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Sermon on Competing / Racing / Champions / Victory / Winning / Fame

In Gods salvation, everyone is a winner, and everyone can live a winning life with a bigger prize than we can ever imagine. The word that I share with you is the word of truth, and fact, and is about being fired up by the Grace of God, for all things so that we may glorify him - in all things, in our race for the Championship Prize of eternal life. **Mathew 5:16 tells us to proudly display our manly accomplishments to Glorify Him.**

I have been around racing most all of my life. In all of my affiliations I have seen one common link. The RULES. Rules are there to keep the sport competitive and safe. Many will tell you it's easy to interpret rules to suit your own personal goals and to push the rules to the limit can sometimes be the difference at the finish line. Win or lose, there is one thing that will never change: rules are here to stay. A slight misunderstanding of a given rule can be the difference between a win and a disqualification. Many of us, in life as well as competition, do a host of things trying to get on the podium – if you will, but so often we fall short on who we are trying to glorify. It is in HIM in which we glorify. His rule tells us how to deal with other rules. It is understandable if a track rule isn't clear that the interpretation of the track official stands without dispute, so why question the final decision? In **Phillipians 2:14, it says "Do all things without murmurings and disputings.** As always, when we look to the Bible for God's authority, the answers are there. But to understand His word we need to know how to interpret it. Understanding that there is only one interpretation is the key. Interpretation is easier understood when we read the word as a hearer of God speaking to us. Let's take a look at Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth. **"Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run your race that you may lay hold of the prize and make it yours."**(1Corinthians 9:24). Paul was inspired to use racing as an analogy to relate the message that if you aren't living your life in God's perfect will you will be subject to God's corrective will. He was speaking to those who believe in Jesus Christ and are "born again" in this verse. One application of this verse is that if you haven't accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior you are not going to receive the "prize" of eternal life with heavenly rewards. We are all alive on the earth, being animated in our bodily form, but without Jesus we are spiritually dead. **By accepting Him as our Lord and Savior we are born again into a newly created being (2Corinthians 5:17;5:21).** Only then are we running the race of life in God's fellowship. He will give us our heavenly reward for how we ran while still on the earth. One note I'd like to make is being "born again" is not a religion, but rather a transaction that brings us spiritual life and reconciliation to God for our past sins. **It is the only way to see the Kingdom of God, as described in John 3:3.**

Praise God for the wins I receive in my life for it is to Glorify God - amen.

Hebrews 12:1 says" therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us cast off every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run the race before us with endurance". The first thing a winner does is eliminate every distraction that keeps them from focusing. The burdens of life are set aside, or cast onto God's shoulders, so the winner can focus sharply on his goal. The bible says "Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you." A winner recognizes that he can't do it alone. A genuine winner will turn from his sin and honor God by acknowledging Him first in all things. And a genuine winner knows about **Luke 1:37, For with God nothing shall be impossible.**

This leads me to visit the word - Champions.

A true champion is not made by the number of wins, but rather by the discipline, effort, attitude, and lifestyle they lead on and off the track. That is the real D.E.A.L. What fuels the true champion is not found in the fuel tank, the motor, the tires, the set up, the hauler, the sponsors, the fans, or the accumulated points at a series end. Championship fuel is found deep within the spirit of the man. The real power within each true champion is not found in their head, muscle, or machine, but rather in the condition of the heart. A true champion is gracious in defeat, and humble in victory. The spirit of the person is reflected in their attitude, so it seems easy at times to determine whether the point's champion is really a true champion. Witnessing a competitor throwing his gear about, or hearing a winner cuss and swear in their victory acknowledgement is not the real DEAL to becoming a true champion in God's eyes. The bible says, "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body." James 3:2. That scripture says, "For we all often stumble in many things. And if anyone does not offend in speech, never says the wrong things, he is a fully developed character and a perfect man able to control his whole body and curb his entire nature. It takes much discipline to hold your tongue and emotions when excited - no matter what the source of excitement. Whether you win or lose, you must control yourself not to be offensive. This is one attribute of a true champion. The word perfect in these passages of scripture is a word meaning "fully mature in every way". The true champion puts forth their best effort every time even if they know they are out classed. When you see a racer with less than perfect equipment giving it their all on the track believing they can win, even if the competition looks like they have better stuff, you are looking at as true of a champion as anyone. Because he says "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Colossians 3:23. Basically, a true champion is not one that complains or argues when things don't go their way. They are the one that silently and humbly accepts the things they cannot change. They also are the ones that press on in the midst of extreme trials, looking to God for the answers that cannot be found in the man of world. A true champion has the attitude: "... not my will, but thine be done." Luke 22:42.

The conclusion of one's recognition as a true champion is that of the lifestyle they lead before others. A lifestyle filled with worldly desires and a pride filled heart unwilling to acknowledge the life that was given for them, is truly a life headed for destruction. "He who keeps the commandments of the Lord keeps his own life, but he who despises His ways shall die." Proverbs 19:16; "A man's moral self shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth; and with the consequence of his words he must be satisfied whether good or evil." Proverbs 18:20. A true champion knows the real D.E.A.L. is a relationship with Jesus Christ filled with Discipline toward God, a zealous Effort to glorify God, a mature and righteous Attitude, and a Lifestyle dedicated to pleasing God. I pray that we reach those that don't know the real deal in being a true champion.

All of these things fall into place when we trust in, adhere to, rely on, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with our whole heart, mind, and body. As we let Him direct our ways by His word we gain an increasing faith. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing, the word of God. Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1, "for it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". He also tells us that we will never please Him without it in Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him".

If you're not living the life of a true champion and a genuine winner, Jesus wants to be your Lord and Savior and give you the prize of all prizes. With only him will you begin to enjoy life as a winner. With only him will you live the life of a true champion. Don't be disqualified from the Kingdom of Heaven. All it takes is for you to ask him into your heart. Romans 9:9 says "if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."