

DISQUALIFIERS

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"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 ESV) There is the danger of disqualification, even for an apostle of Jesus Christ!

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

Jesus' apostle Paul said that he was working to keep his body under control! The danger he faced was "Disqualification." Have you been disqualified? Of course, the "prize" that Jesus' apostle Paul was writing about is God's heavenly reward for the winners. Paul called this prize "imperishable." The prize is eternal imperishable life with the Creator of the universe!

Paul was warning other Christians against disqualification. Of course, to be officially put out of the race means that you were first admitted to the race! So the apostle is talking about himself, and about other Christians. He is talking about saved people who for lack of self-control and focused purpose can be disqualified. The danger is real! The doctrine of "once saved, always saved" is false. Jesus' apostle warns against disqualification.

Jesus himself also warned about this problem. And it is interesting that Jesus talked about the same problem in terms of **self-control and the absence of focused purpose.**

As was His custom, Jesus told a parable to warn about this problem. Jesus said there was an owner who was leaving for an extended journey away from home. So the man entrusted his property to three of his servants. The master distributed his wealth to those three servants, according to their abilities. To the first servant the owner gave 5 talents. (A "talent" is a weight of money measured out in some precious metal like silver or gold. It is estimated that one talent was the equivalent of 75 pounds.) So this 5-talent man is given about 375 pounds of money. We know not whether this was in silver or gold. Jesus said that the man also called a second servant and gave him 2 talents of money (150 pounds). Then

the master called a third servant and gave him 1 talent of money (75 lbs.). The master then began his journey.

The record says that "after a long time" the master of those servants returned and came to settle accounts with his servants. (Matthew 25:19) The 5-talent man did well and had earned for his master 5 more talents (100% increase). The 2-talent man had also earned for his master 2 more talents (100% increase). However, the 1-talent man had buried and hid the money. So, when the master came to settle accounts, this man returned the one talent to his master. He had kept it hidden away, but he saw that this displeased the Master. The servant gave the excuse of fear. **"Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."** (Matthew 25:24-25 ESV) The Master was NOT impressed. **But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless (unprofitable, KJV) servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'**" (Matthew 25:26-30 ESV) I can imagine that in a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth there is great regret. Fear in that servant paralyzed him! He lost his self-control. He forgot to focus on his purpose as the **Master's servant!** This unprofitable servant was disqualified.

Friends, to be disqualified is to lose your soul. That's right! God has blessed the world with forgiveness. Furthermore, the God of heaven has blessed the world with "grace and truth" in the coming of Jesus Christ. It was God's grace in action when Jesus was sent. It was also God clarifying for the world the Truth of His existence and the truth of eternal life. It was God clarifying for the world His justice in awarding wonderful forgiveness. God could freely grant forgiveness because the penalty for sin was paid by His only begotten Son. Wonderful forgiveness! What a marvelous rich deposit God has given to the world.

However, it is true that only God's servants will receive these great gifts. Anyone can come to Jesus for salvation, but not everyone will! Only those who are hungry and thirsting after righteousness will be filled (Matthew 5:6). So, are you interested in this deal? How do you get into this race toward the prize?

Simply stated, you enter the race through Faith, Repentance, Confession, and Baptism. Your **faith** is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You believe the scriptures that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Jesus' sacrifice (which is the gospel, the good news), Jesus' sacrifice gave His Father the power to forgive your sins justly. (Romans 1:16) You must believe that Jesus is God's Son sent to die for the sins of mankind, including your sins.

But you must also **repent** of your sins.

Jesus paid the penalty for your sins, but you must feel sorry for them! That's right! Jesus said to a crowd of people who thought they were less sinners than some others who had perished, "Unless you repent you will also perish." (Luke 13:3) Jesus' apostle Peter also stood before a large crowd and said "Repent". (Acts 2:38) Repentance is the acknowledgment and the turning from your sins. You must repent in order to get in the race for the heavenly prize of eternal life.

Furthermore, You must be bold enough to step up and **confess** what you believe. No one can baptize you into Christ unless they first know what you believe about Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "**Everyone ... who confesses me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.**" (Matthew 10:32-33 WEBA) There were a large number of the Jewish rulers who "believed in [Jesus], but because of the Pharisees they didn't confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue, for they loved men's praise more than God's praise." (John 12:42-43 WEBA) As an Ethiopian man and a preacher rode together in a chariot "they came on some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?' [The preacher answered] 'If you believe with all your heart, it is lawful. [The Ethiopian answered and said], 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" (Acts 8:36-37 MKJV)

Once you have confessed your faith, then you are permitted (like the Ethiopian) to reenact your faith! You believe that Jesus died for your sins, and that he was buried, and that he was raised from the dead by the power of God. You have confessed your faith and repented of your sins, and you are now ready to be buried in a watery grave and raised to a new life in Jesus Christ. It happened that way to that Ethiopian. After he confessed his faith in Christ, "[the Ethiopian] commanded the chariot to stand still. And they both went down into the water, both Philip [the preacher] and the [Ethiopian] eunuch. And [Philip] baptized him." (Acts 8:38 MKJV) When that man was raised from the water the Lord added him to the race. Jesus added him to the church of Jesus Christ. (Compare Acts 2:47)

Yes, simply stated, you enter the race for your heavenly prize of eternal life through Faith, Repentance, Confession, and Baptism. You are now ready to run! But remember that the apostle of Jesus Christ said, "I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:26-27 ESV) Even after starting the race; even after becoming an apostle, Paul could be disqualified!

What are the rules of disqualification?

In Paul's second letter to Timothy he talked about certain men who opposed the truth. He described those men as "corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith." (2 Timothy 3:8 ESV) Those men could no longer be trusted "regarding the faith." "The Faith" is a reference to the sum total of the teaching of Christ. We are told that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17) The men Paul was describing were disqualified from the race because they no longer stood for the faith, in fact, they were opposing it!

Earlier in the letter to Timothy Paul described these men as "having an appearance of godliness, but denying its power." (2 Timothy 2:5) Furthermore, Paul said of them that they were "always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth." (2 Timothy 2:6) What were they studying? They were not studying the truth. Their source of information was the wrong source.

In Paul's first letter to Timothy we find more evidence about the source of these men's knowledge. Paul quoted the Holy Spirit as describing this disqualifying situation: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith [well, that disqualifies them doesn't it] by devoting themselves [ah, that is "ever learning"] to [what? What is the source of their learning?] deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, [but how did they come by this learning?] through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, [and what kind of teaching characterized this departure from faith?] who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." (1 Timothy 4:1-3 ESV)

There it is. These men were disqualified from the race; they were "disqualified regarding the faith". They had given over their self-control to demons. They were now aimless; they were without a righteous purpose for living. They were not serving the Lord who died and is now living for them, but they were serving "deceitful spirits and teachings of demons."

Friend, are you a Christian. If not, perhaps you would like to be on the road that

leads to eternal life with God.

Friend, you too can run this race with self-control and a clear purpose of eternal life to come. Believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Him, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ into the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus purchased forgiveness for you at the old rugged cross. Jesus will add you to His church setting your feet on the racecourse set before you. Yes, there are disqualifiers, but you can as Paul did, run with purpose and with discipline the race set before you.

We close with the words of Jesus' promise: "**Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.**" (Revelation 2:10)

Find a church of Christ near you and you will find a Christian who can help you run the race for eternal life.