

"Lungs and Breath: Inspiration and Exultation"

by Rev. John C. Tittle

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NRSV

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. ²⁵ Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; ²⁷ but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

Discussion Questions:

1. What jumps out at you about this passage?
2. Did/do you play any sports? What's your favorite sport to watch in the Olympics?
3. Today you hear more about "participation trophies" in kids sports where everyone gets an award. What do you think of this trend?
4. Paul uses an athletic metaphor to describe what a practicing faith looks like. How might we run the race of faith to win it? Does this mean there is only one winner? Are we trying to beat other people? Or is Paul using the metaphor differently?
5. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. How do we partner with the Holy Spirit to have more self-control in our lives?
6. Salvation and faith is a gift, yet God designs this gift to involve our response to his goodness. So what is this imperishable victory crown that we look forward to?
7. What should be our goal to focus our spiritual energies and training?
8. What do you think Paul means when he says that he "beats his body?" (Just for background, the Bible does not advocate a disdain for the human body, self-mutilation, or flagellation.) What is a spiritually healthy way of doing this?
9. What might this disqualification be? Is it disqualification from the prize or are we ourselves disqualified?
10. How might you exercise your faith more?