Paul's Self-Discipline

Intro: As our text in this lesson turn to 1 Cor. 9:24-27 “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateeth the air: 27But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” In order to realize the danger of losing their reward, the apostle makes use of two classes of people.

1. The Grecian games; 1 Cor. 9:24a. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” Not that salvation comes by competition, but that all who run do not run successfully.

2. All who were baptized unto Moses did not enter Canaan; 1 Cor. 10:1-5 “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” Thus Paul's admonition, “Even so run; that ye may attain.” To enable us to do this, the apostle gives us three directions. Let us notice these.

I. Be Temperate.

A. 1 Cor. 9:25a “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.”

B. The runner

1. For a period of ten months, now for years, he submitted to the rules of the trainer.
   a. Exercising:
      (1) arms
      (2) legs
      (3) every part of the body
   b. controlling:
      (1) eating
      (2) drinking
      (3) sleeping, et. al.

2. This they did gladly in view of “a corruptible crown.”

C. The child of God

1. He must submit to the Great Trainer
   a. Mat. 16:24 “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”
   b. Col. 3:5-11 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 5For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 6In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 7But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 8Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 9And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of
him that created him: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

c.  Gal. 5:24 “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

2.  This he should do in view of the “incorruptible crown.”

3.  This self-control must be:
   a.  Complete
      (1)  The athlete who exercised self-control in eating but not in drinking, failed in the race.
      (2)  The Christian must exercise self-control in “all things.”
   b.  Continuous
      (1)  One day of excess would destroy weeks of training.
      (2)  One lapse into ungodliness will destroy years of training in the Christian life, and possibly a lifetime of Christian influence.

II.  Be Decided

A.  1 Cor. 9:26 “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:"

B.  The runner who enters the race undecided as to the direction will never win. There must be a definite goal to run to.

C.  As runners in the race of life we need:
   1.  Freedom of action
      a.  Heb. 12:1 “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”
      b.  Lay aside the weights that are put on in training.
      c.  Eph. 4:22 “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”
      d.  1 Pet. 2:1 “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,”
   2.  Patience in well doing (endurance)
      a.  Heb. 12:1b “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”
      b.  Rom. 12:12 “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;”
      c.  Jam. 5:10-11 “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”
   3.  Singleness of purpose
      a.  Heb. 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
      b.  Phi. 3:13-14 “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
III. BE EFFECTIVE

A. 1 Cor. 9:26b-27a “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

B. In fighting the good fight of faith:
   1. 1 Tim. 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”
   2. 2 Tim. 4:7 “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”
   3. Paul made his blows count; He wasted no energy.

C. Some individuals fight:
   1. An imaginary fight:
      a. They put on a sham fight as boxers in training.
      b. Mat. 23:5-7 “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, “And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,” And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”
      c. But our enemy is a real one, and he is skillful. 1 Pet. 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”
      d. Unless we are in earnest the fight will be lost.
   2. Human beings:
      a. Eph. 6:12 “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”
      b. Flesh and blood are not our real enemy.
   3. Sin in other people:
      a. This is a real enemy.
      b. Another enemy should be encountered first.
      c. Mat. 7:3-5 “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ‘Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? ‘Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

D. Paul fought himself.
   1. He brought every thought and evil inclination into subjection to God’s will.
   2. Self is the worst enemy of any man, thus, our fight should be against him.
   3. Unless we conquer self we will be lost.
   4. Once self is conquered, a man is better equipped to carry the battle to other areas of conflict.

Conclusion: We must be temperate, decided and effective in our fight. When we are then God will give the victory.