

Living with Christ

By Alistair Begg

Begg:

Oh, yes. That was that was quite good. Let me I just sitting there feeling so guilty all the time, as my mother said, you go to your piano lessons, you know, you didn't go, I don't want to learn the trumpet. And, you know, are you husband and wife? Yeah. Goodness gracious. That's amazing. I mean, all the things you can do in the evenings, you know, have your own concerts, do that stuff, and I can I can do stuff like I can go on the kitchen table, but that's about it.

And I'm going to get I'm going to get my wife's music lessons, because then that would be that would be good. I was going to learn something. Well, you folks are more alert than I am right now. I can tell. I don't know whether the heat is finally gone to your heads or what, but you are holding up exceptionally well. Those of us who were together this afternoon lost about seven pounds per person in the Sutherland Auditorium named after a Scotsman, obviously a stingy Scotsman who couldn't afford air conditioning, apparently, and.

But don't get me started on that, I just I'm delighted to see you here you are holding up well, unlike the wee boy who was at the morning service with his mother and drove her completely nuts, complaining about the fact that he hated being at the service. And she said, well, you'll be

delighted to know you're coming to the evening service, too. And he had an argument with her in the afternoon, but she dragged him by the ears back to the evening service and he sat in there and did the routine thing in all the light bulbs that were out and asking her about this question.

And that question just totally drove her nuts. And when he had pretty well exhausted it all, he noticed that there were flags up in the general area of what was actually an old Episcopal church. And so he was nudging and he said, what's the flag over on the right for us? She said, that's the State of the Union, Jack. She said, that's the national flag. You you little Nick. She said, you know, you. And he said, what about the other one? That's the the you know, the Boys Brigade and the girls Gildroy flag. And he said, well, what about the middle one? She said, well, don't be asking about that. She said, that's that's a sad flag. She said that's that's there to commemorate the people who died in the services. And the boy said, which service? The morning service or the evening service said, OK, fine, it's all right. You don't have to humor me. I don't care. Frankly, I. I don't make a living as a comedian, which is frankly, just as well as you can tell.

But I do want to mention that somewhere in the back there are books and I have written three books, two of which are dreadful. And now this is the third one. It's an evangelistic book. And the reason I mention it is because a lady in the bookstore has very kindly put herself out on the line to stand here and sell paperback copies of this book for five dollars a head, which is an amazing bargain, unheard of in in my Scotchman, but it's long been my desire to write succinct and definitive evangelistic book, and I'm still hoping to do that.

And and in the meantime, there's this. So for any of you who have been thinking of perhaps having a bootleg you can give to a friend or a neighbor who is asking the question, what in the world is this Christian thing all about, then? The book has been written to that end. And if you can make use of it, then it will be a great encouragement. But I wanted to mention it because Holly has so graciously decided to stand there to this end.

Now, I'd like to invite you if you have a Bible with you to turn to First Corinthians in Chapter nine with me. And I'd like to read it again, as I did on the first morning from Phillips paraphrase. And I'm going to read from the 16 verse, actually, when I get roundedness, I will be working from the inside. So you may just want to have your Bible open and then just listen. As I read Philipps paraphrase here, First Corinthians nine and verse 16.

It's just for I take no special pride in the fact that I preach the gospel. I feel compelled to do so. I should be utterly miserable if I fail to preach it. If I do this work because I choose to do so, then I am entitled to a reward. But if it is no choice of mine but a sacred responsibility put upon me, what can I expect in the way of reward this that when I preach the gospel I can make it absolutely free of charge.

I need not claim what is my rightful Jew as a preacher for my no man's slave. Yet I have made myself every one slave that I might win more men to Christ, to the Jews. I was a Jew, that I might win the Jews to those who were under the law. I put myself in the position of being under the law, although in fact I stand free of it, that I might win those who are under the law to those who had no law.

