



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

March 13, 2016

Character Traits of the Faithful #2

Bryan Garlock

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.” 2 Timothy 2.1-7 ESV

While Paul prepared Timothy for his coming death, he encouraged him to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. All those who carry out the Lord’s work from day to day need this strength to continue steadfastly in the faith. Paul taught young Timothy to pass the gospel along to others for safekeeping so they might be able to teach others also. These particular men were to be faithful. Therefore, Paul gave him at least three illustrations to help him identify those who were among the faithful. In this article let us notice the second illustration.

Because they are likened to an athlete, the faithful are a dedicated people. The Spirit expressly says, “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord” (Rom. 12.11). Elsewhere we read, “...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...” (Heb. 12.1). For one to run a race with endurance, fervency must be present. Thus faithfulness depends on a person who is willing to endure and remain enthusiastic no matter the obstacle or difficulty. This person has prepared his mind for action (cf. 1 Peter 1.13; Col. 3.2; Phil. 4.8-9). This is not unfamiliar to a competitor. His dedication will determine success, growth, wins instead of losses, etc. Are we as dedicated as an athlete? May we run the race in such a way to obtain the crown of life and never lose it (cf. 1 Cor. 9.24-25; Rev. 3.11).

Next, all sports demand training. Players cannot compete if they do not understand the rules and regulations of the game nor will they have the stamina needed to achieve their goals. Therefore it is necessary for all rookies and senior players to persist in daily preparation for upcoming games. For the "babe in Christ" and the mature Christian, their training involves daily prayer, studies of God’s word, and spiritual growth.

However, occasionally a player will have excess weight, torn ligaments, etc. that will slow him down or hinder him in his training. One writer wrote to Christians to “...lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...” (Heb. 12.1). All training is fruitless if there is sin or anything else that hinders our spiritual goals in our life!

Northside
church Of Christ

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Announcements

- Remember the shut in's.
- Pray for the church and one another.
- Remember the spiritual sick among us.
- Call or email Bryan to add announcements, thanks.
- We need volunteers for door knocking. Please see Bryan.
- We need volunteers for picking folks up. Please see Bryan.

Five Day A Week Reading Plan

Mon: 1 Sam. 15-19
Tues: 1 Sam. 20-24
Wed: 1 Sam. 25-29
Thurs: 1 Sam. 30-2 Sam. 3
Fri: 2 Sam. 4-8

While training is important, athletes also need their rest. Too much training can make one weary, therefore it is essential that all players take time off for the body to recover. Obviously the saint cannot take time off from serving God; however, he can and must rest from his work. Even Jesus and his disciples took time to rest from their daily activities (see Mark 6.31-32; John 4.6). It is extremely dangerous for players to push themselves over the limit. Between constant training and games one can be easily burned out, or worse, severely injured. While Christians are to be Christians at all times, one will not be fruitful in the Lord's kingdom if he is overworked. Just like the athlete, the faithful will rest and recover from time to time for their work to begin anew.

Finally, athletes are rule keepers. All successful team members skillfully follow the authorized rulebook that sets out the guidelines for their sport. Interestingly, there are very few problems between the opponents because they have agreed upon a standard. Therefore, though it is a competition, they are ultimately of one mind. All worthy coaches and participants keep exactly to the rules. If there is any deviation from the standard, discipline will ensue.

Paul understood this vital ingredient to faithfulness. He explained that "An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." Many today do not respect the Bible as a rulebook. Simply put, it is not just a bunch of "love letters" as some say. Paul instructed all Christians to follow the pattern of sound words and expected all to obey what he wrote in his letters (see 2 Tim. 1.13; 2 Thess. 2.15; 3.14, etc.). Just as the referee has a standard by which he judges, so does God (John 12.48). All players are required to obey the referee's calls as well as their coach's call. Therefore, athletes compete by the rules "...to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown" (1 Cor. 9.24-25). Those who are dedicated according to God's rules will receive the crown of righteousness, which is eternal life (Rev. 2.10; 1 Cor. 9.25; James 1.12; 1 Peter 5.4). Only then can we say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Tim. 4.7-8).

Paul used the illustration of the athlete to show how a competitor would prepare, train and "go for the gold." In the same manner, a faithful Christian will be fervent in his dedication to the Lord, obedient to the standard of God's word, and perseverant in his training and preparation for the carrying out of the Lord's work. BG