

# 1 Corinthians 9:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

## Analysis

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**Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?** Paul shifts to athletic metaphors drawn from the Isthmian Games held near Corinth every two years. Greek stadion (στάδιον, "race, running track") was a footrace of about 200 yards. All runners compete, but only one wins the victor's crown. Paul is not teaching salvation by works or competition among believers—he is emphasizing earnestness, focus, and self-discipline.

**So run, that ye may obtain.** The imperative "run" (Greek *trechō*, τρέχω) calls for purposeful effort. The Christian life is not passive but active, not aimless wandering but directed pursuit. Paul urges the Corinthians to run with the same intensity as athletes striving for a crown. The goal is not defeating other believers but obtaining the prize—faithfulness rewarded, not salvation earned. Paul uses athletic imagery to illustrate disciplined Christian living, not to introduce works-righteousness.

## Historical Context

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The Isthmian Games, held in honor of Poseidon near Corinth, were second only to the Olympics in prestige. Events included footraces, wrestling, boxing, and chariot racing. Winners received a pine wreath (later a celery crown). Corinthians were intimately familiar with athletic training, discipline, and competition—making Paul's metaphor immediately powerful. The city's identity was shaped by these games, held every two years.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does Paul use athletic competition to illustrate Christian faithfulness without teaching works-salvation?
2. What does it mean to "run" the Christian life with purpose and discipline?
3. How does the Isthmian Games context make this metaphor especially vivid for Corinthian readers?

## Interlinear Text

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Οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ ἐν σταδίῳ τρέχετε πάντες μὲν  
not Know ye that G3588 in a race run all G3303  
G3756 G1492 G3754 G1722 G4712 G5143 G3956

τρέχετε εἰς δὲ λαμβάνει τὸ βραβεῖον οὕτως τρέχετε  
run one but receiveth the prize So run  
G5143 G1520 G1161 G2983 G3588 G1017 G3779 G5143

ἵνα καταλάβητε

that ye may obtain  
G2443 G2638

## Additional Cross-References

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**Philippians 3:14** (Parallel theme): I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

**Hebrews 12:1** (Parallel theme): Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

**Revelation 3:11** (Parallel theme): Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

**Philippians 2:16** (Parallel theme): Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

**1 Corinthians 9:26** (Parallel theme): I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

**Galatians 5:7** (Parallel theme): Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

**Jeremiah 12:5** (Parallel theme): If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

**James 1:12** (Parallel theme): Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

**Galatians 2:2** (Parallel theme): And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

**Ecclesiastes 9:11** (Parallel theme): I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.