I myself became like a man without the law, even though in fact I cannot be a lawless man. But I am bound by the law of Christ so that I might win the men who have no law to the weak. I became a weak man that I might win the weak. I have, in short, being all things to all sorts of men that by every possible means I might win some to God. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel.

I want to play my part in it properly. And then he finishes up with a striking illustration. Do you remember how on a racing track every competitor runs but only one wins the prize? Well, you want to run with your minds fixed on winning the prize. Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training. Athletes will take tremendous pains for a fading crown of leaves, but our contest is for an eternal crown that will never fade. I run the race then with determination. I know Shadowboxer. I really fight. I am my body's sternest master for fear that when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified from the prize. That's just in a moment of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of having our hearts stirred by music and by song, and it is a good thing for us to give thanks to you and to sing praise to your name for you are the most high one. And now we come to these solemn moments when we believe that when your word is truly preached, that your voice is really here. And so we longed to hear your voice far beyond the voice of a mere man. Our lives are passing so quickly, our time is so precious that it really would be too bad to spend our time in this way just listening to an individual air his thoughts so we have no ultimate interest in that. But we do have a genuine desire to hear your voice and in hearing it, to understand it and in understanding it, to obey it to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen.

Sermons without illustrations are like houses without any windows. They're like living in a cave, you can only imagine what is on the outside. It often takes a good illustration to crystallize the fundamental point that is being made by the one who is either speaking or writing. And that is, of course, one of the reasons why we often remember things that have been said, not simply because of the forcefulness with which the information is being conveyed, but often because of the light that has been shown on the subject.

As a result of a word fitly spoken of an application that came by way of a useful illustration, the Lord Jesus was masterful in his use of illustrative material. He seldom spoke without making it crystal clear to those who were his listeners. Anybody can make things difficult to understand. It takes a fairly sensible and bright individual to make things easy enough for all of us to understand. And that's why we find the Bible is replete with all this kind of illustrative data. Paul is also an expert at it, and he uses a number of illustrations with frequency he often illustrates from the realm of domestic affairs, often from the realm of agriculture, significantly from the realm of military endeavors, and also in the matter of sporting events. And particularly, he seems to be fond of athletic metaphors. That in itself is quite striking when we realize that most of the indications that we have of Paul that come down to us from various parallel reports to the scriptures would lead us to believe that Paul himself was probably not a very athletic kind of individual.

He would have been, by all reports, the kind of person who was the water carrier or who did that. That mutton machine at the basketball games and at high school frequently got the score completely screwed up and got everybody totally annoyed with him shouting out from the fundamental side and father shouting out, that's not a score and such and such. And everybody finds more fun in that than the average high school basketball game. But he would have been that kind of person rather than the the star on the field, it would seem.

But he uses this illustration and he does not do so explicitly here, but he does it purposefully here as he comes to the application of the statement that he's made concerning his passion for seeing unbelieving people become committed followers of Jesus Christ. I don't know what you're planning on doing with the rest of your lives. I'm not sure that you've even concluded many of you, nor do you need to. But I wonder if any of you have determined that whatever you do and wherever you go and whatever you are engaged in, that you will take up this Paulene challenge to make it your earnest, long and committed endeavor to see as many people become committed followers of Jesus Christ as you possibly can.

Or do you have less of an ambition than that? Now, the reason I mention that is because it is that which is the context of First Corinthians nine, and it is that emphasis which then leads to his exhortation to these people to run so as to win the prize. It's easy for us to dislodge little bits of the Bible and use them simply in a way that is perhaps stimulating or hortatory, but provides no immediate context in where it is set. So without going back through the whole of First Corinthians nine for your encouragement, I want you to notice that that is the case. He is driving on the importance of what he is saying by providing an illustration and exhortation and a word of application. Those are my three points. So you know where we are. So you'll have some encouragement and you should know that, in fact, you've been with me now since Monday. You know that I always spend longer on the first one than I will on the rest because I run out of time.

So for those of you, you're doing a numbers game. Oh, goodness gracious. I was the first one. I did 20 minutes, three times during an hour. I'm sweating to death as it is. No, it won't be quite like that. Incidentally, for those of you who came to read books, try not to make it just as obvious as you are doing. I see absolutely everything. And if you should be in the library, I encourage you now to go directly. The library, but do not do the living God, the injustice of reading some trivial material while you are seeking to listen to the Bible. I didn't come here on a fool's errand and I didn't come to help you to fulfill your requirements for chapel attendance. So I invite you to pay attention. First of all, then, see, I'm a very nice guy underneath it all, I'm just a nice guy. And I will personally get the guy I'm looking at at the end who has chosen to ignore me throughout my little exhortation.

Number one, a sporting illustration, a sporting illustration. Bob Costas would have had a job in Corinth, no question about it. If you think people are crazy about sports here, you can imagine what it was like in Corinth. Corinth, as some of you will know, was essentially the Vanity Fair of the ancient world. It was located on a narrow strip of land called an isthmus, which you will remember from your geography classes. It was four miles wide and it provided a connection point which made the city of Corinth not only a thriving cultural center, but also a thriving commercial center.

It hosted the Esmie and Games, which were second only to the Olympic Games in terms of their size and significance. And so, Paul, writing into that community, seeking to draw home and

drive home his commitment in relationship to see an unbelieving people become committed followers of Christ, it is obvious for him to pick up and use a sporting illustration because it would be immediately understandable by the group. And so he addresses the matter of running and he says, do you not know that in a race all the runners run and not am particularly brilliant about that? Is there is an interesting thing to say. Don't you know that in a race all the runners run? Yes, that's why it's called a race. Of course that's what they do. They run. It's a race.

But that's not the end of it. Don't you know that they all run, but only one gets the prize. That was a rhetorical question. And he was referring to the big races because in the big races, they only had one prize in the races. They sometimes had more than one prize. And if you'd been brought up in Corinth, whether you got music lessons or not, you certainly would have gone through your physical paces in Greece. From the age of seven, children had to do exercises every single day. They were graded in their degrees of difficulty and they were performed in all kinds of situations. The children had to swim in the river water no matter how cold it was, and they were manufactured in such a way so as to try and produce noble souls with beautiful bodies, kind of like what Biola is about, really, in terms of its express purpose.

They want to produce noble souls and beautiful bodies, quoting secular history in Sparta, where the gymnastic exercises were ordered more with a view to hardening for military service. The girls also were developed by running spear throwing and wrestling so as to become the healthy mothers of a race of soldiers. And if you find that demeaning in any way, I'm sorry, but I'm just

simply quoting secular history now. These exercises were very, very competitive and as a result of that contest took place all the time.

They were arranged at the drop of a hat. And many of these contests then were the forerunners of both the Olympics and these Esmie and Games. Incidentally, the Italian games were held in order in honor of Poseidon, who was, if you recall, the god of the sea. And they were carried out in a Spruce Grove that was dedicated to this god. The people were so into sports that one writer of the time describes the masses as only being interested in two things: food and games. And quoting him, he says by day they stood about idle and in the evening they watched sports - and also sounds a little like Biola University. No, that's not fair. But it's not not a lot has changed in the day. They did whatever they did and in the evening they watch sports. Now, he mentions not only the running of this, but also he mentions the training for this. Everyone who competes in the games, he says in verse twenty five, goes into straight training.

The standard of these contests was such that you couldn't even enter them unless you had completed the training process. The training process lasted sometimes for as much as ten months, and only those who had practiced in the gymnasium were admitted finally to the games and to this rigorous external training program. There was demanded a general approach to life, which was to be sober in the extreme. So he talked about running, he talks about training, and then he talks about winning.

They do it, he says, in verse twenty five to get a crowd that won't last. But we do it to. Get a crown that will last for a fading crown of leaves, they were prepared to alter their lives in a quite dramatic fashion. Now, the obvious point of implication and application, which is going to come, is simply this if individuals are prepared to extend themselves in the context of current so that they can get a little thing of leaves to wear on their heads and they can walk around and say, hey, look, look at this, so that they can do that, they're prepared to reorientate their whole lives.

