

Jeremiah 12:1-6

Righteous are You, O LORD, when I plead with You; Yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; They grow, yes, they bear fruit. You are near in their mouth But far from their mind. But You, O LORD, know me; You have seen me, And You have tested my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, And prepare them for the day of slaughter. How long will the land mourn, And the herbs of every field wither? The beasts and birds are consumed, For the wickedness of those who dwell there, Because they said, "He will not see our final end." "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan? For even your brothers, the house of your father, Even they have dealt treacherously with you; Yes, they have called a multitude after you. Do not believe them, Even though they speak smooth words to you.

The Christian Olympics

With the thrill of victory and agony of defeat experienced by our athletes ever fresh in our minds, it would seem appropriate to examine the scripture parallels to the Christian life. Indeed, one of the common comparisons that God uses in His Word to convey the walk of the Christian in that of the athlete. Paul in particular traces the Christian walk in term of training and competing for the prize. He states that the follower of Christ must be involved in the regular discipline of spiritual exercise: "For bodily exercise profits [a] little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). Paul knew the great value of the daily spiritual exercise of prayer, meditation on Scripture and determination to glorify God in every circumstance.

Added to these basic disciplines, Paul also recognized the need for each believer to practice self discipline by turning from sin. He compares this to the athlete holding to the rule while in competition: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: 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" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Finally, Paul was fully aware of the award ceremonies awaiting each believer, a judgement not to determine eternal destiny (this is decided for the believer in Christ, see Romans 8:1), but to determine awards: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). The term Paul uses here, translated "judgment seat", is Bema, the Greek term used in athletic competition for the place where performance is graded and the winner crowned.

The truth that God wishes all Christians to grasp is clear, although salvation is a gift from God through faith in Christ as sacrifice for sin, the believing "Child of God" is encouraged to live for the Lord each day, valuing the reward in heaven for a surrendered life as a greater treasure than any earthly gain. This defines what a life of faith involves: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ...Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Hebrews 11:24,26). This also determines where the Christian's heart is kept: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). Christian friend, run to win!

What is my response:
