

PERILS OF THE RACE

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Text: Galations 5:7-15

In order for a runner to compete he must prepare himself for the race. He must train hard and exercise to prepare his body, but he must also train his mind to concentrate on the race.

Today we see life is a giant rat race and we are runners. If we are going to survive we must prepare ourselves to run. God has shown us how to run in this race. Since this race is not a physical one, we must train our spiritual man to run. We resist the devil by concentrating on the race and exercising our faith.

We must keep our eyes on the finish line and follow the biblical procedures in order to run this race and finish our course. The procedures are quite simple: we must think right, act right, and do right to overcome our opponent.

I. WE RUN WELL BY THINKING RIGHT.

A. To think right a person must be focused.

We become focused by listening to the right teacher and by recognizing bad advice. Paul said here in v. 8 that it was not God's instruction that persuaded them to change. That was their error. They had let themselves be influenced in a negative way.

■ Which way does influence flow? A dignified old clergyman owned a parrot of which he was exceedingly fond, but the bird had picked up an appalling vocabulary of curse words from a previous owner and, after a series of particularly embarrassing episodes, the clergyman decided he would have to have his parrot put to sleep. But a lady in his congregation suggested a last-ditch remedy. She said, "I have a female parrot. She is an absolute saint. She sits quietly on her perch and prays constantly. Why don't you bring your parrot over and see if my own bird's good influence doesn't reform him?" The pastor said it was worth a try, and the next night he arrived with his pet. The bird took one look at the lady parrot and chirped, "Hi toots, how about a big kiss?" The lady parrot responded gleefully, "My prayers been answered!" (Hewett,306)

B. To think right a person must be persuaded.

It is not so easy to be swayed in our faith when we are persuaded in our hearts. Paul believed that these people really loved Jesus and that they would make the right choice (v. 10).

II. WE RUN WELL BY ACTING RIGHT.

A. We must have the right attitude in suffering.

Paul, regardless of the sufferings, would not give in to the law taught by others. His behavior and faith was not changed by the pressure of a select few. Sometimes we must fight the devil and go through trials to examine our attitudes.

B. We must have the right attitude in liberty.

We are free from the law; we are not free to sin. Our liberty should produce a love and commitment of service to one another. Through Christ we cannot fail.

■ A little boy was overheard talking to himself as he strutted through the backyard, baseball cap in place, toting a ball and bat. He was heard to say, "I'm the greatest hitter in the world." Then he tossed the ball into the air, swung at it and missed.

"Strike one!" Undaunted he picked up the ball, threw it into the air, and said to himself, "I'm the greatest baseball hitter ever!" He swung at the ball again, and missed again. "Strike two!" He threw the ball into the air. "I'm the greatest hitter who ever lived," he said. He swung the bat hard again, missed a third time. He cried out, "Wow! Strike three! What a pitcher! I'm the greatest pitcher in the world!"
(Hewett, 40)

III. WE RUN WELL BY DOING RIGHT.

A. Loving one another is the key to making most situations right.

We should put others' needs in the same category as our own. We love one another by showing our love.

B. Building up one another should be the goal of all Christians.

Love is expressed not by backbiting and devouring, not consuming or destroying but by acknowledging one another's place in the family of God

CONCLUSION

Let us make the necessary changes in our lives in order to run well. Let us encourage our brothers and sisters to run and stay focused on Christ so that we will be happy and successful runners.