

## The Battle to Win the Victory

May 20th, 2014, Kichijouji Bible Study  
Gotthold Beck

勝利を得る為の戦い  
2014年5月20日、吉祥寺学び会  
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### 1 Corinthians

9:26 That is the way I run, with a clear goal in mind.  
That is the way I fight, not like someone shadow  
boxing.

9:27 No, I keep on disciplining my body, making it  
serve me so that after I have preached to others, I  
myself will not somehow be disqualified.  
[International Standard Version]

Paul clearly understood that he might be disqualified.  
Even though he was saved, there was a possibility that  
he might be totally useless for the work of the Lord, as  
is written in here.

I would like to entitle the sermon of this morning as  
"The Battle to Win the Victory." Needless to say, the  
most important goal in our life is to have the savior. In  
other words, it is to know Jesus from experience.  
Unless we know the God of salvation, we can't live a  
fulfilled life in this world.

An eternal life, peace with the Lord God, forgiveness  
for sins as well as the conviction that Jesus cares  
about us, leads us and protects us—all these are  
needed to form the foundation of our fulfilled life. The  
conviction that we will have an eternal fellowship with  
the Lord Jesus after death and share in his glory is the  
supreme treasure. When we think of being one with  
the Lord Jesus forever, it changes the way we see  
things. We are released from our burdens and are  
compelled to worship the Lord.

The desire of Paul was for all saved people to be  
perfectly blameless, so that believers would not have  
to take care of them like newborn babies forever. He  
wrote in chapter 4 of Ephesians that they had to attain  
mature adulthood;

### Ephesians

4:13 until all of us are united in the faith and in the  
full knowledge of God's Son, and until we attain  
mature adulthood and the full standard of  
development in the Messiah.

Knowing Jesus is actually a blessing. However, in  
order for us to be vessels that are used for the purpose  
of the Lord Jesus, it is important to understand Jesus

better from experience as our Lord, as the one who  
governs us. It is extremely important for us to live with  
the aim of being crowned with eternal victory. Paul  
wrote to his favorite disciple, Timothy;

### 2 Timothy

4:7 I have fought the good fight. I have completed  
the race. I have kept the faith.

Such an impressive confession, considering that later,  
he died the death of a martyr. He was slaughtered. He  
wrote on another occasion;

### Acts

20:24 But I don't place any value on my life, if only I  
can finish my race and the ministry that I received  
from the Lord Jesus of testifying to the gospel of  
God's grace.

In these very famous verses, the authors of Hebrews  
wrote;

### Hebrews

12:1 1 Therefore, having so vast a cloud of  
witnesses surrounding us, and throwing off  
everything that hinders us and especially the sin  
that so easily entangles us, let us keep running with  
endurance the race set before us,

12:2 fixing our attention on Jesus, the pioneer and  
perfector of the faith, who, in view of the joy set  
before him, endured the cross, disregarding its  
shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the  
throne of God.

To run, to keep running, is to fix our attention on  
Jesus.

Paul wrote a lot about three different athletic  
competitions in Greece and Rome in his time. In verse  
9:26 of the First Corinthians we read at the beginning,  
the word 'boxing' appears. In the Greek era, one of the  
most important sports in athletic events was boxing.

This seems to have been one of the fiercest sports, in  
which fighters literally smashed each other. In  
particular, they tried to hit each other in the face  
viciously, which attracted the audience. Already in the  
famous Roman era, which was around 900 B.C., they  
began fighting with leather gloves in their hands. They  
even embedded pieces of steel in the gloves. It made  
boxing a very dangerous sport which even involved  
some deaths.

Punching beneath the eyes was most fatal, which  
could instantly knock out the opponent. Paul used this  
expression in the Bible. He wrote in verse 9:26 of the  
First Corinthians we read at the beginning; "That is the

way I run, with a clear goal in mind. That is the way I fight, not like someone shadow boxing.” This he did so as not to be disqualified.

He wrote, “I keep on disciplining my body, making it serve me.” He meant that by punching his own body, especially beneath his eyes, he wanted to completely knock himself out.

Let me explain it this way. Christians should place no value at all on their own life. That is to say, if our self-centered thoughts, our own wishes or desires, pursuit of comforts in life or pleasure become obstacles to win the victory in our battle, these things need to be flatly refused.

