

Running the Race

1 Corinthians 9

Now, when I am born again and I am now spirit, soul, and body, my body down here doesn't like it in the basement. My body enjoyed sitting on the throne. It enjoyed ruling over me. It enjoyed its tyranny that it had over me, and it doesn't like being underneath. And thus, my body is constantly trying to rise. I am not dead to the desires of my flesh. They are there. They are always there as long as I am living in this body. But my desires for the Lord and the things of the Lord are greater than my desires for the flesh. But I find that I have to keep my body under, for my body would love to come and begin to rule again and put the spirit under. So Paul said, "I discipline myself to keep the body under, not giving over to the things of my flesh, lest even in this area of having ministered to others I myself would be disapproved." And there are those who say that Paul is here talking about his service to God put on the shelf so to speak.

So, it is important for us to keep the body under, to discipline ourselves in spiritual disciplines. If the athletes are willing to go through such discipline just to receive a corruptible crown, how much more should we discipline ourselves for the incorruptible crown of life that the Lord our righteous judge shall give to us and to all those who love His appearing. Chuck Smith

- I. Our freedom centers on our relationship with Christ. He is the one who set us free from the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23), from the power of sin (Rom. 6:6), from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-2), from the performance treadmill of trying to earn favor with God (Eph. 2:8-9), and from living man's way instead of God's way (1 Peter 2:16). How we live our freedom must always fall under his Lordship, which means that we must be willing to **die to self** for the sake of the spiritual wellbeing of others.

1 Cor. 9:1-2
Acts 1:21-22
Acts 18:8-11

1 Peter 2:16-17 *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

- II. Paul was willing to **die to self** for the sake of those he was presenting the gospel to. His whole life centered around spreading the gospel. He could have made it easier on himself by insisting on financial support from the churches he planted. It was his right to do so. Instead, he used his freedom to stay free from obligating himself to man, so that he could be free to go where needed to win the lost to Christ.

1 Cor. 9:3-23

1 Timothy 6:10

- III. Paul learned to **die to self** through the discipline of grace knowing that it was grace that drew him unto salvation, and grace that put in him a desire to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus (**2 Peter 3:18**). Even though we have been set free from the law of sin and death, we have not been set free from appropriating God's grace and power to give us what we need to train ourselves to be godly (**1 Tim. 4:7-8**). We put ourselves in danger of great compromise in this life, and missed blessing in the life to come, if we choose spiritual laziness over disciplined holiness.

1 Cor. 9:24-27

2 Tim. 4:8

James 1:12

1 Peter 5:4

Revelation 3:11 *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*