

Study 15. 1 Cor 9:24-10:22

Big idea: don't fall away.

Introduction

If your week were an athletics event what would it be?

With this kind of slightly unusual opening question it is helpful for the leader to go first, explaining the question then offering their own answer, e.g.: "My week at work has been like a hurdles race, because some obstacles I get over and others I smash into but I keep on running anyway."

Observation and interpretation

Read 1 Cor 9:24-27

- According to Paul, why is the Christian life a bit like a running race?
- Why is the Christian life different to a running race?
- What does it mean to be "disqualified" in the Christian life?

Read 1 Cor 10:1-13

- What lessons does Paul want us to learn from Israel's history?
- What kind of things does Paul want the Corinthian Christians to avoid?

The link to the Old Testament narrative is a pretty clear indictment of the Corinthians - the desert wanderings of the Israelites (including the idolatry of the Golden Calf, the desire for food of Egypt, and the immorality with the Moabite daughters) hit pretty close to home for the Corinthians who had issues with idolatry, covetousness, immorality and more.

Read 1 Cor 10:14-22

- Here Paul returns to the subject of eating food sacrificed to idols. What do the preceding two sections add to the question of whether they can eat food sacrificed to idols?

Application / Implications

- Do Christians need to worry about falling away?

It is important to acknowledge a good tension here: some people may raise the theological principle of predestination and perseverance, and the difference between our status in the New Covenant with that of Israel. These things are true. And yet the warning is also real: don't presume on God's grace by thinking that sin doesn't matter. God preserves

his chosen people through warnings such as these, as Christians hear this warning and respond in repentance.

- What things have you seen cause Christians to stumble in their faith, and how can we avoid those mistakes?
- Have you ever been tempted to seriously abandon Christian faith or life? What did you do to resist it?
- Are there any old Christians (living or dead, known personally to you or only through stories) that you really admire for their “good race”? Why?

Prayer ideas

- Pray for those experiencing temptation right now.
- Pray for those who seem to have fallen away, that they would get back in the race.