He says, will you be prepared to reorientate your complete life for the sake of seeing men and women come to faith in Jesus Christ? In other words, he says, when you look at that and you see the intensity that's involved in that, he says think about it in relationship to yourself when he writes to Timothy on another occasion. Unfortunately for seven, he says, according to new English Bible, he says physical training has a certain value, but spiritual fitness is essential both for this life and for the life to come.

That's his illustration now at the end. And I want to reverse the order to the end and verse twenty seven. He gives a personal application. That's twenty six, he says. Therefore, in light of this, I do not run like a man running aimlessly. In other words, he says, I need to apply this to myself. As I've been trying to say to you throughout each of these sessions, there's no point in me standing up here and blowing smoke at you. There's no point in me standing up and presenting to us a

standard that I am not prepared to aspire to myself or presenting to you. I challenge that I'm unprepared to live with. If preaching is anything, it is truth distilled through the heart and life of the individual and the people who listen, whether they like it, land for its content or its humor or whatever else it is, or at least finding themselves safe. I think that guy's for real.

And when you listen to Paul as he says what he says and applies it to himself, you understand that look at his concern. His concern is that I don't run like a man running aimlessly, that I don't end up being disqualified for the prize, that I do not end up being a recruiter who never runs, that I don't be like the guy who hands out the invitations but never participates, that I don't become expert at the rules for training and yet myself never get involved in training.

And that's distinctly possible in an environment like this. Distinctly possible. So how is he going to ensure that he doesn't end up disqualified for the prize? Well, look at the control that he displays. He says no to aimless running. I don't run like a man who runs aimlessly. In other words, I don't run as someone who has no fixed and certain goal. Can I ask you, do you have a fixed answer and go, I can remember the group now and you're too young to even know them if I mention their names.

But it's probably the case. And they sang the song. Well, what am I living in for two roomed apartment on the second floor? And it went on like that. It wasn't really a great song. But here's the issue, folks, do you have a fixed and certain goal towards which you're running or you're running around in circles? Are you going anywhere? Where and if I spend any time with you, would I know where you're going? Would it be apparent from what I read in your journal? Would it be apparent from your use of your resources? Would it be apparent from the way you spend your time would be apparent from those who are your peers and your company and the friends you're established. Where in the wide world are you going? Now, Paul was clear on this, remember, in Philippians three, he says, I don't keep looking back. I don't spend my time looking over my shoulder.

I don't go back and erect monuments to my successors. I don't go back and dig in the garbage can of sin that's been forgiven. No forgetting what is behind. I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which Christ has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. What are you going to do on Monday, Paul? I'm going to go for the take. And what are you going to do on Tuesday. I'm going for the take. It's my express purpose. I have nothing else to do if I become a businessman, if I become an attorney, if I become a nurse, if I go to the ends of the earth, whatever it is, that's what I'm going to do. I don't run around like someone running aimlessly. Hey, this is an aimless generation. You understand that, don't you? And that leads me. There is in every in the game's name is my knee and then. And then and right.

That said, we are the orphans in an age of no tomorrows. Nobody knows where the stink they're going, but they're going there fast. And one of the distinctive elements of Christian living in our generation is that the pagan world bumps up against somebody who knows where they're going. And Christian young people of all young people should be settling this issue. And I'm going to tell you something. If you don't get it settled soon and you won't get a better chance to settle it than in an environment like this, you are in deep trouble.

Don't tell me you said when you get married, you get married. Will that go? It goes downhill fast in terms of free time, in terms of what you're going to do when you get up in the year. You've got this woman with you, she's in the bed with everything is it's all over from that point. Guys, I'm telling you now I'm jumping into that stuff. Oh, no, you've got to get sorted out. And girls don't marry some guy that doesn't know where he's going because he'll take you there and you don't want you don't want to go with it.

