



Fighting Above Your Weight

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 KJV I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: [27] But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

I. INTRODUCTION—FIGHTING ABOVE YOUR WEIGHT

-A few days ago, I ran across a statement that arrested my attention. In fact, I had never even heard of this phrase before. It was, “he is fighting above his weight.” So I begin to seek out an answer as to what this concept really meant.

-When I “googled” it, I was sent to various websites that had to do with boxing and those trainers who developed boxers. All of the sites seemed to indicate that fighting above your weight meant that you were fighting an opponent who was bigger, meaner, and had the capacity to knock your brains out.

-But there was a disclaimer that was given in the midst of defining this idea. It gave the thought that there were fighters in the past who managed to fight beyond their abilities and win the battle against an opponent who was intimidating to them.

-They had been outmanned and outgunned from the outset but they kept on fighting above their weight until the victory had been secured. Through rigorous self-discipline, reaching above the obstacles, and pressing on ahead of the hindrances, they were victorious.

-There are things that all of us can do to become greater servants in the Kingdom of God and one of those necessary things to do is to fight above our weight.

II. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:26-27

-Paul with this one passage of Scripture puts himself and all of the saints of God in the place of a boxer. There will be moments when we dole out heavy blows to the enemy. The body of this boxer has been so finely trained that it is in top-notch condition. Weeks of training have led up to the battle he is about to get involved in.

-Just as the outer man has been tuned into the finest condition through eating right, training right, sleeping right, and everything entailed in that the inner man is just as involved. There are things that take place in the soul of the boxer that catapults him into the arena with a mindset toward victory. Passion, courage, and stamina are all components of the greatest of souls who fight.

-No fighter can be careless or unconcerned with his body or with his soul. Wasted energy soon enough become liabilities that will create a disaster in the ring. There are certain temptations that the devil wants you to buy into when you start the fight.

A. Fighting Above Your Weight—Understanding the Battle

-One of the earliest mistakes that the devil tempts us into believing is that we are going to constantly be walking in places of refuge and by still waters in some green, lush pasture. All spiritual maturity will be ushered into place with effort and struggle. This is necessary and it should not catch you off guard.

-We are in the fight of our life and the Lord is always calling us to a conquest. In this passage, Paul very clearly now points out that the greatest enemy of the soul is often ourselves. You will have to be very hard on your flesh.

-Various translations of 1 Corinthians 9:27 note it this way:

ESV—I discipline my body and keep it under control. . .

NASB—I discipline my body and make it my slave. . .

NIV—I beat my body and make it my slave. . .

NRSV—I punish my body and enslave it. . .

Williams—I keep on beating and bruising my body and making it my slave. . .

Moffatt—I maul and master my body. . .

-The very direction and how-to of the punches of the fight is defined in other places by Paul:

Romans 8:12-14 KJV Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. [13] For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit **do mortify** the deeds of the body, ye shall live. [14] For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Colossians 3:5-8 KJV **Mortify** therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: [6] For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: [7] In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. [8] But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Galatians 5:24 KJV And they that are Christ's **have crucified** the flesh with the affections and lusts.

-You are the one, Paul says, who must take control by the empowering of the Holy Ghost.

- Mortify.
- Control.
- Direct.
- Be in charge of.
- Have power over.
- Prevail against.
- Crush.
- Put down.
- Destroy.
- Overcome.
- Triumph.

-He does not say for us to fight for reform of the body but to beat it down. Fight!

-More times that I would like to admit, I have fought against everything but myself.

- Low-life thinking.
- Personal weaknesses.
- Allowing outward circumstances to dictate my joy.

-If you can ever, through the Spirit, master yourself and beat down those things that control your mind and thoughts, half of the battle has been fought and you are shortly on the way to a victory.

- Every revival begins with one man, himself!
- Every social change begins with one man, himself!

- Every spiritual reform begins with one man, himself!
- He decides to pray!
- He decides to fast!
- He decides to worship!
- He determines to make a difference!
- He decides to quit making up excuses!
- He determines to go beyond his failings!
- He determines to conquer those feelings, lusts, failures, and dilemmas that control him!

