**Sermon Date:** June 12, 2022

**Series:** The Physical Body

**Scripture:**  The Disciplined Body—Crown of Celery? Or Lasting Glory?

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

**24**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. **25**Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **26**So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. **27**But I discipline my body and keep it under control,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209%3A24-27&version=ESV#fen-ESV-28551a)] lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

**Big Idea:**  Self-control is not about looking good in the mirror; it’s about mirroring the good news of Christ to others.

**Summary:** We are in the midst of a series about the physical body, asking ourselves “What does God’s word say about our bodies?” Today Pastor Randy explored Paul’s exhortation to us that we *discipline* our bodies through the spirit working self-control in us. Pastor splits the sermon into two sections through questions: Section one asks, what does Paul mean when he talks about disciplining the body, that is, exercising self-control? Section two asks, why does it matter? Why should we care about disciplining the body? Randy describes the setting for the scripture for today’s sermon explaining Paul is using imagery the Corinthian people would have vividly understood: Paul asks them to imagine the Isthmian Games—these athletic competitions that took place in their city every two years where marvelous athletes competing in foot races, wrestling, feats of strength, and so forth, all in a carnival like atmosphere of vendors, and likely Paul, selling his leather goods in his own booths. The Corinthians would have easily pictured the athletes in a race, straining with bursting muscles, and laser vision on being the first to cross the finish line in order to, as Paul reminds them, be the ONE who wins the prize, in this case a wreath made of . . . . well, of celery, as Pastor demonstrated. [But, I am sure it looked cool!]. Paul uses the imagery of the competing athlete to answer the “What” about self-control: Self-control equals the agony of arresting the body’s appetites in all things. In fact, he furthers, an athlete *is* one who agonizes. So, the WHAT of the disciplined body is this: The disciplined body is one that does NOT simply yield to bodily appetites, but rather, for certain times and in certain ways, arrests, stops, holds off on bodily urges for comfort and satiation. But, why? Why would someone *want* to experience the agony of arresting bodily desires? That’s the second half of Pastor’s message: Again, Paul’s original audience, the Corinthians, would have well understood the *why* of why an athlete agonizes the body: They do it to win the prize, the wreath. The pleasure (and I suppose GLORY) of the wreath outweighed the cost of the agony. But here Paul challenges both us and the Corinthians to remember that the wreath the athletes willingly agonized over is perishable. Pastor Randy pointed out that the wreath—even before it was placed on the head of the winner—was already dead, perished, cut off [though I suppose it may have had an appearance of looking fresh for the moment]. Pastor’s exploration of Paul’s words sets us up for key questions to ask ourselves: What are we willing to agonize over? What is the wreath we are chasing? For what are we striving? What would be the point of not just normal human suffering, but of actually, momentarily afflicting ourselves by saying no to bodily urges? Pastor capstones his sermon with this thought: Self-control is not about looking good in the mirror [as an athlete certainly does], but it is about mirroring the good news of Christ to others. When we exercise self-control when a conversation turns to gossip (even though our flesh wants to hear more), when we put our body in agony by saying no to sexual sin or to hating others or seeking vengeance or spending more than we need on ourselves and ignoring the needs of others or willingly rejoice when others succeed or refuse the delicacy of pride, when we do all these things ***through the power and working of the Holy Spirit*,** *o*thers can see the image of Christ in us.

**Questions:**

1. How does Randy define “self-control” in his sermon? Does this definition make sense? Can anyone share
2. What are some of the common urges our body’s have? Obviously, these urges aren’t bad; we need them, so why is it we need to control these urges? Why not just do whatever they prompt us to do?
3. You may have already covered this in the previous question, but what is the fruit (or usual result) of NOT exercising self-control over the physical body and its urges? Can anyone share a short illustrative example from their lives?
4. How does modern media—both in its form and its messages—make self-control especially challenging?
5. Why does it take the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives in order for us to exercise self-control? Why do we need to rely on the Holy Spirit (who, remember, is equal in personhood to the Father and the Son) in order to have self-control?
6. Of course, many people exercise self-control over the flesh in order to win something greater. But often, these “greater” things are perishable and short lived. What are some perishable “wreaths” that people strive to win? Not that these things are necessarily bad, but what can be the problem with agonizing to win these temporary “wreaths”?
7. Randy alluded to two things that are IMPERISHABLE and thus worthy of the agony of self-control, people, and God. In what way does exercising self-control help us win regarding people and God in our lives?
8. Invite the Holy Spirit to do a work in your lives. Consider asking Him first of all to help you prioritize your life. What “wreaths” are you striving to win? There are many good things to strive for in this life, but what should come first? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you set first things first, and so forth.

Secondly, ask the Holy Spirit to help you exercise discipline/self-control in areas where you need it in your life. Where do you need self-control? Ask the Holy Spirit to come now and bear the fruit of discipline in that area. Consider asking a trusted Christian friend to help you pray for that specific area.