If you swear you're going on a date and it takes you forty five minutes before the guy can work out whether he wants to leave the parking lot or not, you know, hey, forget him, leave him behind. He's useless. He's useless. He's a walking contradiction, partly truth and partly fiction. Taking every wrong direction on his lonely way back home as a country western song movies, he says no to aimless running. He says no to shadow boxing.

Do you ever see people shadow boxing? It's kind of weird looking, isn't it? I don't even know you even going. I'm not even going to I'm not going to do that up here. I know. I know some of you are hoping I will because you're just going to buy stuff at a wedding. What an idiot can believe he's doing that. So I'm not doing that and put my hands behind my back so I don't do it involuntarily or something. But I go to an exercise club. Nobody would know. But I do. And there's a guy goes up there and he does the shadow boxing and he always makes these noises and you're on the exercise. And every time I hear this, I don't even look around anymore. I know he wants me to look around because he's he's doing his thing. He's doing the thing. He's boxing the air. I have a feeling I can take him without any athlete.

What he actually says here is I give my body a black eye. That's the literal translation. He says, I take it to myself. The cross reference is surely Romans six do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness for sin shall not be your master because you're not under law, you're under grace.

And since he recognizes the peculiar challenges that are part and parcel of living in this body, he says, I don't just shadow box. I box myself into subjection. I box myself into submission. Kind of a weird thought. I don't want you going to start punching yourself on the nose. You know, some

of you on the nose are the ones I mentioned earlier on. But that's that's by the way, you'll notice that it's all volitional. You see that there's nothing emotional here.

It's intensely practical. I don't run around, he says, going nowhere. And I don't punch the. He's not waiting for the feeling to hit him and then he'll get serious. No, you can't do that. Any of you swim for school? I can't believe swimmers has also to get up in the middle of the night and in Ohio is freezing the drive to the school to go in a pool. It's not really that warm either. Swim up and down and up and down and up and down.

Up and down and up and just do that all the time. Then they get out to go to classes and they do it again at half past two. Why and if you are looking forward to this morning, go no, we are you looking forward to it yesterday? No, we were looking forward to tomorrow. No, I'm doing it because I'm doing it. That's not very spiritual. Let me tell you something. If I hadn't fixed points in my life and determined I'm doing it because I'm doing it or I'm not doing it because I'm not doing it for the Lord alone knows what I would have done that I shouldn't have done and what I would have neglected to do, that I should have done.

And I had nothing to do with how I was feeling in my stomach at that particular moment in time. You're waiting for the bell to go off. It is probably not going off and there is no suggestion and

Paul here that there is a shortcut to a life of usefulness. Everybody wants to find the shortcut, the new formula, the new dimension. And it all has to have no demanding activity attached to it. That's why clowns bought those abdominal teasers.

Incidentally, in all those things, those those royal blue things for thirty nine, ninety five or something, where if you send off for it, you got a flat stomach that looked like a baker's breadboard. Right. You get the abdomen iser and you get it in your flat. There you go. Now none of you would admit of getting one of them if I asked you. I know that. And if you and if you would admit you're crazier than that, you're you're you're a crazy person. Because the fact is that if you've ever seen one of those things, it's a plastic bucket and all you do is sit in it. And I never saw anybody get a flat stomach just sitting in a plastic bucket, and your wife will tell you, OK, now go up and then go down and go up and go down. And you look up me go, this is setup's. And she goes, exactly, don't you look an idiot for thirty nine, ninety five because you thought that you could come up with some little plastic gizmo that would make you physically fit. The Christian world is full of all kinds of gizmos suggesting that people try this and you'll be a spiritual giant. There is no way to do it.

