

Far Greater than Gold!



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The ancient Olympic games in Greece were common knowledge in the first century, just as modern Olympic games are today. For more than a millennium, the Games took place every four years in ancient Greece. ¹ Corinthians 9:25 “Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things [goes into strict training]. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

The apostle Paul compares the Christian life to the training of an athlete ¹ 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. ²⁵ 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].”

Everyone was familiar with the Olympic games, so the apostle refers to them in teaching a Bible truth—¹ 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.”

The apostle refers to the Olympic athlete, so that we will compare our learning and training and commitment as we run the Christian race. The time; the dedication; and the energy it takes to run at Olympic level is extremely high, and the spiritual lesson we are to learn from that is the

dedication and the commitment it takes to successfully run the Christian race—^{SO} ¹ Corinthians 9:24 “Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”

It takes an enormous amount of practice; constant training; and sacrifice to compete at an Olympic level. They set their sights on a gold medal awarded to the one who runs in such a way as to obtain it. The 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 a prize—*Far Greater than Gold!*

We are to see ourselves running the Christian race like the participants in Olympic games. When we see them doing intense training hour after hour and day after day, we see ourselves trusting God every hour through every day—for the ability to meet every situation in a scriptural manner—resisting temptations; praying for strength; asking for patience at all times; and trusting Him for success with the tasks that are set before us.

Hearing about the Olympic games reminds us to be listening for the voice of God—as we enter each day to face the challenges ahead. As we view the fierce competition and hear victory shouts when crossing the finish line; we are to see the path ahead of us with profound discipline and expending energy in pursuit of an eternal prize—something *Far Greater than Gold!*

The Olympic games produce the best athletes in the world who show the most amazing skills—but as incredible as it all is, the believer knows that they have something much better to win—and definitely Someone much greater to trust every day—infinitely superior and far more important than any game or athlete who ever competed.

As valuable and meaningful as Olympic medals may seem at the time—they pale when compared to the eternal crown obtained by all true believers who stay in the race and endure to the end—with their faith firmly on Jesus. As the

apostle did, so should we—^{Philippians 3:14} “Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

The Olympic games have something to teach—the gold medal may be for the fastest and best, but the eternal prize of a heavenly kingdom is for every one of every age. Cross-country races are for the fittest, but the spiritual fight of faith is for the faithful of every culture and time. The Olympics are run in human strength; the Christian race is run in divine strength—God gives the ability to those who faithfully trust Him every day—finally obtaining a prize *Far Greater than Gold!*

We are to ¹ Timothy 6:12 “Exert all your strength in the honourable 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!* ^{Philippians 3:12} “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

Their run for the gold, is our race for the prize of an eternal kingdom. We train and practice every day in living the Christian life, so that the result is something *Far Greater than Gold!* ² Timothy 4:7 “I have gone through the glorious contest; I have run the race; I have guarded the faith. ⁸ 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 Timothy how important this struggle really is—¹ Timothy 4:8 “Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

Faith to trust God, is by the Spirit of God—Who *inspires* us to believe God and *empowers* us to get around any obstacle; get over any hurdle; and make it through any temptation—without giving in to the discouragements; the deceptions; and the lies 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*”—which is always by faith in God.

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 are worth it—to obtain a *bronze*; a *silver*; or the coveted *gold medal*. 1 Corinthians 9:25 “*Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [self-controlled] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*”

The *believer* begins the day with *purpose* and a *focus*—keeping our eyes on the *goal* and knowing that all the *learning*; the *tests*; the *temptations*; *difficulties*, or *trials* along the way, will be worth all the *training* and *learning*—because 1 Corinthians 9:25 “*We do it to get a crown that will last forever.*”

Olympic athletes *prepare* for the games with many years of intense, focused, physical and mental training with a coach—who determines the ideal *plan* to reach the desired *goal*—an Olympic Gold Medal—but a prize that will eventually be left behind along with everything else we accumulated along life’s path.

The *believer* *prepares* for a godly life of faith, by being committed to many years of focused training—always with the Holy Spirit to guide us, coach us, and train us along the way—and reminding us always of the *plan* to follow to reach the desired goal—God’s eternal kingdom—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.”

It is a reminder that we *could disqualify* ourselves—by lack of discipline; lack of training; not being focused on the goal; or simply by our refusal to *learn* from the challenges along the way—the tough tests we face; the insults we hear; and the difficulties we encounter—we trip over them rather than learn from them. 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 ability to respond in a way that is in line with His Word—reacting to insults in silence as Jesus did; and responding to difficulties in a scriptural way. It is to face every situation in dependence on divine power to help us respond correctly—always giving glory to God and never ourselves.

For Olympic-level performance, energy, and strength, they commit to eating nourishing foods. 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 for nutrition professionals or following a strict diet—the Word of God has already given the plan for a proper diet—fruits and vegetables.

Proper sleep; mental preparation; hiring a coach; daily exercises; training each day; and staying focused, is the plan of the *Olympian*. Such things are part of 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 write out a plan—the *believer* calls on God to help them follow His written plan by the power 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.*”

Bible believers rose early in the day to face an assortment of challenges—facing them always by faith and trust on God. Responding to difficult situations as the Word explains always produces spiritual fruit. 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—it is an eternal crown that is *Far Greater than Gold!*



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