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Randall L. Adkisson, Ph.D.

Monday

1Cor. 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

It is amazing what an athlete will do in order to win a prize and recognition. The Greek word for 'compete' is the word from which we derive 'agony'. Indeed, we will put ourselves through all types of 'agonies' in order to achieve our goals, whether they are educational, personal, or athletic. Often the prize for such agony is temporary, fleeting. But the prize that God offers for our spiritual discipline is eternal. God's rewards will last forever. Let's take the same determination, effort, and discipline with which we pursue our most important goals and pursue God.

Tuesday

1Cor. 9:24 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 win.

"Only one wins"? The statement is not limiting the number of believers who can win the prize of grace, or find success in pursuit of God. But by comparing our Christian run to that of an athletic competition, Paul does remind us pointedly that some will win and some will lose. Salvation is not the issue here, but he is saying that the undisciplined believer will lose out on God's purpose, fulfillment, and plan for his/her life. Many have lost much already by failing to pursue God's plan with determination and heart. It's time to run and this time to win.

Wednesday

1Cor. 6:18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1Cor. 10:8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.

The word immoral is a translation of the Greek 'porneuo', the word from which we derive 'porno.' It describes any sexual relationship outside of God's plan for sexual fulfillment in marriage. Today we live in a society much like that of Corinth where sex is cheapened and the temptation to engage in immorality is heightened by the presumption that it is normal. But God warns sternly and seriously against sex outside of marriage. Lives are shattered. The damage is serious and deeper than imagined. Flee immorality. Determine to be disciplined.

Thursday

1Cor. 10:10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Eph. 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

It seems odd to us that 1) grumbling would be considered sinful, and 2) that its seriousness would be ranked with idolatry and immorality. Yet God declares that this sin of attitude and tongue is indeed a serious offense to heaven. Through out scripture, grumbling is shown to be disheartening to the people and purposes of God. Grumblers are judged severely, because their words rob the motivation and momentum of kingdom work and often attack the leaders in God's work. The healthy believer is not a grumbler but an encourager.

Friday

1Cor. 10:7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were...

You do not have to bow down to a graven image to allow idolatry into your life. If you allow anything to take the rightful place of God in your service, thinking, or priorities, it has become an idol to you. Many believers drop out of the race altogether because of the idol of 'sports'; the lake and the game can be costly idols. Some make unhealthy romance their idol. For some work becomes the idol that replaces God. The pursuit of the dollar is like the pursuit of Baal. God wants and deserves first place in your life. Nothing and no one should be more important.