

by John Chasteen

At a Glance

So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 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.”

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Corinthians 9:26-27, NLT

What’s up with Paul and the struggle with his flesh? Shouldn’t this spiritual giant have been beyond such a struggle? Why would he need to take drastic measures to control his body?

As Christians we are called to discipline our bodies. By “discipline” I mean to take charge of urges motivated by the flesh. Whether we like it or not, the Word is clear that we are to control our fleshly desires.

So why does Paul make such an extreme statement? Mainly because he knows our bodies are not yet redeemed and that they have the potential to impede our spiritual progress.

In verse 27, when referring to the discipline of his own body, Paul uses a strong Greek word to get his point across. The word *hupopeadzo* conveys the idea of handling roughly or forcing into submission. This was Paul’s attitude toward his flesh.

Romans 8:9-10 tells us that because of sin our bodies are dead. The verses are not referring to physical death but rather to the fact that our bodies are not alive to God, that they do not want to participate in spiritual matters.

For instance, the physical body has no desire to pray or worship. It is dead, so to speak, to the things of God and must be made to cooperate.

As a matter of fact, Paul goes on to explain that our bodies are somewhat unspiritual. Not in the sense that the human body is unprofitable or bad, but rather in the sense that the principle of sin operates through the unredeemed physical body, thus making it not spiritual.

Sin working through the body also can easily sidetrack our spiritual progress. Romans 6:12-13 says: "Do not let sin control the way you live. ... Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin."

If left undisciplined, the body will become an instrument through which sin can dominate.

Paul clearly understood the need to discipline his body, and he took drastic measures to ensure that he kept it in check.

If this great man of God needed to discipline his body, we certainly need to bring ours into subjection—especially since failure to do so can lead to

disqualification.

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