

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Christian Discipline Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time Friday, September 12, 2014
8:15 AM **1 Cor 9:16-19, 22b-27**; Lk 6:39-42 (The Most Holy Name of Mary) (We have to be tuned in every part of our being to Christ and to the work of the gospel.)

“No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

St. Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians is a rich letter. It’s full of many different teachings, most of them related to his own experience. In this particular section, he is comparing the work of being a Christian and spreading the gospel, which he identifies. **Being Christian is spreading the gospel; spreading the gospel is being a Christian.** They aren’t two different things. **There is one life, one vocation, one mission. It is spreading Christ.**

Now this he says—he is comparing it to the life of an athlete. He says, **look what athletes do**—look what they do. Look how they deprive themselves, how they work at their particular sport, how they train, how they fast, how they discipline themselves. He says: What do they get out of it? Just a withered little wreath. He is speaking of, of course, this little crown that was the original prize for Olympics, Olympic Games and other types of games, a little wreath or crown made of branches, leaves. Now days, of course, they get a lot of money. But even there, so what? He is saying, so what? **The leaves wither; the money is spent.**

What we are working for in spreading Christ is an imperishable crown. It’s something worth far more—and **he means it worth exerting physical discipline.** He is saying that the life of leisure or comfort is dangerous. This is something people have easily forgotten. It’s dangerous to get soft. It’s dangerous to get comfortable. **It’s dangerous to have an easy life.** Why? Because in an easy life we start to forget; **we start to forget what Christ is all about.** We start to forget who we really are. We start taking care of ourselves,

enjoying ourselves, indulging ourselves, and **we forget who we really are and what our work is.**

We are put on earth for the sake of the gospel he says—for the sake of the gospel. And to live a life of true stewardship and for the sake of the gospel means to be **alive and alert.** And one is not alive and alert if one is too comfortable. One gets sleepy and forgetful and soft. And pretty soon one can't do. Just like an athlete who doesn't keep practicing becomes soft and can't do anymore whatever sport he or she had been practicing, so it is with the Christian. **If we get soft, we can't do anymore what we have to do.** In other words, **Christian life requires not only moral discipline, not only spiritual discipline, but physical discipline. It's a whole package.** We have to be up to snuff in every way: mentally, morally, spiritual, physically. **We have to be tuned in every part of our being to Christ and to the work of the gospel.** So he says, "I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified."