

A pair of worn, dark red boxing gloves hanging from a rope against a dark background. The gloves are made of leather and show signs of use, with some scuffing and discoloration. The laces are visible on the top of the gloves. The background is dark and slightly out of focus, emphasizing the gloves.

Greater Victories

David Brandt Berg

GREATER VICTORIES

David Brandt Berg

A Mountain Streams book

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations in this booklet are from the New King James Version, © 1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc. References marked “KJV” are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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INTRODUCTION

“Victory isn’t simply walking across the goal line; it’s struggling through opposition to reach the goal.” That’s just as true of the Christian’s spiritual life as it is of sports, with this one important difference: In the spiritual struggle the victory goes to those who depend on the Lord’s strength and abilities, rather than their own.

To be a *winning* Christian, you can’t just sit there like a spectator; you need to get in shape and stay in shape spiritually. To be a champion, you need to train like a champion. Put in contemporary terms, the apostle Paul explained it like this: “In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win. To win the contest you must [lay aside anything] 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 shadow-boxing or playing around” (1 Corinthians 9:24–26 TLB).

David Brandt Berg has inspired tens of thousands to become winning Christians. If you’re out to win, **Greater Victories** will help you do just that!

Run the Race

A Bible Study on Hebrews 12:1

“**W**herefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which [does] so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”¹

The original text of this epistle was not divided into chapters. The translators did that. So you've got to keep in mind the preceding chapter in order to understand what “great cloud of witnesses” Paul is talking about. It is Hebrews chapter 11, of course, which some people refer to as the “Faith Hall of Fame.” Paul is referring to all the saints who have already gone on to be with the Lord. And they're not only watching us, they're praying for us. They are like our cheering section in the heavenly stadium, cheering for their team—you and me and everyone

¹ Hebrews 12:1 KJV

else who is serving the Lord. Whenever one of us scores a goal, they really cheer! Whenever one of us wins a soul, all the angels in Heaven rejoice.¹

Think how wonderful it is that there are millions of witnesses up there in Heaven, all watching and praying for us. Sometimes the Lord even has them come down here to help us. *This* life is where the real action is, where the big tests and battles are taking place. Once you leave this life there are other things in store for you, but this life provides the primary tests. This is what the whole universe is watching, the big game, the World Cup! So since they are all watching us, what should we do? Paul explains:

“Let us lay aside every weight.” What are the weights?—The things that slow us down, that hinder us from getting the job done. The Lord allows us to wear those weights for a while, to strengthen us. Sometimes runners wear weights while training, in order to build up their muscles. Then, when they take the weights off, they feel like they can almost fly! So sometimes the Lord allows us to wear a few weights to test us and strengthen our spiritual muscles. But when they have served their purpose, then it’s time to lay them aside and run the race.

“And the sin which does so easily beset us.” What is sin?—Not doing the *most* important thing God wants us to do, the way He wants us to do it—not hitting the bull’s eye, the center of His will. So, “let

¹ Luke 15:10

us lay aside the weights and the sins”—anything that holds us back from doing our best to be what God wants us to be.

Then, after laying aside all these weights and distractions and sins, what are we supposed to do? “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” You have to *do* God’s will; you have to *do* God’s work! As long as you are doing the job He has for you, as long as you’re doing His will, you’re running the race.

You can only “run with patience” if you have faith and are trusting the Lord. If you didn’t have patience, you would lose heart and quit, wouldn’t you? You’d say, “I’m tired of doing all this hard work, especially when people never thank me and don’t appreciate me and don’t realize what a hard job this is!” If you didn’t have patience, you couldn’t do it. In another epistle Paul encourages us: “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”¹

It’s a race in which some are going to win more than others. Some are going to receive greater rewards than others do. It may be because they performed their duties faithfully and well, even if they weren’t able to do a lot of public outreach and witnessing. I think that some of the little people who do the most unseen jobs in the Lord’s service are perhaps going to get rewarded the most one of these days. They are the ones who will step forward to receive their medals, rewards, and crowns from

¹ Galatians 6:9

Jesus. For the first time, they will get everything that they deserve, and the whole universe is going to hear about their faithfulness to Jesus!

Picture this: At the sound of a drum roll, a woman steps forward to receive her reward. “Who is that? I never heard of her!”

“Don’t you know? That is one of the volunteer office workers who helped make a wonderful outreach ministry possible!”

Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! Out step some others. “Who are they?”

“Those are some print shop workers. If they hadn’t been diligent in their work, a lot of Gospel literature would never have been printed.”

Dum-ta-dum-ta-dum! “And who are all those people?”

“They operated and maintained the computer systems that furthered the Gospel, repaired the Christian volunteers’ cars, organized relief work, taught children about Jesus, sponsored missionaries, and did countless other jobs.”

So we’re to “run with patience the race that is set before us,” which is serving the Lord however and wherever He has called us. And the only way we can have the patience we need to run and win this race is by doing what? “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”¹ So keep your eyes on Jesus!

