

Introduction:

1. I admit there are times when I might get confused about what day it is. But, I am not confused this evening in talking about the Super Bowl. I know Super Bowl LXVII was last week, not tonight.
 - a. I watched the game last Sunday evening (after worship). And what a game it was. The “lights out” thing brought a new element to the Super Bowl and nearly changed the whole thing. What an exciting game! That’s especially true if you were a Ravens fan!
 - b. I chose this title because every one of us is playing in our own personal Super Bowl right now.
 - c. You are in the championship game! This is your life right now. You are not on the practice field; you are not training for the big game later; this is not pre-season. It is all happening now.
 - d. This is your life, whether you are young or old. You get no time-outs, no overtime; though you could experience sudden death!
2. The question is this: Do you want to win in life? Do you want to be a champion? You can be!
 - a. I chose the example of the Super Bowl Championship because of this: The things that make for success on the football field are very much like what we need to win as Christians.
 - b. The Apostle Paul was a man who was familiar with sports; his writings reflect that familiarity as he talks about winning and how we should live as Christians, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.
 - c. Paul was a champion. If we are going to win, here are some qualities we must have!

The Lesson:**I. A Champion Possesses Passion.**

- A. If we are in this thing to win, then we must have the attitude and disposition of a winner.
 1. Paul says the runner runs to win—and that we should run in that way, 1 Corinthians 9:24b. Paul himself ran in that way, 1 Corinthians 9:26.
 2. Paul was passionate and purpose-driven! His focus was on Jesus, Hebrews 12:1-2.
 3. Paul had a desire that he expected to meet, Philippians 1:21-23.
- B. Paul was a champion—and champions are passionate!
 1. Last week we watched two teams play with real passion—passion for winning.
 2. The championship trophy is named after the great Green Bay coach, Vince Lombardi. He said, “Winning is not a sometime thing. You don't win once-in-a-while. You don't do things right once-in-a-while. You do them right all the time. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing. There is no room for second place. There is only one place in my game, and that is first place. I have finished second twice in my time at Green Bay, and I don't ever want to finish second again. There is a second place bowl game--but it is a game for losers played by losers. It is and always has been an American zeal to be the first in anything we do and to win, and to win, and to win.”
 3. That was Lombardi’s attitude. That was Paul’s attitude. Let it be ours also.

II. A Champion Exercises Self-Control.

- A. If you want to excel in life's most important endeavor, you need discipline, 1 Corinthians 9:25.
 - 1. Call it self-control or discipline; it matters not. Without it, you will never succeed at anything worthwhile. You will never develop as a Christian, never grow and never mature.
 - 2. Paul said he disciplined his body, 1 Corinthians 9:27. His mind ruled, not fleshly desire!
 - 3. He exhorted others to do the same, 1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 2:3-5.
- B. Are discipline and self-control easy? They would not be what they are if they were easy!
 - 1. Former Dallas coach, Tom Landry said, "The job of any football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be."
 - 2. Ken Weliever said, "Discipline puts feet to Christian passion to be a champion."

III. A Champion Is Committed and Focused.

- A. Do you view Christianity as a spectator sport or serious competition? See 1 Corinthians 9:26.
 - 1. Look at Paul's commitment and focus In Philippians 3:12-14 Paul said, "I press."
 - 2. There is no looking back, longing for the old life. We are committed to the new!!
- B. The Ravens and Forty-Niners were focused in spite of many distractions in the past weeks.
 - 1. Lombardi was right when he said, "The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor."
 - 2. So it is with the Christian. You can only win if you are committed and focused.

IV. A Champion Practices Self-Sacrifice.

- A. A price has to be paid to be a winner in any sport or any significant endeavor. It costs to win.
 - 1. There are things you must give up. The whole point is sacrifice, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.
 - 2. You have to throw off anything that hinders you, Hebrews 12:1.
- B. But note this: You are only getting rid of stuff that hurts you! See Ephesians 4:17-32. What do you need to give up in order to become a champion? Think about you!

V. A Champion Perseveres to the End.

- A. In that Super Bowl game the halftime score was 21-6. Should the team with six points quit?
 - 1. It got worse. The Ravens scored on the opening kickoff of the third quarter. Quit now?
 - 2. Champions don't quit. Both teams are champions, but only one can win the Super Bowl.
- B. But in your Super Bowl and mine, everybody can win, 1 Corinthians 9:24.
 - 1. Paul makes a contrast between the winner in the games and our winning. Everyone can win, but none of us can quit and win! We persevere, Hebrews 12:1.
 - 2. We endure in spite of hardship, unfair treatment, misery, sickness—we endure!

Conclusion:

- 1. The Ravens can brag that they are champions. But, a thousand years from now, no one will care!
- 2. You are different and will always care about yourself. Jesus has given you a big lead. Don't blow it.