

# Greater than Gold



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The apostle compares the Christian life to the training of an athlete <sup>1</sup> Corinthians 9:24 “Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win. <sup>25</sup> All athletes [striveth] practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize [incorruptible crown].”

The Bible does not mention baseball, basketball, or football, but does refer to the Olympics. The ancient games were common knowledge in the first century, just as modern Olympics are today. For more than a millennium, the Games took place every four years in Greece. Everyone knew about the Olympics, so the apostle refers to them in teaching a Bible truth—<sup>1</sup> Corinthians 9:24 “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”

In mentioning the Olympics, the apostle wants us to transpose them to a different level of faith as we run the Christian race. The energy; the time; the dedication; and the focus it takes to run at Olympic level, is extremely high, and the spiritual lesson we are to learn from that is the time; the dedication; and the focus it takes to run the Christian race—<sup>1</sup> Corinthians 9:24 “in such a way as to get the prize.”

It takes constant training; an enormous amount of practice; and real sacrifice to compete at an Olympic level. They set their sights on a

gold medal awarded to the one who runs in a way as to deserve it. The temporary struggles and triumphs of the Olympic Games, are to be transposed to the persecutions and victories of the Christian life—a race that results in an eternal prize!

Concerning the Olympics, we are to see ourselves running the Christian race in like fashion; when we watch them training hour after hour, we are to see ourselves trusting God every hour through the day—for the ability to meet every situation in a right and scriptural way—resisting temptations; praying for strength to do our work; asking for patience in training the children; trusting Him to be able to do the tasks set before us—and keeping our focus always on the Cross.

Hearing about the Olympic Games, means hearing the voice of God—as we enter each day to face the challenges of that day. As we view the fierce competition and hear shouts when crossing the finish line; we are to see the path of discipline, and of expending tremendous energy in pursuit of an eternal prize—something far greater than gold!

The Olympics produce the world’s best athletes and show the most impressive ability—but as amazing as it all is, the believer knows that they have something much better to win—and definitely Someone much greater to trust—infinitely superior than any game or athlete who ever competed.

As momentous and important as the gold-medal may seem at the time—if we pan the camera of our eye back to an aerial view, we see the smallness of the Olympic arena—a city that looks like a speck compared to the massiveness of the universe.

The Olympic Games have something to teach—the gold medal may be for the young, but the eternal prize is for every one of every age.

The cross-country races are for the world’s fittest, the spiritual fight of faith is for the faithful of every time and talent. The Olympic race is run in *human* strength and ability; the Christian race is run in *divine* strength and the power that God will give to those who faithfully trusts Him every day—eventually obtaining a prize much greater than gold!

<sup>1</sup> Timothy 6:12 “Exert all your strength in the honorable struggle for the faith; lay hold of the Life of the Ages, to which you were called, when you made your noble profession of faith before many witnesses.” The Olympian exerts all of his/her strength and energy in the struggle for a gold medal; but the believer exerts all of their strength and energy to win something far greater than gold! <sup>Philippians</sup> 3:12 “I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”

Their run for the gold, is our race for the prize of God’s kingdom. We train and practice every day in living the Christian life so that the result is something far greater than gold! <sup>2</sup> Timothy 4:7 “I have gone through the glorious contest; I have run the race; I have guarded the faith. <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

The apostle told his young helper—which was all part of his spiritual training in the ministry—how important this struggle for the faith really is—<sup>1</sup> Timothy 4:8 “Train yourself in godliness. Exercise for the body is not useless, but godliness is useful in every respect, possessing, as it does, the promise of Life now and of the Life which is soon coming.”

Steadfast trust on God, is enabled by the Spirit of God—Who empowers us to get around any obstacle; get over any hurdle; and make our

way through any temptation, without giving in to the deceptions; the tricks; and the shams of the devil along the way. It always takes us back to 1 Corinthians 9:24 *“Run in such a way as to get the prize.”*

The Olympian starts the day with a *purpose* and a *focus*—keeping an eye on the goal, and thinking that all the training, the energy, and the sacrifices will be worth it—to obtain a bronze medal; a silver medal; or the coveted gold. 1 Corinthians 9:25 *“Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”*

The *believer* begins the day with a similar mindset and purpose—keeping our eyes on the goal, and knowing that all the learning; the faith tests; the temptations; difficult people; and hard trials along the way will be worth it all—because 1 Corinthians 9:25 *“we do it for an eternal prize.”*

Olympic athletes prepare for the games through many years of intense, focused, physical and mental training—usually with a coach to determine the ideal training plan to reach the desired goal—an Olympic Gold Medal that will be left behind—to never again bring cherished memories for the one who obtained it.

The believing Christian prepares for a godly life of faith by also committing to many years of focused training—always with the help of a Coach, the Holy Spirit, to guide us and train us along the way—reminding us of the plan to follow—that of steadfast faith in God, so as to reach the desired goal—an eternal kingdom that is enjoyed forever and ever—something far *greater than gold!*

Running the race of life, is being aware of the opponent we face. 1 Corinthians 9:26 *“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I*

*have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”*

The apostle is reminding us that we could *disqualify* ourselves, by lack of discipline; not being trained; or by our refusal to learn from the challenges—the tough tests we may face; the insults we hear; and the difficulties we encounter in life. 1 Corinthians 10:31 *“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

It is to the glory of God to meet a difficult test in a scriptural way—asking Him for the strength and wisdom to respond in a way that is according to His Word; to react to an insult in silence as Jesus did—bringing glory to God. It is to face every difficult task in dependence on divine power to help us complete it successfully—giving glory to God—never ourselves.

For Olympic-level performance and energy, they commit to eating the right food to fuel their body. Genesis 1:29 *“God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for [food].”* There is no need of a nutrition expert or to follow a strict diet, when the Word has given the plan for a proper diet from the beginning—fruits and vegetables.

Proper sleep; mental preparation; hiring a coach; an assortment of exercises; training early in the day; and being accountable to someone to stay focused, is the plan of the Olympian. Such things are part of running the Christian race as well. God has given His creation refreshing sleep to be an important part of every day. Psalm 4:8 *“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.”*

Being mentally ready to face every battle with the adversary of our soul, is a correct way to begin; 1 Timothy 6:12 *“Fight the good fight for*

*what we believe. Hold tightly to the eternal life that God has given you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.”* Philippians 3:14 *“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

The Olympian hires a coach to lay out a plan—the believer calls on God for the gift of His Spirit; Ephesians 1:13 *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”*

Many Bible believers rose early in the day to face an assortment of challenges—always by faith and trust on God alone. Facing any difficult situation as the Word of God explains, always bears fruit and produces spiritual growth. Hebrews 12:11 *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

The One to whom we must give account of our training program and exercise regime, is our Coach, our Guide, and the Savior of our soul! Hebrews 4:13 *“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”* It is worth it all—an eternal prize that is infinitely *greater than gold!*



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