

RUNNING IN VAIN OR VICTORY

In (Gal.2:2), Paul says that he visited Jerusalem church a second time after 14 years. He visited it with intentions to meet with the apostolic leaders “for fear that he **might be running** (trecho/ p.a.subj) or **had run** (trecho/ a.a.ind 1ps) **in vain** (kenos) [for naught]” (Gal.2:2).

Apparently Paul was a sport enthusiast and especially that of Track and Field. He used several illustrations from running in his writings. We will mention some of them in this lesson.

Today, we will study **four aspects** of Paul’s discussion with the apostolic leaders regarding the doctrine of **RUNNING IN VAIN OR VICTORY**.

1. What Paul was doing during these 14 years was important to his concern regarding Running in Vain or Victory. What race was Paul running these 14 years (Gal.2:2)?

To understand these 14 years, we will need to examine Paul’s evangelism in Syria –Cilicia (Gal.1:21-24; Acts 11:24-25, 27-30; 12:25) as well as his first missionary evangelism trip into Asia Minor (Acts 13-14). It was during the evangelism of Lystra that Paul was stoned to death (Acts 14:19-20; 2 Cor.12:1-6). Still it was a successful trip of converts and planting churches.

2. When news from the first missionary evangelism trip reached Jerusalem church regarding Paul’s grace gospel, great debate and confusion erupted within the Jerusalem church because of the work gospel of the Judaizers (Acts 15:1-7a).

They didn’t believe these converts were saved because they weren’t circumcised (Acts 15:1).

The first church conference was held to settle the debate regarding salvation by works or grace. Paul also wanted this conference - “for fear that he might be running or had run in vain.” (Gal.2:2)

As a minister of the **New Covenant** (historical Christology gospel) and **not of the Old Covenant** (Shadow Christology prophetic gospel), Paul wanted to be sure he hadn’t overlooked something doctrinally regarding the grace gospel of salvation. “Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in You (Christ).’” (Gal.3:8, 16)

(Heb.8:6-7) “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a **better covenant**, which has been enacted on **better promises**. For if (2cc) that first covenant has been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.”

“When He said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.” (Heb.8:13)

3. Paul used the illustration of running again in a question to the Galatians - “You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Gal.5:7, NAS)

(Gal.5:7) “You were running the race nobly. Who has interfered in (hindered and stopped you from) your heeding and following the Truth?” (**Amplified**)

- Answer to **WHO hindered** – Judaizers (legalists) from Jerusalem church.
- Answer to **WHAT hindered** – Works gospel of salvation (circumcision) and works spirituality (keep the Law) (Acts 15:1, 5).

Legalist believers:

(Acts 21:21) “And they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcised their children (salvation) nor to walk according to the customs (spirituality).”

Grace believers:

(Acts 15:11) “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.” (Eph.2:8-9)

Purpose of Law:

(Gal.3:24-25) “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be **justified by faith**. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

4. The writer of Hebrews also used the running illustration to teach the importance of running the race without hindrance to the finish line (Heb.12:1-2; 1 Cor.9:25).

(Heb.12:1-2) “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding **us** (Reference to Heb.11/ ALSO), **let us ALSO lay aside** (apotithemi/ a.m.ptc.) every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles **us**, and **let us run** (trecho/ p.a.subj.1pl) with endurance the race set before **us**,

Fixing (aphorao/ p.a.ptc.nplm) our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Jesus Christ, the Head of spiritual track and field, assigns the race, heat, lane, and strategy to run

(1 Cor.9:24-27).

- It is important to understand and accept the assigned race given to each of us to run.
- It is important to lay aside every encumbrance and sin in order to run our best race.
- It is important to run the race with endurance to the finish.
- It is important to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ who ran His race and set a world record.
- It is important to know that a great cloud of spiritual hall of fame runners are cheering for us.
- It is important to know that if we finish the race we will receive the **PRIZE - Crown of Righteousness.**

THE PRIZE: (Available to all Church Age Believers, even you)

(2 Tim.4:7-8) “I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the course**, I have kept the faith; 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.” (2 Cor.5:8; 1 Thess.4:17-18)