-Sometimes you have to say to yourself, “I am better than this! I may have disappointed God and myself, but by the grace of God, I am going to be better and change!” I am going to master this thing that keeps dragging me down into the gutter!

Pat Conroy wrote a very dark book called *The Prince of the Tides* about three kids who grew up along the South Carolina coastline. Two brothers and a sister who all felt like their circumstances of life controlled their destiny. Even into their adult lives when they made poor choices, they looked back to their childhood and tried to pin the responsibility there. This is not the case with someone who has been redeemed. He has to step out of that kind of mindset.

-All God’s children got trouble. . . but we can ill-afford to let them control who we are and what we will do for the Lord and our world.

-Paul comes along and says, “My body, my thoughts, my dreams, my desires are going to become my slaves. I will control them instead of them controlling me. I am going to fight above my weight!”

B. Fighting Above Your Weight—Taking a Punch

-You will have to learn how to take a punch. You won’t walk through this fight without absorbing some blows.

The story is told of an aged saint a long time ago. He was going about his business when he heard a knock on the door. “Who is it?” he called out. There was a shadowy figure at the door who said, “It is the Savior.” That old saint was suspicious and said, “Well, if you are the Savior, show me your nail-prints.” The story goes that the devil vanished from his sight. There is no Christianity without the print of the nails!

-Every saint of God is born to fight. With that fight there are punches that you will have to take. But in the long run you have to constantly remind yourself that it is only a matter of time before I get to decide when and where the victory is going to take place.

-I wish I could tell you that you are going to be immune from suffering but to do so would be a very unbiblical thing to say. Consider:

Romans 8:18 KJV For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 KJV For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. [17] For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

-There are a host of other passages that bear out the same ideal that suffering will be a certainty of life.

-You will have to suffer in the fight. Boxers have to endure split lips, bloodied noses, and black eyes. A saint of God will have to endure some soul-jarring blows, some mind-addling injuries, and some disorientation in your spirit. . . but keep fighting. . . Suffering is part of the journey.

- When you suffer, you are not alone, the Lord is with you.

- When you suffer for righteousness, you are better off than your persecutors.
- When you suffer for Jesus Christ, it is much better than suffering for sin.
- When you suffer for the Lord, none of the challenges were a surprise to God, He knew you were going to endure them.
- When you suffer for the Lord, remember that He is suffering with you.

-Moses chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for just a season.

Jeremy Burroughs—Never are men’s graces so improved as in the times of suffering. As the spices have a more fragrant smell when they are beaten to powder than when they are whole; and so the saints graces are much more fragrant in the nostrils of God and do grow up more in the time of suffering.

2 Timothy 2:12 KJV If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

-Romans 8 is loaded with promises to those who suffer for the cause of Jesus Christ.

C. Fighting Above Your Weight—Endurance

-If you are going to fight above your weight, you know you are in a battle, you will have to take some punches, and you will also have to understand the necessity of endurance.

-Boxers are told that they need to run two or three miles a day to gain the necessary element of endurance. It is inevitable that you are going to get tired. The way often seems hard and challenging. More often than not it will seem as if spiritual progress is always against the grain.

-There will be times when the fight is frustrating and wearying but you must march on. Effort and struggle are the two inescapable elements of life. It is like canoeing up the river, you have to keep paddling. If you quit paddling, you will begin to drift back downstream.

-Do Hard Things!

-We all run into things that make endurance difficult for us:

- Persecution from those around us at home, at school, and at work.
- False teachers in our day make it difficult for those who are authentic.
- Skeptical friends and family members can dig in under our commitment.
- The dangerous atmosphere of a social setting that wilts our witness.
- Simple spiritual weariness that steals over us in the course of time.
- Mountain-top experiences that don’t last long enough followed by the trek to the valleys of trouble.
- A conscience that will not let us rest—not necessarily in great matters but in the little omissions of daily prayer.
- Carelessness with how we spend money.

-All of these things can have a troubling effect on our spiritual life. But just stay with it, don’t get weary in your well doing. Reaping comes to us when we often do not expect it.

