
The Prize is worth the Pain: Training for Godliness

Lessons I learned from running track: The prize is worth the pain while we train

Question: So if we have already won the "prize"- Heaven through faith in Christ and we don't have to work for salvation then why choose the path of self-discipline?

Maybe we have misunderstood and misrepresented the true prize.

The Bible uses theological language to speak about the totality of salvation.

- Our past- Justification- free from the penalty of sin through the work of Christ.
- Our future-Glorification- free from the presence of sin in the restored Kingdom of Christ.
- Our present- Sanctification- free from the power of sin as we partner with Christ.

Salvation isn't chiefly about our final destination.

It is about our transformation.

Full restoration as Image Bearers.

We get to partner with God in sanctification- our salvation as image bearers.

There is no discipleship without self- discipline.

Paul expresses this in **I Timothy 4.**

"7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. 8 For 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. 9 This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. 10 That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe. 11 Command and teach these things. 12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."

The word used in the NIV is Train (discipline/exercise) is from the Greek gymnaze.

Note: The goal is not self-discipline/training is godliness.

Godliness= Christlikeness because Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

A Word about self-discipline/training.

If Godliness is the goal beware of "disciplines" that make you feel less reliance upon God and upon the Body of Christ. Beware of self-"disciplines" where you think maturity equals outgrowing your need for Him. Make us more reliant on Jesus. Be disciplined to pursue transformation into the image of Jesus. This is God's goal.

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Romans 8:29)

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to work for His good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13)

We get the privilege of working out what God is working in- being fully human and full Image Bearers.

Note: Grace is not opposed by effort. It is just offended by "earning."

Starting Line: Being honest with ourselves

- Price we want to pay = prize we want to gain.
- If we cherish the prize discipline becomes more of a delight than a duty
(No athlete resists practice when they value the trophy)

If you will delight in the prize of being like Jesus you will see self-discipline as worth the price.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "How little people know who think that holiness/godliness is dull. When one meets the real thing...it is irresistible."

Paul is going to do two wonderful things in this passage.

- 1) Runs a cost analysis. Godliness is worth the price.
- 2) Points us to the hope we need to cope when we feel the pain while we train.

Start with the cost analysis-the value of godliness because godliness is the goal.

Note again the end of **verse 7 and verse 8:**

"...train yourself to be godly. ⁸ For 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."

Godliness has value. It holds a promise= the promise of reward in this life and the life to come.

*Godliness is its own reward. It is profitable in this life. If for no other reason than I get to look in the mirror and like what I see. I get to live without guilt and shame.

*Godliness gives me meaning. We were fashioned to find purpose in influence/impact
Look again at what Paul writes in verse 12:

"¹² Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity...¹⁵ Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. (I Tim 4:12,15)

*"Salvation" is at stake- mine and others

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (I Tim 4:16)

The reality is my true salvation and your true salvation is at risk. We risk being less than the best versions of ourselves and being conformed to the image of God when we resist training.

We don't risk rejection. We didn't earn God's love through works. We won't lose God's love through works. But maybe we forfeit salvation as a destination when we resist salvation as transformation.

We should cherish Christ-likeness more than comfort.

Sometimes we struggle with self-discipline because ...

We cherish comfort more than Christlikeness

We tried... and failed... and given up hope

Note: This is why we need hope to cope with pain that comes while we train.

Paul addresses this in verse 10.

"That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe." (I Tim 4:10)

Paul uses these terms, "labor and strive" Strive is from the Greek word we get our word, "agonize" from.

Note: Because we put our hope in the living God we labor and strive.

If there is no pain there is no gain

But...Where we see no gain. It is not worth the pain.

There is pain in all training. But the worst pain isn't physical, it is the emotional pain of trying so hard and not seeing the results.

An "unattainable" goal that we have no real hope in attaining is non-motivating. We will never push through pain in training if we don't have the hope of seeing results.

We often give up training when...

- we don't see results
- we don't get rewarded.
- we constantly feel defeated.

We often quit trying when...

- We fear failure and rejection

We embrace the training when we ...

Realize we were created to "run"

We delight in those things that help us be who we were born to be.

We were created by God and for God to be like Jesus.

Jesus is the prize we run for.

Paul writes this in **Philippians 3:**

"¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you."

Note:

Our destination isn't a place... it is a person- Jesus.

And on the way to that destination we experience the salvation of transformation- being like Jesus.

Questions:

What is one thing you will do this week to pursue Jesus and being like Him?

Who is one person you can ask for help?

(We experience "other-discipline" before we can experience "self-discipline.

We find courage and hope through encouragers who are hopeful.)