It is unacceptable to fight like boxers beating only the air instead of striking a blow to the body of the opponent, just to avoid hurting their own fists. No one can win a victory with such a style of boxing anyway. Paul could say;

#### Acts

20:24 But I don't place any value on my life, if only I can finish my race and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Here, Paul is not encouraging us to practice celibacy or to live in some cloister. He is rather telling us that it is important for us, as athletes, to aim at one big target with all our strength and all our hearts. It will lead us to victory. I guess Paul mentioned here about the battle of the Spirit and the battle of the flesh.

The New Testament makes many mentions of the conflicts between the spirit and the flesh. Let us look at some examples.

#### Romans

8:4 so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not live according to human nature but according to the Spirit.

8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

8:6 To focus our minds on the human nature leads to death, but to focus our minds on the Spirit leads to life and peace.

8:7 That is why the mind that focuses on human nature is hostile toward God. It refuses to submit to the authority of God's Law because it is powerless to do so.

8:8 Indeed, those who are under the control of human nature cannot please God.

8:9 You, however, are not under the control of the human nature but under the control of the Spirit, since God's Spirit lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of the Messiah, he does not belong to him.

Regarding the same fact, Paul wrote to the brothers and sisters living in Galatia;

#### Galatians

5:17 For what the flesh wants is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, and so you do not do what you want to do.

The word 'flesh' here refers not only to the sinful desire that goes against Jesus' teaching, but to the inherent and innate nature of humans.

#### Galatians

5:19 Now the actions of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, promiscuity,

5:20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of anger, quarrels, conflicts, factions,

5:21 envy, murder, drunkenness, wild partying, and things like that. I am telling you now, as I have told you in the past, that people who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

So wrote Paul to the brothers and sisters living in Galatia. I guess that more than half of what he listed here as the actions of the flesh actually belong to sins within our hearts. Sexual immorality, impurity and promiscuity are not the only actions of the flesh. Hatred, envy, conflict, grudge, idolatry as well as being loveless, legalistic and ascetic—all these things also belong to the actions of the flesh.

#### Colossians

2:16 Therefore, let no one judge you in matters of food and drink or with respect to a festival, a New Moon, or Sabbath days.

2:17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Messiah.

#### Colossians

2:20 If you have died with the Messiah to the basic principles of the world, why are you submitting to its decrees as though you still lived in the world?

2:21 “Don't handle this! Don't taste or touch that!”

2:22 All of these things will be destroyed as they are used, because they are based on human commands and teachings.

2:23 These things have the appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion, humility, and harsh treatment of the body, but they have no value against self-indulgence.

For example, although sexual immorality and asceticism are seemingly opposite to each other, in the eyes of Jesus, they are just two different sides of the same coin. In other words, while some actions of the flesh are apparently indecent and vile, and other actions are disguised as apparently faithful and humble, there is actually no difference between the two.

Because anything we do with our own strength without relying on Jesus is sin. Brothers and sisters in Galatia believed that they could bring themselves to perfection by purifying themselves through legalistic actions. Paul complained about these kinds of religious efforts;

#### Galatians

3:3 Are you so foolish? Having started out with the Spirit, are you now ending up with the flesh?

In this sense, there is always a conflict between the spirit and the flesh, that is to say, our old man and new man, we as sinners and we who are reborn and planted with new life.

So, we all have to be knocked down ourselves. Jesus commanded so himself in his Sermon on the Mount;

#### Matthew

5:29 So if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your body parts than to have your whole body thrown into hell.

5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away from you. It is better for you to lose one of your body parts than to have your whole body go into hell."

Paul wrote to the people in Colossae too;

#### Colossians

3:5 So put to death your worldly impulses: sexual sin, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry).

However, at the same time, we will have another experience. That is to say, when we overcome the law of sin by which our body was governed, our body will not be dishonored, but actually honored and sanctified. The Bible says that, in actuality, our body is the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit.

#### 1 Corinthians

6:19 You know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God, don't you? You do not belong to yourselves,

"Don't you know?" So wrote Paul to the brothers and sisters in Corinth. What can be said clearly from epistles in the New Testament is that our body has to be offered as a weapon of righteousness.

