**“Exercise”**

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Isaiah 40:21-31

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

Mark 1:29-39

Epiphany 5

From 1st Corinthians, the, now, **9th** chapter: “Do you not know that in a **race** all the runners compete, but only one **receives the prize**? **So run** that **you may obtain it**. Every athlete **exercises** self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but **we an imperishable**. So I do not run **aimlessly**; I do not box as one **beating the air**. But I **discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified**.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

I address, today, a roomful of what the Apostle Paul calls **runners**. We are **exercisers of efforts** … competing … at least **moving**. We flow from one thing (crawling out of bed by alarm or sun) to another: coffee or breakfast, then to work or school through activities one after another … walking some yet largely **bustling** at speeds mostly not relaxing. So we get tired because we’re busy … and too speedily busy. We’re busy because we assume we must be (by responsibility and yet sometimes just in a busy-ness that this culture encourages). When we take breaks, we might (what’s called) “crash”. But sleep is, often, not very restful or it might be excessive since that’s how bodies deal with what’s a seeming non-stop stressful schedule of movement. Entertainment is sought to be “escapist”, yet sometimes (and I don’t understand this) “reality” (but others “reality” which means watching others being busy oddly enough). But, at least (we think), our busyness can be different experiencing theirs … an, again, escape from one type of busyness to another. Even if our bodies are immobile for portions of our **“exercising” of this life**, our minds and, bigger, our souls and spirit may not be, really, “resting”.

**Text**

We’re called to “run” and “exercise” and “do”. Yet we’re not call (at all) to be doing any of that wastefully, but do all of it **equipped with strength that’s of and from the divine Heavens** where rest and restfulness grant a Source by which the will to **“run” is for a “run” appropriate**. “Self-control” (that can only really come from God’s control) provides divine “discipline”, and that divine “discipline” makes **efforts “fruitful” and guaranteed to be Good and useful rather than just what Paul labeled a** “**boxing of air**”. It’s **promised to us** through the Means of being in God through Christ, and we’ll hear it again from that Old Testament text, (the first verses of the Gospel of Isaiah). I personally don’t know of any way to slow down “pace” unless one acquires a different sense of a “pace” that’s eternal but certainly not stagnant (which is Paul’s call and point). **Focused it is** and **purposeful** and **useful** by God’s building of that focus and purpose (or Mission) and usefulness. It is, then, **satisfying** and not fleeting or momentary, but **helpful** to even our own restfulness as well as the restfulness under God of our spouses and kids or parents and friends … therefore, for us in line with Jesus, not **lame movement, but pointed and restful to our own body and soul and spirit**.

**Godless stagnation** is, (in all our texts) **warned against** while **wise (deliberate) MOVEMENT** is **expected and promised to be prospered**. One thing that concerned Paul, he said, is that all of his “exercising” for others’ benefit might take his eyes off of his own eternal “rest”, so he points, first, to the gift that he inherited in the fact that **exercising Christ** in oneself fills us to then **be** **blessed** and **a blessing**. To a different city, Paul warned how wasteful an inappropriate quest would be, and he aimed (not at all) to seek any “approval of men”, but of God alone (letting all other things take their course from that). He knew that it would be sufficient to rest in God as his, then, “full tank” would “spill out” from that start with what’s Godly in God’s Words which then equips, by promise, an energized “drive” Godly useful for others … doing Good from all the Good that he’d gotten (and ever sought to continue getting). Paul was helpful to this world for God by the feeding of God’s Word to, first himself, be **blessed to be a blessing / divinely at peace, energized to bring such peace to market-places and homesteads, to old friends and new acquaintances**. For ourselves and our welfare, and the divinely-Good welfare of our homes and enterprises, **we** are promised filled with God’s Word to then energetically benefit others by a **divine movement of God’s Word and will**. It is **THAT** to which Paul **well recognizes for himself for us**, and **insists upon for himself and us**.

Paul talks about a **“run” positive** as God’s **building of “self-control within a person in all things” … a “discipline” and “exercise” (“run” literally, yet not, so much of speed as divine purpose) headed for a “wreath that’s imperishable” because it’s in the One who died, but now lives, Jesus (God’s Son). You are (right now) in positive motion (even though seated), ears touched so, with that, body and soul and spirit touched and renewed by God’s promise to provide that / a rest (in Christ), being “exercised” in it … and expressed as an “exercised” movement that’s equipped from it …**

**… and all of that because “exercise”** never **stops in, just, the hearing** … just **strengthened for it that way / energized as the Word’s promised to do that upon its hearing**.

**Application**

And this is where **“Mission” gets its language**. “Mission” is **the business (not the wasteful busyness, but purposeful business / the “exercising” of what God fills us with as we hear it, gaining it to, then, move with it outward**. Paul’s always been considered a great “Missionary” because he exemplified God’s Word in **MOTION** in remembrance of what all he’d been given every time God’s Word spoke to him, continuing to focus him on gaining it further by further hearing himself, then taking that same Word to where it was needed to purposefully let it spill out from his joy toward others’ potential joy.

And I don’t ever remember him becoming overly tired within that “run”, moving always seemingly with the **energy that we’re all promised for the motion and strength of God’s Mission of movement**. From Isaiah: “The Lord is an everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. **He** does not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable. And **He** **GIVES** **power to the faint**, and to **him who has no might He**” (again, God, the Almighty and willing One) “**He** **increases strength**. **They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint**.” ….

From our Gospel reading in Mark 1, Jesus is shown quite willing to heal the mother-in-law of Peter … then **help her up to “get busy” … to, as it says, “serve them”**. Maybe that’s a **good** **perspective for our day**. It is, **today**, God’s day for us to **REST IN HIM** (which, by the way, **any day is** as **He puts in us a rest and peace through His Word**). But our day of rest in Him does, then, expect a **movement from our hearing**. God’s “Mission” through us so strengthened is to gather more (so many more) for the same healing and strength and purpose that we’re promised and get ,,, to “**RUN**” **in that effort and purpose**.

We have (as most every church does) un-used seats … and they are all available and begging to provide the God-given rest and energy that many of your friends and acquaintances would **love to have if you’d just help to settle them in to gain it**. It’s just a thought, but **MOVE IN GOD’S RENEWING STRENGTH** to fill the back seats of your cars (and take chances to make this happen, putting to “exercise” God’s promised divine power) to gain passengers by your divinely-energized movement. Have them “climb into the car” by your deliberate and efforted invitation. Have them ride with you and sit next to you for God’s Word and peace. “**Run**” / “**exercise**” and **watch God make this world useful**. **Let God’s “Mission” / God’s be (in all ways) also our own**. In +Jesus’ name. Amen.