

***Kick-Off to the New Year 2020!***  
***5 Essentials for “Winning the Race!”***  
***Taken from the book of Philippians-Warren Wiersbe***

This book was written to the church in Philippi by the apostle Paul while imprisoned in Rome. His purpose for writing this epistle *was to encourage the church at Philippi to continue to grow spiritually in their lives.*

***Paul had been walking with God for about 25-30 years at the time of this writing.***

***The swan***

**In 2 Timothy 4:7- 8 and 1 Corinthians 9:25-Paul uses the language of an athlete who has won the event.**

**1 Corinthians 9:24-Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? We all run...Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Run-*trecho*-to run- a constant and continuous pace... giving it all your might! ... that you may win the prize.**

**The writer of Hebrews describes our journey as a ‘race’-Heb. 12:1-"Therefore since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance *the race* that lies before us" HCSB**

***Characteristics of the race***

1. This is no ordinary race. In fact, it is anything *but* ordinary. **It is extraordinary!** The Greek word for ‘race’ (run with endurance ‘*the race*’ that lies before us...(Hebrews 12:1), is *agon* from which we get our word *agony*. Similar definitions include, a contest, a struggle. Don’t let that discourage you. It doesn’t mean that your entire race will be one of continuous struggle! But what it *does* mean, is, there will be times, (many) where your ‘flesh’, your ‘self-life’ will go through the pains, the ‘agony’ of dying to self only to be resurrected to Christ’s life! ***This race, then, is a race, (a contest) in daily progress toward Christ-likeness. We do not race against opponents. We race against ourselves. Are you more like Jesus today than you were yesterday?***

2. **The race is unique to you. Hebrews 12:1-...the appointed course of the race that is set before us...**  
It has been marked out especially for you. **Don't compare your track to someone else's track.**

**3. The race is full of obstacles**-this race is full of obstacles, hurdles, and hazards. They can't be avoided or erased. They come in different sizes and at different stages. **There is a purpose in it all!**

**4. You run to win this race**-"Run in such a way that you may win" (1 Cor. 9:24 HCSB). As was expressed earlier, winning is not beating the other runners. ***You win as you strain to become more like Christ everyday. The goal is not perfection, but progress.***

**5. Winning the race will require everything that you have!** *The average Olympian trains 4 hours per day, 310 days per year, for 6 years before succeeding. That translates into more than 7,000 hours of training for an event that may last less than 60 seconds.*

Paul is wanting us to pursue Christ, pursue His hand on us, with this passion that he sees on the Olympian athlete! **It will require a lifetime of training.** Prayer, Bible Study, worship, service, evangelism, stewardship are among the needed the disciplines for running the spiritual race.

**6. But you don't do it alone!** Winning the spiritual race is never achieved by willpower alone. Seek 1st the Kingdom of God....all these things will be added to you. ***We have the Holy Spirit inside of us! Listen to the Holy Spirit!***

**7. The most rewarding thing you could ever do.** Run-that you may win in knowing and becoming like Him!

***'5 Essentials for Winning the Race!' Philippians 3:12-16***

**1. (Holy) Dissatisfaction-3:12-13a**-**"Not as though I had already attained!"** (obtained- NIV, NRSV) either were already perfect-(**made perfect-NIV**)... (Remember he is 25-30 years in writing this!)

If anyone could think he had arrived, it would have been Paul. But he always kept in mind that he wasn't there yet. He didn't want to rest on his laurels or to start coasting. Remember, this is a man who:

1. had had numerous visions of the Lord.
2. had been caught up into heaven and had seen things that no other living person had seen.
3. had written some of the most profound theology ever penned. But his attitude was, **"I need to keep moving ahead."** You see this even in his final days, when he was in the dungeon in Rome, and

he wrote to Timothy asking him to bring his coat, and then he adds, “and the books, especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13).

-Obviously Paul was satisfied with Jesus Christ (3:10), but he had a “*sanctified dissatisfaction*”...*He knew there was more*...he still had to keep (12)- “*pressing forward*” in order to “*lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold*” of him.

***How about you? Do you have a ‘holy’ dissatisfaction?  
(Please write your thoughts)***

Relationally \_\_\_\_\_

Financially \_\_\_\_\_

Physically \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritually \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Devotion-3:13a-“this one thing I do”**-Concentrate. Keep your eyes on the goal and let nothing distract you. Paul-“That I may know Him...” (Phil 3:10). Nehemiah, the wall-building governor’s reply to the distracting invitations, “*I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down!*” (Neh. 6:3). **Concentration is the secret of power.** If a river is allowed to overflow its banks, the area around it becomes a swamp. But if that river is dammed and controlled, it becomes a source of power.

***How about you? Is there an area(s) of concentration, an area where you need to be ‘more devoted’ this year?  
(Please write your thoughts)***

Relationally \_\_\_\_\_

Financially \_\_\_\_\_

Physically \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritually \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Direction-Do you feel God’s presence? Do you feel His direction? I do. I feel the Holy Spirit inside of me directing me; prompting me.** Israel had God’s direction. They followed a cloud in the wilderness.

