

**Message #34****I Corinthians 9:19-27**

People who want to be champions at anything are very disciplined people. They are intensely focused. That is true when it comes to athletics, academics and business and it is especially true when it comes to the spiritual life.

People who want to be spiritual champions are very controlled, very consistent, and very focused. They are highly disciplined when it comes to the things of God

Paul was not interested in just going to heaven; he wanted to enter heaven having won all rewards. Paul was not interested in just finishing life having been a Christian; he wanted to finish life having been a winner.

**THE BELIEVER WHO DOES NOT WANT TO LOSE REWARDS IN ETERNITY IS ONE WHO IS EXTREMELY DISCIPLINED ON EARTH.**

A central spiritual problem with the Corinthians is that they were totally undisciplined. They were very unruly. They were true believers but they also were self-centered, worldly-minded and very carnal.

**MOTIVATION #1** – He desired to win the lost world. **9:19-22**

It is quite clear that the key word of this section is the word “win,” which shows up five times in four verses (**9:19, 20 (twice), 21, 22**). The word means to win in the sense of winning something gainful or profitable (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 245).

Paul’s point is that he lived his life under such self-controlled discipline so that he could win others to Christ or gain them for Christ, which of course is the most profitable thing one can have—a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul was not out to offend the lost; he was out to win the lost.

**Verse 19** makes it clear that Paul was free from all men, but he had purposely made himself a slave to all men in order to win them.

**Illustration #1** - When he was with the Jew, he became like a Jew. **9:20**

When Paul was with the Jews, he was so disciplined that he could relate to them even in their ridiculous legal system. He observed their ordinances and there were times when he even went to bizarre extremes (i.e. Acts 21:18-27 – he purified himself and shaved himself bald). Paul would, at times, go to Jewish synagogues and accommodate himself to their system of worship.

**Illustration #2** - When he was with the Gentile, he became like the Gentile. **9:21**

Paul would NEVER do things sinful, but if things weren’t sinful, he did his best to fit in with sinful people in order that he might win them.

**Illustration #3** - When he was with the weak, he became like the weak. **9:22**

Weak Christians are Christians who lack knowledge (8:7-9). They do things and think things that are not Biblically accurate.

**MOTIVATION #2** – He desired to participate with God’s Gospel. **9:23**

The word “partaker” is one that refers to joint participation.

It IS possible to present the truth of God to others and lose all rewards because the one presenting that truth was totally undisciplined in his own life. If one’s own attitudes and actions are not right, one can lose rewards even though he is witnessing.

One who preaches the Word and DOES NOT live the Word will lose all rewards even though the Word may be changing lives. One who preaches the Word and DOES live the Word shares in all the Word accomplishes.

**MOTIVATION #3** – He desired to win the eternal prize. **9:24-27**

Paul was not a man just interested in running a race, but he was a man interested in winning the race.

**Point #1** - Not every Christian will be a winning Christian. **9:24**

Paul was running the Christian life to win. He was not just going through life as a survivor; he was running the race to be a winner.

**Point #2** - Every winning Christian is a winning Christian. **9:25**

Athletes who win are tremendously self-disciplined and self-controlled.

To be a winner requires an ultimate level of dedication and discipline. Champions deny themselves freedom in order to win the event. A common denominator among all rewarded Christians in eternity will be that they were self-controlled and self-disciplined in the things of God while they were here on earth.

**Point #3** - Every winning Christian is a focused Christian. **9:26**

Paul says I do not have that uncertainty in my life. I have an eternal purpose. I am not running without aim or boxing as if I am beating the air. Paul says I am running to win.

**Point #4** - Some Christians will be losing Christians. **9:27**

The word “disqualified” means that it was possible for even Paul to lose his rewards.

We learn an important lesson from this verse: losing Christians will be those who are a slave to their body. Their body tells their minds what to do. Winning Christians will be those who make their body a slave to their mind. Their mind tells their body what to do.

Are you on an award-winning course in life? Is your life highly committed to God and His Word? Are you a disciplined person or undisciplined?

Will you win or lose?