

Stop Beating The Air!

1 Cor 9:24-27

(Zeke Flores, based on outline by Mike Hughes)

Intro: *Paul uses 2 immediately recognizable illustrations.*

- A. Runner & boxer are familiar even if don't follow sports.
 - 1. The lessons in these figures are clear as Paul helps us to understand better our role as children of God.
- B. While the lessons are filled with positive concepts, what about the negative ones Paul introduces in vs 26?
 - 1. Immediately we can see that a runner with no direction gets nowhere fast and a boxer flailing wildly won't win the fight.
 - 2. Yet, this is precisely Paul's point:
 - a. Xians w/o a game plan won't make it!
 - b. Therefore, all the motions we go through are wasted, have no effect.
- C. When considering our lives in Christ, how is it that we can make it ineffective, simply beating the air?
 - 1. WE ARE SIMPLY BEATING THE AIR...

I. ... When We Have No Definite Goal - vs 26

- A. Every Xian ought to be a purpose-oriented person since we have a definite goal!
 - 1. Heaven - **1 Pet 1:3-4; Heb 11:13-16**
 - 2. Can't speak enough about the importance of focus.
 - a. Motivational speakers speak of "visualization."
Heaven ought to be so clear that we can see it!
- B. Some can lose sight of the goal and thus focus on the wrong one.
 - 1. **Matt 6:33; 1 Tim 6:9-10; 17-19**
 - 2. Sometimes we can tend to walk by sight, not faith.
- C. What are your goals?
 - 1. For worship - To honor God or punch your time card?
 - 2. For Bible class - Increase knowledge or just habit?
 - 3. For service - To show love or get a good reputation?

II. ... When We Don't Observe The Rules - vs 27

- A. Not a hard concept - Rules are everywhere:
 - 1. In civil life we have boundaries - Law
 - 2. In sports, a runner must stay on track, in his own lane.
 - 3. A boxer must stay on the ring, no low blows, etc.
- B. Yet we see people constantly breaking the rules and later wondering why they're in the predicament they're in.
 - 1. Ben Johnson & Florence Joyner, considered fastest runners in 1980's dogged by doping. Recently, Marion Jones (Olympic medal winner) admitted to steroids.
 - 2. Who can forget Mike Tyson's TWO earbites on Evander Holyfield?
- C. God's word IS a guidebook / rulebook divinely given so we can know EXACTLY what our boundaries are.
 - 1. **2 John :9-11; John 12:48; Matt 7:21**
 - 2. Whoever heard of anyone ever rightly winning anything by breaking the rules? Neither has God:
 - a. **2 Tim 2:5**
 - b. In the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, Ben Johnson of Canada won the one-hundred-meter dash, setting a new Olympic record and a new world record. Our American contender, Carl Lewis, came in second, and most were shocked that he hadn't won the gold. After the race, the judges learned that Johnson had an illegal substance in his body. He ran the race illegally, so the judges took away his medal. Though he ran faster and made an unforgettable impression, he didn't deserve the reward. Though the world and even our fellow Christians may be impressed with and applaud our deeds, forget not that **God is the final judge!** (Charles R. Swindoll, Hope Again)

III. ... When We're Not Properly Trained - vv 24b; 27

- A. Ever seen an untrained amateur try to do something?
 - 1. It's comical and dangerous!
- B. Our training concerns two realms:
 - 1. The intellectual - **Rom 12:1-2; Eph 4:20-24**
 - 2. The physical/practical - **Heb 5:12-14**
 - 3. No athlete will ever reach his potential w/o applying what he's learned and neither will any Xian!

- C. It takes courage, dedication, and discipline, but it is ultimately worth it!
1. **1 Tim 4:7-8**
 2. Every Xian MUST see the value in the work.
- D. Realize also, that the training does not promise overnight success; there are no silver bullets.

1. Just methodical, consistent practice.
 - a. *“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”*
Isa 28:10
2. If you're diligent, in time you will see immense maturity and others will notice it too. Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare.

IV. ... When The Prize Is Not Worth The Effort - vs 25

- A. Every athlete who pours himself into his sport does so because it has appeal and value to him.
1. Then, when the prize is won, the victory is sweeter.
 2. Where there is no real effort, there is no real victory.
 - a. "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. 'Tis dearness only that gives every thing its value." Thomas Paine.
- B. Yet, people everywhere pour themselves into attaining that which never really satisfies.
1. People can amass great worldly riches and never feel satisfied.
 - a. We are living in a world in which we have tremendously increased our information without having appreciably increased our wisdom. We are living in a world in which we have fantastically multiplied our riches without having fully learned to use those riches wisely. We have developed our natural resources without having developed correspondingly greater resources of the spirit.
 2. **Matt 16:26; Luke 12:15-20**
 - a. A story is told of a man who loved old books. He met an acquaintance who had just thrown away a Bible that had been stored in the attic of his home for generations. "I couldn't read it," the friend explained. "Somebody named Guten-something had printed it." "Not Gutenberg!" the book lover exclaimed in horror. "That Bible was one of the first books ever printed. Why, a copy just sold for over two million dollars!" His friend was unimpressed. "Mine wouldn't have brought a dollar. Some fellow named Martin Luther had scribbled all over it in German."

Conc: *These simple things will help you to reach for the crown.*

- ◆ Have a definite goal (heaven)
- ◆ Observe the rules (the Bible)
- ◆ Be properly trained (learn & apply)
- ◆ Value the prize (put it 1st)

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