#### Romans

6:13 Stop offering the parts of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Instead, offer yourselves to God as people who have been brought from death to life and the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness to God.

Our body ought to be a holy living sacrifice. Paul wrote in the same epistle to the Romans, 12:1;

#### Romans

12:1 I therefore urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices that are holy and pleasing to God, for this is the reasonable way for you to worship.

Our body needs to be the instrument through which the Lord is glorified;

#### 1 Corinthians

6:20 because you were bought for a price. Therefore, glorify God with your bodies.

At the time of our resurrection, our body is transformed to a glorious one. This is what Paul wrote to the brothers and sisters in Corinth. Chapter 15 is called the chapter of resurrection.

#### 1 Corinthians

15:43 The body is planted in a state of dishonor but is raised in a state of splendor. It is planted in weakness but is raised in power.

15:44 It is planted a physical body but is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.

15:45 This, indeed, is what is written: "The first man, Adam, became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

15:46 The spiritual does not come first, but the physical does, and then comes the spiritual.

15:47 The first man came from the dust of the earth; the second man came from heaven.

Our body does not by itself oppose the Lord. Hence, it does not need to be denied. As the creation of the Lord God, it rather deserves the same positive praise as our spirit. However, because of our sins, our body is always exposed to the danger and possibility of being used as an instrument of the devil, and it constantly needs to be knocked down.

As I mentioned earlier, it is not because there is something evil within our body that it needs to be knocked down. It is to place our body in the right condition for fulfilling its intrinsic function and purpose. By this, our body will obtain true liberty. Sins will be brought low and holiness will be brought high. Sin is a dishonor, but holiness and purity is our honor. And this is true not only for our spirit, but for our body as well.

Thus, our body won't get ruined by being knocked down. It will rather gain strength to play the role. Our body needs to be constantly knocked down so as not to be used as an instrument of sin.

However, we should not forget that our body which is the creation of the Lord is intended to be used as the instrument of the Lord. It has a very important mission. It is a tool used by the spirit. Through our body, we communicate with the world outside.

People around us can correctly understand what kind of people we are and what our purpose is by observing the actions of our body. For example, through what we talk and write, how we act and what we do, as well as the movement of our eyes, facial expressions, gestures, the way we look, walk, work, eat and drink, people understand us.

Without our body, our mission won't be understood by people around us and it will remain unclear to them. Thus, our body should be used as the instrument of the righteous Lord to reveal these facts to the world—Jesus is alive. We can serve the living savior through Jesus. Jesus is the only one who can liberate us from the control of sin and free us from the fear of death.

Jesus was the one who was resurrected and gave us new eternal lives. Jesus is our life itself.

Paul wrote to the people in Colossae;

#### Colossians

3:4 When the Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you, too, will be revealed with him in glory.

Paul wrote from the prison in Rome;

#### Philippians

1:21 For to me, to go on living is the Messiah, and to die is gain.

When Paul mentioned our body, he said that the purpose of its existence is for the life of the Lord Jesus to be clearly shown within it.

#### 2 Corinthians

4:10 We are always carrying around the death of Jesus in our bodies, so that the life of Jesus may be clearly shown in our bodies.

And the Bible tells us that the life of Jesus will be completely revealed through our bodies. According to the promise in the Bible, our body too has the possibility to come back to life in the future. It is important for us to keep our body pure now. However, at the same time, it is for the transformation of our body in the future.

#### Romans

8:11 And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then the one who raised the Messiah from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive by his Spirit who lives in you.

Thus, in order to win the final victory, our body needs to be purified now at this very moment. Paul writes in Philippians, chapter 3, that we need to strive to fight in athletic fields. It is not just a matter of our salvation, but it is also necessary in order to win the victory of God.

#### Philippians

3:12 It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already become perfect. But I keep pursuing it, hoping somehow to embrace it just as I have been embraced by the Messiah Jesus.

3:13 Brothers, I do not consider myself to have embraced it yet. But this one thing I do: Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

3:14 I keep pursuing the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly call in the Messiah Jesus.

And finally, our body will be transformed to be like the glorious body of Jesus.

#### Philippians

3:20 Our citizenship, however, is in heaven, and it is from there that we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

3:21 He will change our unassuming bodies and make them like his glorious body through the power that enables him to bring everything under his authority.

End