

### Introduction:

For a moment imagine a football team. This is not your normal Monday Night Football team. It's the Bad News Bears of football. The quarterback only wants to do two things: run with the ball as long as he can (it doesn't matter which direction) or throw the ball as far as he can (again, it doesn't actually matter which direction). On occasion, he scores; usually, he gets sacked, fumbles the ball, or throws it away. The offensive line isn't too worried about blocking the defensive line. They just want to get their hands on the ball. When the ball is hiked they all turn around and start hollering the quarterback's name. Sometimes, they want the ball so badly they chase down their own quarterback to get it. The wide receiver just loves to run. Sometimes he happens to be where the ball is thrown; sometimes not. The defensive back is pretty good. He has even made a few interceptions, but when he does, he just runs to the nearest end zone whether it is his team's or not. There is one defensive lineman, a big fellow, who plays football because he likes to hit people. The play may be over, but he's still hitting people, especially if they have the ball. Do you know what we call this? We call this Peewee League.

What is the problem here? They don't really understand what the win is. Certainly, they usually understand that whoever has the most points at the end wins the game, but they don't understand what their role in that is. As they grow in maturity and understanding, they'll begin to see the win. Of course, we've all seen players who never quite get it. For them the win is to showboat or dominate. They're ball hogs and glory hounds. They feel good about themselves but their team loses. We can easily see how awful this is in sports. I recently heard a great phrase these folks need to learn: Clarify the Win. That is exactly what sports teams need to do. They need to clarify their win at every level, from the season win, to the game win, to the play win, to the individual's role win. If they don't do that, they're going to lose.

Sadly, for too many years, I think I've been a peewee league Christian. The spiritual ball has been snapped to me and I haven't fully thought through what I'm supposed to do with it. I walk through the days, weeks, months, and years trying to do the right thing as I react to what goes on around me without thinking about what exactly the measurable win for me as a Christian is. What do I need to do this year to win? How will I know when I have won? What is my win as an individual Christian? What is my win as a member of this congregation? What is my win as a preacher for this congregation? Have you thought about this for your life? Or are you also lingering in the peewee leagues of Christianity? If you want to have a great year in God's service, then you need to clarify your win in 2010.

Consider **Philippians 3:1-4:1**. Notice that Paul clarified his win and it helped him tremendously.

### Discussion:

- I. Paul clarified his win.
  - A. According to **Philippians 3:14**, Paul was pressing on for the prize of God's heavenly call. In **Philippians 3:11**, I believe we see that prize—the resurrection from the dead. That resurrection was not simply life after death. In **Philippians 3:20-21**, he explained that resurrection was having this earthly body transformed into a glorious body by the Savior that will come from heaven, where his citizenship was. Paul knew his ultimate win—resurrection to eternal life.
  - B. However, he clarified his daily win as well. It would do no good to wait until the moment he stood in judgment to start thinking about how to gain the ultimate win. He needed to think about a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly win that would lead to that ultimate victory. He explains the clarified win that motivated his daily choices. In **Philippians 3:8-10**, he claimed his win as an individual Christian was to know Jesus, be found in Jesus, and have the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus. He wasn't concerned about impressing people. He wasn't concerned about making money. He wasn't concerned about living high on the hog. He was concerned about getting close to Jesus. That is what mattered. That is the only thing that mattered.
- II. Clarifying the win helped Paul press on.
  - A. In **Philippians 3:12-14**, Paul claimed he had not won, but was pressing on for it. If he hadn't clarified the win, he wouldn't be able to do this. You can't pursue a goal you haven't named.
  - B. Further, he was able to forget what lay behind in order to press on for the win. Clarifying the win helped him keep everything in perspective. Past victories and losses wouldn't get in his way because his vision was focused on the win that was to come. Reminiscing did not blur his vision.

- C. When we haven't clarified the win, we may think we're already there and have nothing more to do. But Paul knew better. He urged the brethren to understand this same win and through that to stand firm in the Lord (**Philippians 4:1**). When we know what our win is, we can keep pressing on for it instead of wandering aimlessly through life.
- III. Clarifying the win helped him declutter his spiritual life.
- A. We spend too much time asking questions about what we are allowed to do and what we aren't. Because Paul had clarified his win, he had a very simple answer. His win was to know Jesus, be found in Jesus, and have the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus. He would do anything that led to that win. He cut out anything that hindered that win. **Philippians 3:7-8** says he counted everything that had been gain to him before he understood the real victory as loss for the sake of knowing Jesus.
- B. He discarded reliance upon rituals, nationality, family background. He discarded his own zeal and righteous living by the law. He discarded his place in the Jewish community. He gave up goals that wouldn't help him get closer to Jesus. He wasn't doing this as a means to show how good he was or to earn salvation. He understood that salvation is in Jesus and he would do anything to be in Jesus and give up everything that hindered him being in Jesus. Clarifying the win helped him declutter his spiritual life.
- IV. Clarifying the win pushed him to have the right companions.
- A. In **Philippians 3:17-19**, Paul taught the Philippians to take note of those who were gaining the win. Keep your eye on them, he says. Watch them. Be with them. Learn from them. Be careful because there are many who are really enemies of Jesus. They won't help you get in Jesus because they are opposed to Him. You can tell who they are because their god is their belly. That is, their fleshly passions drive them (even if they "go to church"). They glory in shame. Their end is destruction. Their end is not resurrection in Jesus. Their end is not a glorified body. Their end is death. Our friends really do determine the direction and character of our life.
- B. Paul was passing on a lesson he had clearly learned. If we want to win, we need to note and be with those who are winning. Brothers and sisters, this does not mean attend the right church. Every church has people at every spiritual level. Just attending even a church that has lots of winning members is not what Paul is talking about. What this means is take note of the folks who are accomplishing your win. Keep your eye on them. Spend time with them outside of this building so you can see how they live their winning life. Find someone who is accomplishing the win you want to gain and watch how they are doing it. Then do what they do.
- C. When we've clarified our win, we'll know who we need to spend our time with.
- V. Clarifying your win at every level.
- A. We must make sure to take this to every level in our lives. This was Paul's win as a Christian. However, I believe his win as an evangelist might be seen in passages like **I Corinthians 9:22-23** or **II Timothy 4:1-2**.
- B. Take some time this week to clarify your ultimate win as an individual Christian. Also clarify your win for 2010. What specifically within the realm of knowing Christ and being found in Him do you want to work on this year? Clarify your win for your role within this congregation, whether you are an elder, deacon, preacher, teacher, greeter, inviter, pray-er, etc.
- C. Let's not spend 2010 as Peewee league Christians or as a Peewee league church. Let's step up into the big leagues, clarify our wins and by God's grace win the victory.

### Conclusion:

I know sometimes it seems like we just aren't going to win. However, I want to remind you of what Paul said in **Philippians 2:12-13**, Paul explained that we can keep working out our salvation with fear and trembling, not because we really are strong enough to work out our salvation. We can do that because God is working in us. Trust God's promise on this. Clarify your win based on God's word. Press on for that goal and God will work in you to accomplish it. You will win.