past; quit reliving it and letting it slow you down.
 2. Learn nothing from the past. The second way Satan can sabotage you is when you don't learn from your past. When you don't learn from the past, you will repeat it. That is why you must look inward. Examine your past mistakes, sin, and pain. Learn from it and then let it go. You must address your past to be able to let it go. That is the only way you can leave it behind and move forward in faith. How has Satan used your past against you? What have you learned from your past that makes you the man you are today? Have you left your past behind? If, not, why not?
- C. Look forward- vs. 14. Once you have addressed your past, you can let it go and focus forward. Paul speaks of finishing the race, winning the prize, and meeting the goal. The prize is Jesus and eternity with him. The focus is Jesus and what he wants to do with your future. You don't look back or look around, you focus forward to what is ahead for you in Christ. The word focus refers to a single-minded commitment to looking forward and winning the race. Paul concludes in verse 15 reminding us that spiritually mature people are the ones who put the past behind them and have one single ambition for life- run well the race that God has given them to run. What does it mean to focus on Christ? What wisdom has the Bible given you to help you win your race? What is your primary takeaway from this study?

