



## PART 3

# AN APPROVED WORKMAN: LEADERSHIP HELD TO A BIBLICAL STANDARD

## Chapter Ten

### HOW NOT TO BE DISQUALIFIED

And thus Paul highlighted for us another critical, indispensable, and supremely important quality every leader must maintain: *A leader is disciplined.*

#### **LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #24** **A LEADER IS ENERGETIC**

## FINISHING THE RACE

For Paul, the passion to *finish* the race well was never far from the forefront of his thoughts. He told the Ephesian elders,

**Acts 20:23-24 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> “Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

<sup>24</sup> But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”

When he wrote to the churches in Galatia, he rebuked them with these words: “**You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?**” (**Galatians 5:7 NASB**).

He also recounted for them how he had earnestly defended the gospel, “lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain” ([Galatians 2:2](#)).

**Galatians 2:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup>“It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, **for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.**”

He encouraged the Philippians to hold fast the Word of life, “holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ **I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain**” ([Philippians 2:16 NASB](#)). He reminded Timothy that “if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules” ([2 Timothy 2:5 NASB](#)).

And here in [1 Corinthians 9](#), Paul explained that this was the very thing that motivated his careful, relentless self-discipline: “**But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**” ([1 Corinthians 9:27 NASB](#)). That’s true for any leader, not just preachers. The ultimate irony is the leader who disqualifies himself after having sought to influence others.

Paul drew this metaphor of disqualification straight from the Isthmian games. When the games began, a herald would enter the stadium with great pageantry. A trumpet was blown to call everyone to attention. Then the herald stood on a platform.

He would announce the contest, read the names of all the contestants, and proclaim the rules. Of course, the rules were absolute and binding. Any infraction meant immediate disqualification.

Paul said he did not want to be the guy who proclaimed the rules but then disqualified *himself* by violating them.

There is no shortage of Christian leaders who have done precisely that. They seem to start well, and some even show signs of excellence for a time. But they don’t finish well. They let their own flesh get in the way, and they are disqualified, even after they have preached to others. Some bail out because they prefer a life of ease to the trials of leadership. Others are set on the bench by divine Providence. More than a few are publicly disgraced after embarrassing the cause of Christ in reprehensible ways. They are nearly always disqualified because of their own lack of discipline.

Paul did not want that to happen to him. As a matter of fact, the yearning to finish well became the driving obsession of his life. He wanted to win the race for the glory and honor of Christ.

And he *did* finish well. He lived a triumphant life despite all his many trials. By most accounts, he was beheaded by the order of Nero on the Ostian Road near Rome. Paul knew his martyrdom was imminent, and shortly before he died, he wrote this classic valediction to his disciple Timothy:



**2 Timothy 4:6-8 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup>“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.**

**<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;**

**<sup>8</sup>in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”**

May that be our legacy too.