

# The Prayer Class

**Purpose:** *To encourage greater participation and joy in prayer*

*The Prayer Class meets in God's Throne Room 24/7*

*In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence Ephesians 3:12.*

Teacher: Abe Funk

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**Lesson:** *Run to Get the Prize*

## Welcome to The Prayer Class:

What are we learning from the Paris Olympics that will encourage us in our race to finish strong?

**Bible Reading:** 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to **get the prize**. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get **a crown that will last forever**. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**Key Verse:** *Run in such a way as to **get the prize** 24b.*

## Background and Lesson:

The highlight of the Olympics is the men and women's 100-meter foot race. The winner is honored for being the fastest in the world. There are many other foot races, and the 42.2 km Marathon is also highly prized and popular for both men and women, and best describes the Christian's race.

The object of the Olympics is to identify the best athletes in the world and reward them with a bronze, silver or gold medal. That recognition drives people from all over the world to devote money, time and sacrifice to get especially the gold medal.

Since my last lesson I have watched both winners and losers, how they celebrate and how they handle disappointment. There are many more losers than winners. Paul says, many run but only one gets the prize. Since then, the Olympics have added two more prizes, silver and bronze, but for many athletes it's only the gold that counts. In a previous world competition, I saw a team sport getting silver, and before stepping off the podium, one athlete removed his silver medal and tossed it aside in disgust in front of the officials. It wasn't gold, so to him it was nothing. Damian Warner is a Canadian decathlon track and field athlete. He is the 2020 Olympic champion and four-time world medalist. When he failed his pole-vaults with three tries, he withdrew from the competition, calling it his worst nightmare of his life. Later he told a reporter, "I will be better for it." There are many tears of disappointment, and always some, though they fail, say they will be back, or "I was honored just to be here", or "I did my best and I am proud of that." The best athletes don't always get the rewards—they may be having a bad day, a case of the nerves, or not feeling well—and so they miss their great moment.

What motivates Christians to follow Jesus and endure hardship and discipline? Why do we do it? Why spend a life-time following Jesus? Why did some of the first disciples die for Jesus in the end, destitute and in prison? What is their reward in the end? Paul tells us to run in such a way as to **get the prize**. What is that prize and when are we awarded the prize?

Seven times in Revelation chapters 2-3, Jesus reminds the churches that *overcoming*, and finishing strong was important. It's great to come out of the blocks with a good start, but our race is about finishing, and finishing strong, winning! Many start well but get sidetracked, occupied with things of the world, or fall out altogether. The prize is for those who finish.

There are many rewards along the race to encourage us. Appreciate them and hang in to the finish line to hear Jesus' *Well done good and faithful servant* Matthew 25:21. Here are a few more:

- Being a child of God 1 John 3:1
- The Lord is with us all the time and daily bears our burdens Psalm 68:18
- Forgiveness from all our sin never to be remembered Jeremiah 31:34
- The privilege of prayer, communion with God at any time Ephesians 3:12
- The Bible as our road map and practical instructions as we run to finish Psalm 119:105
- Running with companions and many witnesses watching and encouraging us Hebrew 12:1-3

Back to Revelation 2-3, Jesus lists seven rewards for the church's faithfulness, ending with, *the right to sit with me in my throne* 3:21. Paul reminds us in our Scripture why we persevere; ***we do it to get a crown that will last forever*** 9:25. Peter adds in 1 Peter 5:4 *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

*So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised* Hebrews 10:35-36. Olympic rewards are for a time, but the rewards Jesus offers are for now and for all eternity!

**Quote:** *In the Christian life it's not just how you start the race—what counts is how you finish*

### **Think About This:**

How is your race? Is there anything you need to change to finish your race well? You'll be glad you did!

### **A Prayer for You:**

Let's join Paul in this prayer: ***if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace*** Acts 20: 24.

### **My Notes and what To Pray for:**

Add your prayer requests here: yourself, family, church family, missionaries, & leaders in government

Note: All Scriptures are from the NIV Bible unless otherwise indicated

***Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful*** Colossians 4:2

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