J.C. Rile, writing many years ago as the bishop of Liverpool in a book entitled Holiness on this very subject, says this When people talk of having received such a blessing and having found that higher life or the secret after hearing some earnest advocate of holiness by faith and self consecration while their families and friends see no improvement and no increased sanctity in

their daily tempers and behavior, immense harm is done to the cause of Christ. True holiness does not consist merely of inward sensations and impressions. It is much more than tears and size and bodily excitement and a quick impulse and a passionate feeling of attachment to our favorite creatures in our own religious party and our readiness to live with everyone who doesn't agree with us. It is something of the image of Christ which can be seen and observed by others in our private life and in our habits and in our character and in our doings. And there is no easy way to that.

Are you prepared to give your life to this? Prepare to spend all of your life to become useful to the master. Well, I ask that because it brings me to my final point, which is the striking in the striking exhortation that he actually begins with. There's. Twenty four in the final little sentence run in such a way as to get the prize. Our paraphrasing you are to run in such a way as to have your minds fixed on winning the prize.

Paul wasn't suggesting that there was only one prize, he's using this as an illustration and second, before he points out that the crowns are available to all along for his appearance. What are you saying? This is run like a prize winner. Don't run like a straggler. Don't run like a wanderer. Don't run like a half hearted participant. Don't be one of these people who, when you meet them in the street and they have a thing on it, says the Boston Marathon, you go, hey, how was it?

And they go, how was what? And you know, when they say that to you, you know, they probably shouldn't be wearing this t shirt and then sometimes say, oh, I didn't run in and I just I just got the t shirt. So you just wanted to make it look like you're running it? Well, no, not really. Well, OK, fine. We don't have to go into that. Do you remember crosscountry, did you run cross-country at school when everybody starts off together because you have to.

That's the only time I was ever first I figured I could be first for the first 50 yards so I could see my mother say, hey, how was she? Well, you know, I was reading for for a bit or for a little bit. For a tiny, tiny bit. Not much. And then the girl went out in front and then the big glob in the middle and then the guys at the back moaning, groaning, complaining, griping, saying bad things about the games teacher saying what they're going to do to this guy if they ever get a hold of him on a dark night, all that stuff.

And they're at the back. You think this is lousy? OK, I haven't been around Biala enough to know this, but I'm pretty dead certain that that's exactly where this thing goes. There's a small group running out of the front. There's a big group struggling along in the middle, and there's another small group at the back door listings. And I want to say to you what Paul says to me, to each of us, a run in such a way as to get the prize.

In fact, the word that is used here in terms of competition is the word against mine from which we get our word agony. He says, get agonizing about it, get into competition in such a way that you're prepared to go for the gold. Remember, Jesus, whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me will find it at accelerating on this, says he, who is not prepared to sacrifice, will not be honored to gain the crown.

He is, with regard to his ego, will. One day, when Christ appears to have a great disappointment, she holds fast to an earthly mind, to her own convenience, to the enjoyment of sin, to pride renders herself unequal, for raising only serious training in practical holiness, in self-denial, in true discipleship can strengthen spiritual muscle. Now, let me say this to you. Without being trying to be unkind in any way at all is just the rambling of an old man.

But I have observed, and I've said this before and I may even have said it to you before in April, that your generation doesn't finish. In a unique way, you don't finish your vegetables. You don't finish tidying up your rooms, you don't finish making your bed. I'll get it. I'll get it. I'll get it. That was four months ago. You said that you don't finish your relationships either. So how in the wide world do you plan on finishing the race?

One of the key reasons for the striking ineffectiveness of the contemporary church for a number of shipwrecked lives, lies, I believe, and you're sensible and you don't think about this, but at lies, I believe in the fact that a complete generation of Christians are growing up without an awareness of the absolute necessity of dealing with sin, what was called by the prior generation or writers, the mortification of the flesh, even the phrase you're going on of the what?

The mortification of the flesh. Yeah. Dealing with all of the rampant impulses of our lives that even though we are redeemed still, there is an earnest longing to go and experience that, to try that, to do this and to do the next thing and listen to loved ones. If you're waiting to be able to get victory over that on the strength of some great surge of emotion I can use for you, it isn't going to happen. You are you are easy prey for the evil one.

