

Speaker : Senior Pastor Prince Guneratnam
Title : The Christian as an Athlete – A Wrestler

Introduction

Paul compares the Christian life with the lives of athletes

- Runners

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1 & 2)

- Boxers

“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air” (1 Corinthians 9:26)

- Wrestlers

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12)

Western Wrestling

“Wrestling is a sport in which one contestant competes with another using various holds and techniques in an attempt to force the shoulders of the opponent against a mat, thus scoring a fall and winning the match. If a wrestler cannot score a fall within the time limit, a winner is determined based on a point-scoring system.”

“Exhibition wrestling is popular in the USA. This is more for entertainment rather than a sport.”

Japanese Sumo Wrestling

“A sumo wrestler leads a highly regimented way of life. The Sumo Association prescribes the behavior of its wrestlers in some detail. For example, in the wake of a serious car accident involving a wrestler the Association banned wrestlers from driving their own cars. Breaking the rules can result in fines and/or suspension, not only for the offending wrestler, but also for his stablemaster.”

“A sumo wrestler is expected to grow his hair long to form a topknot, or chonmage, similar to the samurai hairstyles of the Edo Period.”

“The winner of a sumo bout has to do one of the two:
The first wrestler to force his opponent to step out of the ring, OR

The first wrestler to force his opponent to touch the ground with any part of his body other than the bottom of his feet.”

“Matches often last only a few seconds, as usually one wrestler is quickly ousted from the circle or thrown to the ground. However, they can occasionally last for several minutes. Each match is preceded by an elaborate ceremonial ritual.”

“The wrestlers themselves are renowned for their great girth, as body mass is often a winning factor in sumo, though with skill, smaller wrestlers can topple far larger opponents.”

- Taking the analogy of the wrestler, the Christian is involved in 3 types of wrestling:
 - With Ourselves
 - With Rulers, Demonic Powers, Worldly Forces of Darkness and Spiritual Forces of Wickedness in the Heavenly Places
 - With God

The Wrestle To Live (We Wrestle With Ourselves)

- Our greatest opponent is ourselves.

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Paul says,

- “I discipline my body” (New King James Version)
 - “I beat my body” (New International Version)
 - “I buffet my body” (Amplified Bible)
- Paul tells us reasons why we need to discipline ourselves
 - Because of our sinful nature

“17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:17-25)

- The question, “*who will deliver me?*” – v. 24

“11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:11-23)

- To wrestle with yourself is to beat or discipline your body
- It is to die to self to do the will of God.
 - You can die to self by the power of Christ’s life and His Spirit in you.
 - For God’s power to work in you, the “self” must die.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)

The Wrestle For Victory (We Wrestle With Satan And His Kingdom)

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12)

- Satan will use people to do his work, but people are not our enemies.
- When we wrestle with Satan and his kingdom, Paul says we need to be properly attired. We must put on the whole armor of God

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13)

- Our wrestling must be with God’s Word and faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, under the protection that God has provided.
- The whole armor of God is described by Paul

“10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:10-18)

- Gird your waist with Truth – put on Jesus, who is the Truth
- Put on the breastplate of righteousness – stay under the Blood of Christ
- Feet with the Gospel of Peace – be the salt and light of the world
- Take the shield of Faith – Word and obedience
- Take the helmet of Salvation – renewed mind
- Take the sword of the Spirit – walk in the light of His Word & Promises
- Praying always in the Spirit – live in fellowship with God

- This is our hope and means to succeed in facing the devil and his devices
- Having put on the whole armor of God:
 - Be watchful
 - Persevere
 - Why persevere? Because it is a wrestling match!

The Wrestle For God's Blessings (We Wrestle With God)

- You need to exercise your will.
- Decide to follow God's way

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8)

- "Illustration - Jacob who wrestled with God" (Genesis 32:24-32)

24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob."

28 And He said "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

29 Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

31 Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

32 Therefore to this day the children of Israel does not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank."

- His name was changed from Jacob to Israel
- His walk was changed, he walked with a limp

Conclusion:

- Finally, Paul says "Stand"

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13)

- Stand and you will see the salvation of the Lord

- 3 fundamental principles to stand on:-

- Humble yourself

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10)

- Trust in the Lord

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"
(Proverbs 3: 5-6)

- Obey God – know His will and do it

“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. 2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 28:1-2)