

WIN

"Pastor, I'm very competitive and always want to win. Is there anything wrong with that?" The desire to win is perfectly acceptable provided you aren't doing it to see others loose! 1 Corinthians 9:24 says, **"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."** Another translation says, **"Run in such a way as to win."** In this passage the apostle Paul highlights two things; (a) the need for self-discipline, and (b) the reason for winning. Concerning self-discipline, he points out that we must always have a target to aim at - we should not run aimlessly or be a shadow boxer (verse 26). However, with regards the motive for winning, it is simply to obtain the prize! Paul states that the unbeliever runs to get a prize that will not last, but we get a prize that will last forever (verse 25). What we need to be aware of is this... The prizes may be different but the race is the same! There is no such thing as Christian Olympics! In this life, we are all in the one race. The unbeliever gets a crown that will tarnish and decay, but our crown never perishes. The one is temporal reward the other is spiritual reward.

Everyone who competes goes into strict training (verse 25). This means hours and hours of hard work - day in and day out! Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean that you will automatically win at everything. God is a just God - He will not give you a competitive advantage if you have failed in your perpetration. If the other runners have trained harder, prepared better and run their race with more desire and determination, one of them will get the prize. The only difference between someone else winning and you winning is the prize. If you were to win, all the glory goes to Jesus and your reward is in heaven. This should be the main reason for entering in the race. To run "in such a way" as to get the prize! In Philippians 3:13-14 Paul reiterates this principle by saying, **"One thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus."** You cannot win your race always looking behind. Throughout, you must remain focused on the prize that is ahead.

Tomorrow is the 2014 FIFA World Cup Final between Germany and Argentina, and the team that has prepared better, is more disciplined, and has greater desire and determination will have a competitive advantage. During the semi finals, Brazil played Germany and lost 7-1. Yet most of the Brazilian team are made up of very committed Christians! So why didn't God make sure Brazil won? He is a just God. Germany defeated Brazil because they were more effective and seized every opportunity. This should be a lesson to every one of us! I believe that because God is a just God, He provides equal opportunity to all. Therefore, if you have trained hard, prepared yourself for what lies ahead, and have a genuine desire to get the prize for Jesus, opportunities will come your way. You were created to have dominion and in Christ this involves winning. So see yourself as a champion for God! You are a winner!