Let me tell you how you stay married. Your mind, you can see your heart to settle your affections, to run after any one other than your life's companion. You do not stay married as a result of simply managing to get up in the morning. Go. Oh, I'm Married, yey, married, yey, I'm married, yey! If I did that. My wife would have to give me pills or something. I don't remember the last morning I got what lo I married. Now I'm happy to be married. But if it was whoa I married that get me infidelity. For the last 20 years, I've been in deep trouble. I see that's the silly claptrap that we get. Well, I just don't feel how I felt. I don't give a rip how you feel, how you felt. Well, I'm just feeling it the way, you know, going with the flow, feeling it. You know that I'm not I'm not it's not there. So I'm sorry. We're going to have to work on that. But get the deal

better. Worse, Richard. Poor, sick out, good, bad, stinking, indifferent. The whole deal. You're in it. You understand? No, we're not coming to you for counseling. Good. [applause] No, no, don't do that, I'm Scottish, you can't do that for Scottish people.

Now, here's the point. If that is true in terms of marriage, it's definitely true in terms of our relationship with Jesus Christ, you know, to get victory overseen by the enabling of the spirit of God. This is my self effort. You have to pronounce the death sentence on sin. 60 seconds a minute, 60 Minutes an hour. Twenty four hours a day. That's the only way you'll ever do it by the enabling the spirit of God. You pronounce the death sentence sin and you put that death sentence into effect all the time and you kill everything that sets itself against God's purpose in your life. All of the sources of temptation in our lives differ from one another.

They differ in relationship to our personalities and our temperaments and our circumstances. Each of us has had to learn the hard way just exactly where it is that we are most vulnerable. Oh, you say? Well, it's just like a bunch of rules and regulations to be a thousand things a boy can make or do. No, it's not that at all. External rules will never keep you true to Jesus Christ. And if you've come out of a background of legalism, you know that because you've had more rules and regulations than you've had hot dinners, but it hasn't dealt with the propensity of your heart.

That's why Pharisees will always imagine things worse than what the bad guy was actually doing. The prodigal goes off, uses up all the money, ends up in a pigsty, comes back, big party going on. Big Brother comes by. What's the deal with the party? Your brother came back. You should be glad. Says I'm not glad this guy is a bum. He should have stayed down there. I want nothing to do with him. As far as I'm concerned, you're here all the time.

We're going to have a party anytime you want, he says. I was slaving for you all this time in your house. Slaving in the house as not a sun sunstones leaving the house. He was a Pharisee. And you never once gave me a party like this, but when your son didn't say when my brother when your son went off and wasted his life with prostitutes. You mentioned prostitutes all of a sudden where prostitutes come from. That wasn't in the story.

Came out of this filthy pharisaical mind. Pharisees will always condemn their own lustful thoughts right out of their mouths. So don't misunderstand me for a moment, listen to John Calvin. Mortification from a self-restrained carried on by ways of self invention onto the end of self righteousness is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world that is Jarno and not Jonquil. The true foundation of going for the goal of dealing with sin is our union with the Lord Jesus Christ and because of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ, because of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ, because of the amazing awareness of the fact that he loves me a bag of worms and he loves me.

On the strength of that union. Then I will spend all of my energies. To live for the praise of his glory, you see, it is on account of the union that I enjoy with Susan Jones, that since the 16th of August, nineteen seventy five, I never phoned up any of my old girlfriends. Because of the explosive power of a new infection and it is the it is the foundation of our union with one another, which makes meaning for all the strident, precautionary things we do to preserve one another in purity and in faithfulness.

And that's the exact same thing. If you want to live for Jesus Christ, it is a constant battle against sin, refusing to allow, as I say, your eyes to wonder. It's the deliberate rejection of any sinful thought, suggestion, desire, aspiration, deed, circumstance or provocation. At the moment, we become conscious of its existence. It is the constant endeavor to do all in our powers to weaken the grip which sin in general and its manifestation in my life in particular.