¹ Hebrews 12:2

Love Never Fails

All the introspection, analyzing, and agonizing over your weaknesses, failures, and faults are merely works of the flesh that will have to be repeated next week. Battles never cease! “*Many* are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”¹

Only God can do it! Our salvation is only by grace, never by our own works or battling in the flesh with our sins. If *God* can't deliver us, nobody can!

If you're trying to attain a state of sinless perfection, you're doomed to disappointment. You'll *never* make it! Not even the apostle Paul counted himself to have attained.² He kept making mistakes for the rest of his life and committed a classic blunder by trying to please the conservative religious leaders of his day. That permanently cost him his freedom, and ultimately his head.³ Nevertheless, he was

¹ Psalm 34:19

² Philippians 3:12

³ Acts chapter 21

a good apostle and faithful evangelist who did a tremendous job in spite of all his shortcomings, failures, sins, and mistakes.

If you think the time's coming when you'll no longer have to fight sin and the "old self,"¹ you're mistaken. *I'm* still at it. How about you? That's why we have so many victories: We have so many battles, and so much to fight against—mostly our own stinking selves! God knows we should be growing, passing a few tests, surviving a few trials, and having a few triumphs and testimonies, but if you think you're ever going to become some sort of "sinless saint," I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed!

Remember, love never fails. I have a hard time correcting other people for the same mistakes that I'm guilty of myself, and of which most of us are guilty—and sometimes even worse. So about all I can do is bawl them out momentarily, confess what a horrible mess I have made along the same line, cry a little, pray a little and sympathize a little; then we hug each other, forgive each other, and try again.

"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."²—And, let's face it, you've got plenty of them! I think you are going to find out sooner or later that the "thorn in the flesh"³ that God is going to use to keep you humble is some besetting sin which will take a lot of the grace of God for you to keep overcom-

¹ Ephesians 4:22

³ 2 Corinthians 12:7

² Matthew 6:15

ing, and you'll probably keep battling it for the rest of your days. This is what helps keep us in shape spiritually. As I've often said, "There's no triumph without a trial, no testimony without a test, no victory without a battle—so keep fighting!"

You're bound to win sometimes, and when you lose, it will keep you humble and help others to know you're only human—and it will help you to give *God* all the glory! I do not believe in the doctrines of eradication of sin or mere suppression of sin and temptation that some people teach, but rather in the good old Bible doctrine of habitation: "Christ *in* you, the hope of glory."¹ Jesus declared, "Without Me you can do nothing."² He even said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do."³ And Paul later wrote of Him, "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."⁴ The "holiness" doctrine of eradication is all too often a vain show of self-righteous, sanctimonious, holier-than-thou hypocrisy!

You might as well face it: You can't get the victory! It's *impossible* for you to get the victory! Only Christ can. Let go and let God! You can't do it yourself. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."⁵ Only God can give salvation. You can't earn it, work for it, work

¹ Colossians 1:27³ John 5:19⁵ Ephesians 2:8–9² John 15:5⁴ Hebrews 5:8

it up, pray it down, pray it through, or become so wholly sanctified that you're some kind of sinless saint!

You haven't got anybody's righteousness except Christ's, and He's the only One who can give it to you. Your own righteousness stinks! It's "filthy rags."¹ So quit trying so hard in your own strength! Let God do it. Let the light in, and the darkness will flee of itself.

Get so full of the Spirit and the Word that you don't have time to worry about your own stinking self or how bad you are. Of course you're bad! So are all the rest of us! Only Jesus is good! I gave up on myself a long time ago, like Paul did when he said, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"² Hallelujah! He's the only One who can do it!

You're glorifying Satan when you talk about your sins. You're glorifying self when you talk about your faults, because you're talking about yourself instead of Jesus.

You just can't possibly tell people how bad you are, so quit trying. Let's talk about Jesus! And let's avoid being harsh on others for poor little blunders of the mind rather than sins of the heart. Let's forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.³

¹ Isaiah 64:6

³ Ephesians 4:32

² Romans 7:17–25

We all need to apply to ourselves what Jesus said to the self-righteous hypocrites: “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’”¹ So for God’s sake, let’s remember that only Jesus can do it. Let’s quit trying to legislate righteousness. It’s a gift of God! Let God do it! Love never fails! Jesus never fails! What everybody needs is *love*. If they’re not going to find it with Jesus and amongst His followers, you and me, where are they going to find it?

¹ Matthew 9:13

Dumps

This morning I was discouraged and frustrated about something. My wife sensed it, so she cheerfully began to sing this chorus:

Cheer up, you saints of God, there's nothing to
worry about,
Nothing to make you feel afraid, nothing to
make you doubt!
Our God has never failed, so why not trust Him
and shout?
You'll be glad you trusted Him tomorrow!

The problem is that when we're downcast, if we start talking about the situation, we usually end up voicing our complaints and doubts and speaking defeat. That's what I did when I replied half-jokingly: "Fold up, ye saints of God, there's nothing to be happy about!" I was just singing it lightheartedly, but it was really the way I was feeling—and it was kind of nice for a while. "Poor me!"