

Devotion 9
Eyes on the Prize

Monday, Week Two

So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. (2 Corinthians 9:5)

I really got into running when I was in the 7th & 8th grade. I ran races at track meets, and I found myself especially wanting to run sprints faster and faster and faster. It just so happened that the time of day I was free to do my sprint work was when a local high school track team was out on the track. The sprinters were some really “cool” guys. And they honestly wanted to help me get faster. (I think it’s a sprinter thing.) Well, amid all the different advice they gave me, one thing still stands out: “You’ve got to keep your head up. If you drop your head all your energy goes down. You’ve got to point your energy where you want to go. You’ve got to keep your eyes on the prize.” And they were right. My times were incredibly faster when I kept my head up with my eye square on the prize, running as straight a race as possible with all my energy pointing to the place I wanted to go.

The Bible says much the same thing with respect to our salvation and growth in our faith and life in Christ. Hebrews 12:1+2—“*...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”

I believe one of the lessons from 2 Corinthians is that our loving Heavenly Father would guide us in the same way with respect to our stewardship. Paul is urging the Corinthian Christians to “*finish the arrangements for the generous gift . . . so it will be ready as a gift and not as one grudgingly given.*” It is as if St. Paul is saying, “Keep your eyes on the prize. Focus on the task at hand. Let your Lord have His way with you. Get all the ‘nuts and bolts’ things done with respect to working it out in your life. Let His Word have its way with you as you wrestle with its meaning in your life. Get it done. Make your decisions—decisions you can joyfully embrace and rejoice in because, by grace through faith, you have ‘*kept your eye on the prize*’ and followed through to be ready when the time came.”

Interestingly, these words are written before, not after, a section in the text which talks about “sowing generously.” It is as if Paul is saying, “Keep your head up, run the straight race as you let the following words from God guide you.” As we look to give joyfully, proportionally, sacrificially, and meaningfully from the heart, as we work to figure out what this means in our lives and how we will go about doing it, as we search the Scriptures to guide us and empower us, it is a comfort, is it not, that God Himself would be pleased? For through these things we “keep our eyes on the prize” as we look to step out in faith as God would guide us.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, when I am tempted to doubt the value of the study, work, and effort in this stewardship emphasis, help me to “keep my eyes on the prize,” and trust that through these things You will work to have Your way with each of us in our lives of stewardship to Your glory and our great good. I ask this in the name of Jesus, the Author and Perfector of my faith. Amen!