Absolutely. Are you doing that? Think about what an athlete will do. Some of you are athletes. Abstinence and diet change, patterns of sleep, hardship and training, sacrifice in relationships, monetary commitment and all for the transient applause of the crowd and a corroding metal, what we then allow people in the realm of physical fitness to outstrip us in going for the gold. I don't anticipate for a moment that all of you will be enamored by what I say in preaching is a lot like Paul in Athens.

You know, some of them began to sneer. And said, maybe you could try this again later. It wasn't that good. And if you said, yeah, we'll we'll go with you. Paul. Can I join you tonight? Young man. Young woman, wherever you are in your heart and in your head out here. Can I encourage you? To run. So as to get the price. And I'm going to ask you to do anything public, I'm just asking you, as you know your heart, when you walk out of here sooner rather than later to resolve under God, say, God, I don't understand all the implications of this.

I don't know where I've been or whatever, but I don't want to run aimlessly. I don't want to shadowbox. I don't want to play around with this stuff. I want to go for the gold. And the word of God is. That if we honor him, he will honor us. Remember that part of Chariots of Fire where she comes across the American runner and he gives every piece of paper to every little, of course, in actual life.

It didn't come from an American athlete. It came from the monsieur who had worked on Little's body before he left for the athletic arena. And the monsieur gave him the verse, which he then took out with him. And you remember he ran to Olympic gold. Immortalized for his commitment, standing for a principle. In the Edinburgh Evening News, he was asked many years

later, what was the significance of his victory in the 400 meters? How could he account for winning the 400 meters?

And he said, and I quote The Edinburgh Evening News, The secret of my success over the four hundred meters is that I run the first two hundred as hard as I can. Then for the second two hundred, with God's help, I run even harder while I'm definitely on the second two hundred and forty six years old. That means. Thirty five is halfway. My mother died of a major heart attack the same age as I am as I stand before you now.

My father just died of heart failure at the age of 73. So I would assume all things being equal. I'm definitely in this second two hundred. I'd like to keep running. I want to run by myself. So many people I'm running hard after. Some of them are younger than me, some of them are older than me. But every day I live my life, I run again because folks like you keep running. Can you see what made a little a runner was not actually his passion for athletics, was his passion for a guy?

And when the time came for him, he died in nineteen forty five, incidentally, but when the time came for him to leave Edinburgh and to go to China as a missionary, there great crowds of people, Christian people and unbelieving people came to see the Olympic athlete leave from the railway station, the Waverley Railway Station, down underneath a castle in the center of

Edinburgh and Princes Street. And they all gathered out on the platforms and all around hanging on lampposts and everything.

And when labor was safely on the train, he opened the window of the train and he put out his head and he began to greet the people in to wish them farewell as he headed for China. And many of them were there just for the event. It was you know, there's not much happening in Scotland. Those days is going to have nothing much to do but down. They went for it and they weren't ready for what he said or what he did because he put his head out the window and he shouted above the noise of a crowd, Christ for the world, for the world needs Christ.

And then he started saying, these guys showering where the sun. Got his successive journeys running and his kingdoms dragged from shore to shore till noon, show wax and wane no more. And then he was gone. From his grave. In a prisoner of war camp. And I hear his voice down through the corridors of time saying, come on. Give up your small ambitions. Go for it. Thanks for listening. Horribly hot, wouldn't you say? I'm going to go find someone with an air conditioner for this place. Let's pray together.

Father, out of all of these words, we want to hear your voice. So then speak Lord, in the stillness. Draw the stragglers back into the mainstream. The shadow boxers back into the fight, the aimless

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runners. With their eyes upon the. Reminders that if Jesus Christ is worth serving, he's definitely worth serving. Well. So then help us to seize the day. And to live to the praise of your glory. Help us to forget everything is useless. Help us not to forget anything that sense. For Jesus.

[End of Recording].