

# Faith Factor

## Why Not the Best? – The Athlete

February 25, 2024



2 Peter 1:5-8 (CEV) – “**Do your best to improve your faith.** You can do this by adding goodness, understanding, self-control, patience, devotion to God, concern for others, and love. If you keep growing in this way, it will show that what you know about our Lord Jesus Christ has made your lives useful and meaningful.”

2 Timothy 2:1-7 (TLB) “Timothy, my son, be strong with the strength Christ Jesus gives you. For you must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will, in turn, pass them on to others. Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, just as I do; and as Christ’s soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in worldly affairs, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army. Follow the Lord’s rules for doing his work, just as an athlete either follows the rules or is disqualified and wins no prize. Work hard like a farmer who gets paid well if he raises a large crop. Think over these three illustrations, and may the Lord help you to understand how they apply to you.”

## The Athlete

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (TLB/NLT) – “In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win. To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things that would keep you from doing your best. An athlete goes to all this trouble just to win a blue ribbon or a silver cup, but we do it for a heavenly reward that never disappears. So, I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I fight to win. I’m not just shadowboxing or playing around. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”

### 1. Intends to \_\_\_\_\_.

1 Corinthians 9:24 (TLB) – “In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT) – “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done.”

Revelation 22:11-12 (NLT) – “Let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy. “Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds.”

2 Timothy 2:21 (TLB) – “If you stay away from sin you will be like one of these dishes made of purest gold—the very best in the house—so that Christ himself can use you for his highest purposes.”

### 2. \_\_\_\_\_ themselves.

1 Corinthians 9:25, 27 (TLB/NLT) – “To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things that would keep you from doing your best. An athlete goes to all this trouble just to win a blue ribbon or a silver cup, but we do it for a heavenly reward that never disappears. So, I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should.”

Romans 8:28 (NLT) – “We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

## God’s Power

- “For I can do everything through Christ, **who gives me strength.**”  
Philippians 4:13 (NLT)
- “Each time he said, My grace is all you need. **My power** works best in weakness... For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NLT)
- “**He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.** Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the LORD will find **new strength.**” Isaiah 40:29-31 (NLT)
- “I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources **he will empower you** with inner strength through his Spirit.” Ephesians 3:16 (NLT)
- “**God is our refuge and strength**, always ready to help in times of trouble.” Psalm 46:1 (NLT)
- “For God is working in you, **giving you the desire and the power** to do what pleases him.” Philippians 2:13 (NLT)
- “The angel told me to give Zerubbabel this message from the LORD: **“You will succeed, not** by military might or **by your own strength, but by my spirit.**” Zechariah 4:6 (GNV)
- “Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with **all the strength and energy that God supplies.**” 1 Peter 4:11 (NLT)
- “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. **I will strengthen you and help you.** I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 (NLT)

### 3. Stays \_\_\_\_\_.

Hebrews 12:2 (GW) – “We must focus on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. He saw the joy ahead of him, so he endured death on the cross and ignored the disgrace it brought him. Now he holds the honored position—the one next to God the Father on the heavenly throne.”

1 Corinthians 9:26 (TLB) – “I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I fight to win. I’m not just shadowboxing or playing around.”

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (NLT) – “The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.”

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