



- Up Words # 22

Olympic Athlete



The 2012 Olympic games opened in London this past Friday night. Men and women from all over the world have assembled to compete for an Olympic medal, the greatest honor in all the world. Most of those who compete began participation in their sport at a very early age. These world-class athletes have trained and tuned their bodies to excel in their particular sport. Discipline, dedication and devotion are on display at these Olympic games.

It should not surprise us to realize that the Apostle Paul may have attended the Olympic-like games of his day. From his writings we can see that he was apparently quite the sports fan. A review of three particular passages reveal some of the apostle's training rules for Christian athletes. Consider with me what coach Paul communicates.

1. A competitive athlete must train hard. - II Tim. 2:1-5
 - a. Paul encourages his protégé Timothy to be strong in the grace of Christ (v.1).
 - b. The apostle points out that suffering hardship is to be expected (v.3).
 - c. Timothy is reminded that a competitive athlete does not win unless he keeps the rules (v.5).
2. A victorious runner must keep the right attitude. - Phil. 3:13-14
 - a. He must forget the past (v.13). Any blunders, falls or false starts must be repressed. They will draw his attention away from the present.
 - b. He must focus on the present, reaching forward for the finish line (v.13).
 - c. He must keep the real reward in mind (v.14). Ultimately it is not about simply winning a race but at life's finish line hearing God's "well done."
3. Winners must compete with passion. - I Corinthians 9:25-26
 - a. Ambition is important, run to win (v.25). No effective competitor is content with last place.
 - b. Self control is essential (v.26). The undisciplined will be unsuccessful.
 - c. Understanding the reward is motivational (v.26). Again, it's not just about a wreath that withers but an eternal crown that doesn't.

Paul's coaching was not without personal application. As he neared the finish line of his life he confidently communicates, "... The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." (II Timothy 4:6-7).

How are we doing? Are we running? Are we running right? Are we running to win? Victorious Olympians will rightfully receive much attention and accolades the next couple of weeks; but what about the victorious Christian? Only eternity will reveal our reward. Keep running!

Looking Up,
Pastor Chuck Circle