***Some more ‘help’ with God’s direction:***

***Phil. 3:13b-“forgetting those things which are behind. “To forget” does not mean “to fail to remember”. “To forget” in the Bible means “no longer***

*to be influenced by or affected by.*” When God promises, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:7), He is not suggesting that He will conveniently have a bad memory! What God is saying is, “I will no longer hold their sins against them. Their sins can no longer affect their standing with Me or influence My attitude towards them.”

**“Forgetting those things which are behind”** then, means, that we break the power of the past by living for the future. We cannot change the past, but we can change the *meaning* of the past. There were *things* in Paul’s past that could have been weights to hold him back (1 Tim. 1:12-17), but they became inspirations to speed him ahead. The events did not change, **but his *understanding* of them changed.**

**Keep the finish line in view-or you’ll return to the past...** Peter-going forward, but saw Jesus die...went back and went fishing...(temporarily at least!)...The children of Israel, while Moses was on the mountain...the vision was tarrying...turned back to idols... **Keep the finish line in view...**

**Hebrews 12:1-continues...**“let us lay aside every “weight” and “the sin” which so easily “entangles” us...every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly-*{skillfully}* and *cleverly*) clings to and entangles us...

**Weight**-Greek-ogkos-a word that describes a burden or something so heavy and cumbersome that it impedes a runner from running his race as he should. This word was particularly used in the athletic world to signify the actions of an athlete who would deliberately strip himself of excess weight before participating in a competition.

**Sin**-so easily *entangles*...ensnares...empeko-a person *entangled* in his lower garments or a person who is caught in some type of *vine*...this is the same Greek word used to describe the vines that were woven together to make the crown of thorns that was placed on Jesus’ head...In the same way, that one particular sin...”*that sin which so easily entangles...*” tries to ‘weave’ around you and stop you from running...

***How about you? Are there things you need to ‘get rid of’ in order to go forward?  
Is there a ‘weight’ holding you back? What is something, (any area) that you  
need to LEAVE BEHIND IN 2019, so that you can GO FORWARD IN 2020?  
(Please write your thoughts)***

Relationally \_\_\_\_\_

Financially \_\_\_\_\_

Physically \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritually \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Determination-3:14-“I press!”-“I follow after!”-intense endeavor!  
“Speeding on earnestly!” (Vine’s) T-(I chase- root idea)-\_so that I may  
apprehend ('make it my own'), *that* for which also I am apprehended  
of Christ Jesus.**

The Greeks used it to describe a hunter eagerly pursuing his prey.

**Determine-Greek-krino-"To resolve," "decide." Weakness, Discouragement,  
Powerlessness, Giving Up, and Faintheartedness, are the opposites.**

### **Drew Brees video-**

When Jonathan Edwards was a student at Yale 270 years ago he wrote seventy resolutions to stir him up to run his race. One of them catches the spirit of verse 24. He wrote: “Resolved: to live with all my might while I do live.” “With all my might.” It’s the practical outworking of the great commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Deuteronomy 6:5). “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The New Testament is full of ways to say this. “Strive to enter by the narrow gate” (Luke 13:24). “Labor for the food that endures to eternal life” (John 6:27). “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the word of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). “Let us not be weary in well-doing, for we shall reap if we do not faint” (Galatians 6:9). “Redeem the time, for the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15). “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 3:12). “Christ gave himself to purify for himself a people zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14). “Show earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope to the end” (Hebrews 6:11). “Love one another earnestly from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22).

Strive, labor, abound, be zealous, be earnest. Run like the winner runs. Be done with half-heartedness and laziness and lukewarmness. Christ has laid hold on you for this very thing. You do not do it in your own strength. You strive and labor and abound and love in the strength that he supplies so that in everything he gets the glory (1 Peter 4:11).

***How about you? Are you determined  
(Please write your thoughts)***

Relationally \_\_\_\_\_

Financially \_\_\_\_\_

Physically \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritually \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Discipline-3:15-16-**...Discipline-3:15-16-Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

**16** Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already [c]attained, let us walk by the same [d]rule, let us be of the same mind. According to the Word of God!

The runner must obey the rules...In the Greek games, the judges were very strict about this. Any infringement of the rules disqualified the athlete. He did not lose his citizenship, but he did lose his privilege to participate and win a prize.

**1 Cor. 9:26-27-**So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

***How about you? Is there an area(s) where you need to discipline yourself according to God's Word? (Please write your thoughts)***

Relationally \_\_\_\_\_

Financially \_\_\_\_\_

Physically \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritually \_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 8:32-** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? You have everything you need to win. **Don't give up on God because he hasn't given up on you.** You can do this. You can finish the race. You can bring home the gold.

*Rev. 2:25,26- "But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come."*