

## Sermon Title: Training For Godliness Requires Self-Discipline

Sermon Text: 2 Timothy 2:5-7

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to the model of self-discipline in obedience.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 pictures of self-discipline motivated by God's illustrations.

**Introduction:** Paul's concern is what it takes to win – “he (the athlete) does not receive the victor's crown except.” In **1 Corinthians 9:24-26** [<sup>24</sup> *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.* <sup>25</sup> *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.* <sup>26</sup> *Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*]

and **Philippians 3:12-14** [<sup>12</sup> *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.* <sup>13</sup> *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,* <sup>14</sup> *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*],

Paul described his own commitment and self-control, which must be defined in the context of the Christian life, that is to be marked by discipline and determination. Paul could be referring to the rules of the race, the running of the race or the rigorous training for the race (10 month period), all of it requires the participants to endure hardship and be engaged.

Self-discipline is absolutely necessary in the Christian life, and for those engaged in effective ministry.

**I. The self-discipline of living intentionally. V.5**

**II. The self-discipline of laboring intensely. V.6**

**III. The self-discipline of listening intently. V.7**

**I. The self-discipline of living intentionally. V.5**

A. The picture of competing. V.5a

To compete requires effort, training, exercise, energy, exhaustion, pain, suffering, early rising, dieting and proper nutrition, and essential truths to be followed. But all the athletes efforts are wasted unless he competes according to the rules.

The Greek word (athleo) expresses the discipline and determination needed to compete successfully in an athletic competition.

**1 Corinthians 9:24** Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.

This is an impactful picture of spiritual effort and untiring pursuit of the victory to those familiar with events such as the Olympian Games and Isthmian Games (held in Corinth).

B. The picture of crowning. V.5b

The Christian cannot be crowned a winner if he does not compete, no competing, no reward, as a winner.

C. The picture of conforming. V.5c

All the athlete's and Christian's hard work and discipline will be wasted if he or she fails to compete and conform to the rules. This is a call to obey the Word of God in the pursuit of spiritual victory. This means we must operate within biblical guidelines and not yield to worldly pleasures or mundane civilian distractions. We cannot disobey God's instruction (rule book) in the pursuit of spiritual victory. To disobey God's Word and boundaries is to disqualify ourselves from receiving the Victor's crown. (**Hebrews 12:1-4**)

**Joshua 1:8-10** "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. **9** "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go." **10** Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, **Ezra 7:10** For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

## II. The self-discipline of laboring intensely. V.6

Farmers are required to work long hours in all kinds of conditions. Laziness, complacency, apathy will fail to produce a harvest. But it is also possible to labor with no harvest, due to unforeseen and uncontrollable variables, the farmer must be faithful and endure hardship.

"Hardworking" is from the Greek verb meaning "to labor to the point of exhaustion." The farmer may be the hardest worker of all. D. A. Carson states "they are up before dawn, working all day, exhausted by nightfall – just like pastoral ministry." [D. A. Carson "Entrusted with the Gospel, p. 40]

All metaphors hold the promise of a reward. "Beyond warfare is victory, beyond the athlete's effort is the crown or prize, and beyond agricultural labor is the crop." [Ibid. p. 40]

### A. The hard working farmer is displayed. V.6a

**Colossians 1:28-29** Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. **29** To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

**1 Corinthians 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me.

**1 Corinthians 3:6-7** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. **7** So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

### B. The hard working farmer is deserving. V.6b

## III. The self-discipline of listening intently. V.7

### A. Give careful contemplation to what has been said.

The Greek word denotes clear perception, full understanding, and careful consideration. The form of the verb suggests a strong admonition by Paul, not mere advice, to give deep thought to what is being said.

### B. Give careful contemplation to what will be said.

This verse is a call to intentional contemplation of what has been written, not a promise of complete knowledge or understanding. (**Matthew 7:24-28; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**)

**Psalms 77:6** I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, And my spirit makes diligent search.

**Lamentations 3:40** Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD;

**Deuteronomy 12:32** "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

**Psalms 119:130** The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

**James 1:21-23** Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. **22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. **23** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

**Deuteronomy 17:19-20** "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, **20** "that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

### **Concluding Questions:**

1. Are you a strong Christian, a spirit-filled Christian, a maturing Christian?
2. Are you devoted to guarding and teaching God's Word?
3. Do you deny, die, and dedicate yourself and count your life as nothing in order to faithfully serve the Lord?
4. Do you keep a distance between yourself and the affairs of the world?
5. Do you continually prepare yourself to serve your Commander and Chief?
6. Do you work to the point of exhaustion in your ministry, growth, and faithfulness?
7. Do you understand biblical self-discipline, self-denial, and selflessness?
8. Are you willing to pay the price Christ demands?
9. Are you focused on the prize?