



**PRODIGAL**

**CHURCH**

**SERIES:** PRODIGAL CHURCH

**DATE:** 27/9/20

**SPEAKER:** CRAIG VERNALL

**SERMON TITLE:** SWEAT

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 CORINTHIANS 9

Freedom is very challenging. What we do with our freedom in Christ tells us a lot about God and a lot about ourselves. Maybe more than we care to realize?

In the middle of chapter 9 of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul draws upon a significant illustration to explain how the Christian life requires a disciplined approach to ensure we focus upon the finishing line and not let ourselves slip to the sidelines and become bystanders in our journey of faith.

## **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:19.**

Paul's Use of His Freedom.

19 *"Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."*

Paul's freedom was more than a spiritual freedom. Paul was also a Freeman, that is, a free Roman citizen. He was free from slavery and free to vote as a citizen. As we observe from Paul's life, he used his spiritual freedom to advocate for Jesus but he also used his Roman freedom to travel to Roman cities to share the gospel. Thereby, becoming the apostle to the Gentiles.

**Q1. This reminds us of the privileges we are born to or simply inherit by our citizenship. Can you identify privileges that you have been given that can be used for the sake of the gospel?**

In the verses below is where Paul draws upon the shared experiences had when the city of Corinth hosted the Isthmian games every 2 years. The stories of dedication and sacrifice required to win were well known in the city. Read below how Paul applies this shared observation to the pursuit of the gospel.

*"24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."*

Remember, that with Paul being a free man, he is free because of Jesus' forgiveness given to us by way of the cross and resurrection. Paul now compares his spiritual disciplines to those of an athlete.

**Q2. In what ways does this athletic illustration remind you of the focus and discipline needed to outwork our Christian faith?**

During his sermon Craig used Pastor John Ortberg's story about his family playing Monopoly. As one of his children celebrated his win the children's mother told them to put it all back in the box. A sober reminder that we don't leave this planet with anything more than we arrived with.

**Q3. Paul describes the athlete as someone who wins a crown that perishes. Does the idea of earning an eternal crown give you motivation? If so, how?**

Craig's friend Dave the builder spoke of his frustration when things break down and need fixing. He said, "Everything we own is desperately trying to get back into the ground where it came from."

**Q4. Can you relate to this? Give examples of things "desperately trying to get back into the ground where it came from."**

Bob Buford wrote 2 books "Halftime" followed by "Stuck in Halftime". He described a new season that has come upon the Western world. It's the extra season of years that we get to live due to healthier food and better medicines. These extra years are a gift from God and a gift for God if we use them wisely. Without focus we can easily do what Paul described as our default position: We can "run aimlessly" and "beat the air".

**Q5. How easy or tempting is it to live an aimless life? Especially when our world is (by design) now created to distract us?**

Paul was in jail knowing that his death was imminent when he wrote to his young friend Timothy these touching words in 2 Timothy 4:6-7.

*"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

**Q6. I couldn't think of a better epithet to go on someone's gravestone. How do these words remind you of the big picture of life? Do they challenge your priorities? Why or why not?**

**Q7. In what ways can Paul's words keep you on task with your dedication to Jesus and his mission to the world?**

Enjoy and have a great week!

Hey, don't forget to sign up for "Dinner for 8!"

**Also a footnote confession.**

Craig mentioned incorrectly during the second service that the prize for winning at the Isthmian games was a stalk of celery. This is true. However, I said that this is where our term salary comes from. That was incorrect. Salary comes from the word salt. People were paid with salt in some parts of the world. Thereby, the saying "worth his salt" is from this background.