

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



Team All Saints, St Paul's advice and the Olympics!

Team GB were very successful in the Olympics last month and I'm confident that they will be very successful in the Paralympics this month. Although it is a very proud personal moment when a medal is won or an athlete has done well there is a large team behind the person involved, with family and friends, trainers coaches, physiotherapists and others who have helped and encouraged the competitors on their way. Medals are given to individuals but are counted as national medals and the anthem of that particular nation is played, not the person's particular favourite tune/ song!

St Paul, when describing a Christian used the metaphor of an athlete

1 Corinthians 9: 24-27:

"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. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are 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".

Philippians 3:3-4:

"I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"

Paul would not have known of the Olympic Games, which took place every four years

at the centre of Greece; but he probably would have known the games held in Isthmia, very close to Corinth. Paul knew about the preparations of the city, the training of the athletes, the competitive nature and even possibly scandals of sport.

Paul's letters are rich in metaphor and quite a few are about sport. Perhaps the word 'crown' (*stephanos* in Greek) has a variety of meanings, but one of them is the prize won by athletes in the games; a medal, or even, where the context is right, the 'gold medal'. In 1 Thessalonians, which is probably the earliest surviving epistle of Paul, 2:19, when he describes the Thessalonian Christians as '*a gold medal to boast about*'.

Can we feel that Team All Saints is getting there? What would it take for us to be seen as a gold medal community?

In Galatians, he is cross with the church there, he reproaches them for having lost their initial enthusiasm: '*you were running nicely*', he complains (5:7) but now.....!

Did Paul construct tents for the athletes at the Isthmian games and so in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

"Don't you realise that the runners in the Stadium, all of them run, but only one gets the medal? You are to run in such a way as to win. Everyone who is in athletic training exercises self-control (but they do it to win a medal that will fade away...!); so I am running in such a way as not to be without purpose. When I box, I do it in such a way as not to land my blows on empty air – instead I let my body know who is boss, and I make it my slave..."

The Corinthians must be serious about their mission, as serious as athletes are about their training (and as Paul is about his preaching).

Philippians (1:27-30), written from a Roman prison, yet his most joyful letter, addresses some Christians who have been fighting. He wants them to be *'working together'*. The Greek word for *'working together'* here, difficult to translate as it means something like *'playing on the same side together in an athletics contest'*, uses that metaphor again, incidentally, at 4:3, when he is trying to persuade two women to stop arguing *'They played on the same team as me and Clement, and the rest of our team'*.

In 2:28 he says: *'Don't be intimidated by your opponents'*, which has been the despairing mantra of every coach up against another team. *'We are engaged on the same agon'*. Now an *'agon'* refers to any kind of athletics contest and an *'agony'* is what you go through when you are in deep training for the Olympics. Paul talking again in athletic terms of *'my boast...that I did not run a pointless race, nor was all my hard training pointless'*, and he is happy to have been through it all for the sake of the Philippians and their joy (2:17-18).

Paul encourages them to keep going in the race towards Christ *"I haven't yet got it, nor have I already peaked [in my training] ... stretching out for what is ahead ... rushing towards the finishing-line (target)"*.

May we also build ourselves up through sharing in the Christian community and its worshipping and prayer life so that we may be strong in living out the demands of the Gospel and in achieving the fullness of the eternal life that God gives to his people.
Love, Jo

Monthly Thursday Lunch

Would you be interested in helping in putting on a monthly Thursday Lunch at All Saints?

I am hoping that once a month, on the first Thursday of the month, after our Thursday Holy Communion service at 12.00 noon, to serve a light lunch of homemade soup and rolls or sandwiches. A few people have already volunteered but it would be great to have a few more people to join the team.

Our Holy Communion Service is growing in numbers, around 20 and so, and many of us go home and eat lunch by ourselves I thought that it would be great to share a light lunch together. This would be served at the back of church using our new space and tables and chairs. Others may also want to drop in and join us and they would be most welcome.

Please get in touch with me if you would like to know more or would like to help out, even if you can only help once a quarter.

Love, Jo
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