LIVING FOR GOD’S APPROVAL
1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Introduction: 1) Some think that the Sovereignty of God and man’s will are terms of contradiction. The accusation often thrown at the Sovereignty of God is that it makes robots of man. 2) This is not true. The Sovereignty of God simply means that the results of God’s plans are guaranteed. God does not eliminate or work without your will however. Philippians 2:13. God works in your will so that you will and do God’s will. This means he basically works through persuading your will and this results in the doing of God’s will. 3) His tools of persuasion are: The Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and other people. (Ezekiel 36:26; John 3:5; Romans 8:14; Ephesians 6.) 4) Part of the New Birth or the giving us a new heart is the desire to please God. (2 Corinthians 5:14-17) Our text today assumes that all believers want to please God. Paul is talking though here beyond the generalities of pleasing God but is talking about the very moment we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards for our living for Jesus. Paul is talking about that moment in which he has lived his life for the singular purpose and pleasure of hearing the Lord Jesus Christ say to him, well done thou good and faithful servant. This pleasure exceeded all earthly pleasures and gave Paul the passion to seek it above everything else in this world. 5) We never need fear not being accepted by the Lord. Once we have trusted the shed blood of Jesus we are forever accepted by God. (Romans 8:16,17) However, just because we are accepted by God does not mean the way we live our lives will gain his approval, especially for the purpose of receiving his approval on judgment day. There will be a lot of weeping on Judgment day for those who do not receive his approval. Paul in our text this morning is wanting to share with us how we can win his approval and he compares it to a race back in the days of the Olympic games. This is what we will explore this morning.

I. All can win the race - 1 Corinthians 9:24
II. The Way to run the race - 1 Corinthians 9:25-27  
   A. Self Control or Discipline over the Body  
      1. God made man a Body, Soul, and Spirit  
      2. When sin came into the world the spirit died or became inoperative and the Body took over the person and this is why we are called sinners, by nature we live independent of God. Ephesians 2:1-3. (Instead of seeking the approval of God man began to seek the approval of others, the approval of Eve was more important than the approval of God to Adam, the world is said to be one of man’s three greatest enemies because it entices man to satisfy the lustful desires of the flesh) Galatians 5:19-21  
      3. Self-control is the practice of denying the body, sometimes called the flesh. It actually results in God control. - Romans 8:13 and Galatians 5:16,17,22,23; Luke 9:23; Matthew 16:24 (Note: the Holy Spirit plays a key role in this activity.)  
   B. Athletes discipline their bodies for the race and so we will need to do so also.

III. The dangers along the way (They can get us sidetracked from our goal and sometimes even change our goals altogether. Example: Annanias and Saphira)  
   A. Idolatry - The danger in idolatry is that it causes us to chase other goals rather than the main goal of God’s approval on judgment day. God says he is a jealous God and is angry when we love something or someone as much or more than him.  
      I Corinthians 10:1-7  
   B. Sexual Immorality - Is one of man’s chief idols and lust is actual the cause of many relationships and why many relationships fail. A lifestyle of it is incompatible with salvation. 1 Corinthians 10:8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11  
   C. Testing God - This is when we are constantly demanding for God to prove that he loves us. This is not loving God but using God for selfish reasons. Doubting God’s love for
us offends God. 1 Corinthians 10:9

D. Complaining about the circumstances of life is a result of an absence of trust in God’s rule over your life - 1 Corinthians 10:10,11

IV. The reason to Run the Race - 1 Corinthians 9:25
   A. The secret to self-control or denying the body is when the pleasure of getting Christ approval at the Judgment Seat of Christ surpasses all other pleasures the body could ever provide. (You need to keep this moment on your mind at all times.)
   B. This is how Moses forsook Egypt - Hebrews 11:25,26

Conclusion: 1) Run the race and run it well, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus and he tells us well done thou good and faithful servant. 2) I am especially sharing with so many of you today who have run the race for many years at Grace Baptist Church, through many hard days, and you kept running the race when others gave up and thought it would be better to be where it would be easier and more pleasant. Christ I think will be especially please with you who have hung in there. Those of you who have come in the years I have been here, it does not matter what Church you came from, or what road you have been on before, you are on this road now, run this race with self control until Jesus comes. It is my passionate desire that God tells you well done thou good and faithful servant when you stand before Jesus. 3) Paul said it was his desire to present the Church spotless and this is my desire for all of you.