

# THE SPIRITUAL ATHLETE

## Introduction

- 1) **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** – Paul used a sport and athletic analogy to teach important lessons about our spiritual life
  - a) We are familiar with sports and athletes - school athletics, college/professional sports, Olympics
- 2) Ancient world was also familiar with sports and athletes – Olympic Games (780 BC – AD 395), Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games; gymnasiums, amphitheaters, hippodromes, etc.
- 3) Let us examine this analogy in the Scriptures to equip ourselves to win our spiritual race

## *The Spiritual Athlete:*

### I) EXERCISES AND TRAINS

- A) **1 Corinthians 9:25** – “everyone who competes is temperate (exercises self-control) in all things”
  - 1) Preparation for games included months of intense training, prescribed diets, and constant supervision for thirty days before events
  - 2) Discipline and subject ourselves for the race; if not, we risk "not standing the test"
- B) **1 Timothy 4:7-8** – "Exercise yourself to godliness"
  - 1) The Christian must have self-control in training himself to live and speak godliness
- C) **Hebrews 5:14** – "senses exercised to discern both good and evil"
  - 1) Must mature, grow, strengthen, learn, and use what is gained to win
- D) Satan looks for weak, flabby, sluggish hearts to wrestle and defeat; easy victories for evil

### II) COMPETES ACCORDING TO THE RULES

- A) **2 Timothy 2:5** – "If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules"
  - 1) Rules for the Christian are the "sound words of truth" committed to us in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2, 15); will be judged by the words of Christ (Jn. 12:48)

### III) COMPETES HARD (STRIVES) TO WIN

- A) **1 Corinthians 9:24** – "Run in such a way that you may obtain [the prize]...I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air"
  - 1) Not practice or recreation time, but a real contest for our soul (Eph. 6:12; Jude 3)
- B) **Hebrews 12:1** – "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us"
  - 1) Count the cost, make the preparation, and run the whole race - shame to not finish
- C) **Philippians 3:12-14** – "I press toward the goal for the prize"
  - 1) Be careful to avoid distractions along the way - diversions, self-glory, worry
- D) **Philippians 1:27-28** – "striving together" = literally "athlete together"
  - 1) We are to work together as God's children to win our struggle with Satan (Rom. 16:20)

## Conclusion

**THE PRIZE:** An *imperishable crown* of righteousness, glory, life (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10). Value, recognition, honor, rejoicing, victory! Will we run to win? It is no time to give up or never start -- let us press on to the goal.