

## Running to Win

Text: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

1. Anne Scheiber died in 1995 at the age of 101. For years she had lived by herself in a tiny run-down apartment in Manhattan. The paint on her walls was peeling and everything was covered with dust. Scheiber lived on Social Security and a small monthly pension which she began receiving when she retired from the IRS in 1943. At age 51, when she retired, she was making only \$3,150 per year. Those who knew her say she was the model of thrift. She didn't spend money on herself. When her furniture wore out, she kept on using it. She wouldn't even subscribe to a newspaper, rather she went to the library once per week to read The Wall Street Journal. Norman Lamm, the president of Yeshiva University was literally blown away when he learned that this poor old woman left her entire estate to his university – \$22 million! How did she do it? One day at a time. She had managed to save \$5000 by the time she retired in 1943. She invested that in stocks. "By 1950, she had made enough profit to buy 1000 shares of Schering-Plough Corporation stock, then valued at \$10,000. And she held onto that stock, letting its value build. Today those original shares have split enough times to produce 128,000 shares, worth \$7.5 million" (21 Laws... John Maxwell)

2. Anne Scheiber understood the value of investing for the long haul. Whether her stocks went up or down, she never sold it off. When she earned dividends, she kept investing and reinvesting them. While most people become poorer the older they get, she became wealthier. We can learn a valuable spiritual lesson from Anne Scheiber's story: worthwhile investments take time to mature.

3. I'm not so much interested in your net worth or your financial health as I am your spiritual health, where you are on the ladder of spiritual maturity. No matter if you are a "baby Christian" and have only recently begun to walk with the Lord or if you are a "senior saint" and have served Jesus faithfully for years, we all need to learn the lesson that spiritual investments take time to mature.

4. Certainly Anne Scheiber must have been tempted to bail out or cash in her stocks. Who wouldn't. I often meet people who've bailed out on their spiritual investments. I meet those who bailed out on being a husband and a father. I meet those who cashed out on ministry in the local church and walked away. I even meet some that have tried to walk away from God. However, wherever you go, God is already there.

5. Jesus wants us to be rich! Not, necessarily materially rich but spiritually rich. He wants us to reap the dividends of peace, joy, contentment and fulfillment. He wants us to be able to lay our heads on the pillow at night and feel content and satisfied. In fact He said in Jn.10:10, "...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. " Although Jesus gives us so much, He allows us to invest our riches.

A. Remember the story of the rich young ruler? Jesus gave him an investment strategy in Mk.10:21, "sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

B. He said in Mt.6:19-20, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: "

C. In 1 Cor.3, we see the analogy of Jesus as the foundation of our lives and we must build on Him. Some build with temporary perishable materials and some build with eternal, imperishable materials

6. I've titled this message "Running to Win" because the Apostle Paul must have been a sports fan. He always opened the paper to the sports page first. As he shares the truths of long-term spiritual investments, he uses sports metaphors. In the process he describes three qualities of long-term spiritual investors, three qualities of those who live the abundant life.

### **I. Quality #1 is Determination (vv.24-25).**

A. Life is Like a Race.

1. Paul asks, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? " Life is like a race. Sometimes it's a "rat race." Sometimes its uphill, sometimes it's downhill.

2. The race of life is a marathon, not a sprint. Big dividends come from long-term investments. Marathons are not won in a day. We have to have daily determination.

3. Notice v.24 Here's my translation, "In the race of life, some win and some lose." Some achieve great things for God, some live for themselves. Some find fulfillment, some live with what might have been. A poem says, "Of all the words of tongue and pen the saddest are 'It might have been.'"

B. Some Run to Win, Some just Run.

1. Paul says only "one receives the prize" so "run in such a way that you may obtain it." Literally this phrase translates "Run in such a way that you may win."

2. What does it mean to "one receiveth the prize" or win in this Christian race? What does it mean to have a long-term investment? Note v.25 "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

3. In Paul's day, the prize for the winner of a race in the Olympic or Isthmian games was a garland wreath or "crown." This was the symbol of a champion. Winners were widely recognized and given large rewards (this was before professional endorsement deals!).

4. We run in order to receive an "incorruptible crown." In salvation, we have eternal life. However in running the race to win we obtain what 2 Tim.4:8 describes as a "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:"

5. The big difference in our race and those on the track is that every Christian can win. Every Christian who has the right strategy and practices self-discipline can win.

C. Determination makes all the Difference.

1. One of the world's great tragedies is a person who possesses great abilities and potential but just drifts through life because he has no ambition, no drive, no determination. He just settles for mediocrity.

2. If you could describe the Apostle Paul in one word that word would be "determination." He didn't just live his life, he attacked it. He sold out totally to Jesus.

3. Paul was determined to be a winner. He was determined to make wise investments of his time, abilities and resources. At the end of his life, he said in 2 Tim.4:7, " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: "

## **II. Quality #2 is Direction (v.26).**

A fellow pulled his car over to ask an old man how far it was to a certain town. The old man said, "Well, sonny, if you keep going the way you're headed, it's about 25,000 miles. But if you turn around, it's about three miles." We need to have direction in life.

A. To Invest is not enough We must make Wise Investments.

1. Anne Scheiber could have invested her nest egg unwisely and died penniless. She became wealthy because she wisely invested her resources.

2. Paul says we are to run "not as uncertainly;" Changing the metaphor to boxing, he said, "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: " In vv.19-23, Paul states his life goal is to win as many people as possible to Christ. He had direction, a purpose or a goal. What an example.

3. Whether it is the world of financial investing, running a race or fighting a round or living for Christ we need direction, sound strategies and sound planning.

B. Two Strategies to Keep Us going the Right Direction (Heb.12:1-2; Mt.9:36-38).

1. Lay aside distracting sin. Heb.12:1 tells us to "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," We all have sins that weigh us down and keep us from being who God wants us to be.

2. Run with endurance. Heb.12:1 also says we are to "let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"

### **III. Quality #3 is Discipline (vv.25,27).**

A. Discipline keeps us Going when we'd rather Give Up.

1. Paul says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection:" He said in v.25, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."