

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXV: A Study in Contrasts

TEXT: 1 COR. 9:24-10:13 (NLT)

9:24 Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! **25** All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. **26** So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. **27** I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

10:1 I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters,^[a] about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. **2** In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. **3** All of them ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. **5** Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, **7** or worship idols as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry."^[b] **8** And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. **9** Nor should we put Christ^[c] to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. **10** And don't grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. **11** These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.

12 If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. **13** The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

Footnotes: a. Greek *brothers*. b. Exod 32:6. c. Some manuscripts read *the Lord*.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. a. How does an athlete train to run a race and how does this compare to living the Christian life? (vs. 24-27)
b. What do we have to do to train ourselves spiritually?
c. What challenges do we face in this race of life, both as individual Christians and as God's family?

2. Verse 27 is a powerful statement about spiritual discipline. Regarding the expression "I discipline my body" ("I buffet my body," KJV) Bible scholar Albert Barnes writes:



The word [...] means, properly, to strike under the eye, either with the fist or the cestus [a belt worn by ancient Greeks], so as to render the part livid, or, as we say, black and blue; or, as is vulgarly termed, to give any one a black eye. The word is derived, of course, from the athletic exercises of the Greeks... The word here means, that Paul made use of all possible means to subdue his corrupt and carnal inclinations; to show that he was not under the dominion of evil passions, but was wholly under the dominion of the gospel.

- a. What kind of discipline does Paul have in mind here?
 - b. What disciplines can the 21st century Christian integrate into his/her everyday lifestyle? To what benefit?
3. In chapter 10, Paul contrasts the disciplined believer with the undisciplined backslider—using ancient Israel as a backdrop (vv 1-11).
 - a. Some say that history isn't all that important. Would the apostle agree? (vs. 11)
 - b. What lesson can be learned from the Israelites in the Wilderness? (vs. 12)
 4. What promise (in verse 13) can we claim when faced with temptation?