One of the old great men of God was in his ninetieth year and had some of his friends to come to him and encourage him to ease up a bit in the area of his spiritual endurance. He quickly answered back to them, “Would you have me to quit the race so close to the goal?”

-I am not sure if you have ever heard of David Brainerd, the missionary to the American Indians who died at twenty-nine years of age. Jonathon Edwards took Brainerd’s journals and published them and one entry went like this:

I board with a poor Scotsman; his wife can talk scarcely any English. My diet consists of mostly hasty-pudding, boiled corn, and bread baked in ashes, and sometimes a little meat and butter. My lodging is a little heap of straw, laid

upon some boards, a little way from the ground; for it is a long room without any floor that I lodge in. My work is exceedingly hard and difficult. I travel on foot a mile and a half in the worst of roads almost daily and back again; for I live so far from the Indians. I have not seen an English person this month.

These and many other uncomfortable circumstances attend me; and yet my spiritual conflicts and distresses so far exceed all of these that I scarce think of them, but feel as if I were entertained in the most sumptuous manner. The Lord grant that I may learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

D. Fighting Above Your Weight—Destroying Self-Indulgence

-If you are going to fight above your weight, you have to know you are in a fight, you will take some hits, you will endure, and you will have to battle against self-indulgence.

-Peter informed us that the appetites of the flesh are in a constant warfare against the soul.

1 Peter 2:11 KJV Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

-Far too often in our generation, we become slaves to our bodies. To abstain from fleshly lusts is to hate and fly from the very thoughts and first motions of them. If we are caught off guard by a surprising temptation we are to kill it right on the spot.

-If you are going to fight a good fight, you have to resist the pull toward self-indulgence. When a man starts serving the base appetites of his flesh he sets himself far below even the beasts of this world.

-But when that same man listens to the call of the Spirit, the grace, mercy, and power of God raises him to a place far beyond even the estate of the angels.

Psalms 8:4-6 KJV What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? [5] For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. [6] Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet:

-Get in that place with God and His Word, elevate your life above the whims and drives of the flesh. Fight above your weight!

-The preparation of a boxer means that he will be on a strict regimen for a lengthy period of time where his choices of life will be dictated by a trainer.

- What he eats has been predetermined for him.
- How long he sleeps will be scheduled for him.
- It will be demanded of him that he run for two or three miles every single day.
- The sorts of foods that he is allowed to eat have been planned out for him.
- The hours a day he spends in a gym will be designed according to a plan.
- The amount of water he is required to take in everyday will be forced on him.

-All of these things are given to him so that he can ascend the platform for the championship trophy and belt.

In Pilgrim's Progress, Bunyan tells of Christian going to see Interpreter, who in the allegory fills the role of a pastor. Interpreter takes Christian to see the terrible condition of the Man in the Iron Cage. Christian asked the man, "How did you get in this condition?" The answer was very troubling, "I quit watching. I quit thinking soberly. I laid down the reins and let my lust run wild. I sinned against the light of the Word. I sinned against the goodness of God. I grieved and quenched the Spirit. I tempted the devil and he got me. I provoked God to anger and He left me. I hardened my heart and I now I can't repent."

Then Interpreter looked to Christian and said, "Let this be a lesson to you. Don't ever forget his misery." Christian in a very troubled way answered back, half in response, and half in a pleading prayer, "God help me to watch and be sober always."

-That is a lesson to all of us.

William Law—When we speak of self-denial, we are apt to confine it to eating and drinking; but we ought to consider that, though a strict temperance be necessary in these things, yet these are the easiest and smallest instances of self-denial. Pride, vanity, self-love, covetousness, envy, and other inclinations of the like nature call for a more constant and watchful self-denial than the appetites of hunger and thirst. Until, therefore, we make our self-denial as universal as our corruption, we can no more be said to practice self-denial than he can be said to be just who only denies himself the liberty of stealing.

E. Fighting Above Your Weight—You Will Get Weary

-If you are going to fight above your weight, you have to know you are in a fight, you will take some hits, you will endure, you will have to battle against self-indulgence, and lastly, you will get weary.

-Even boxers who are trained to be in tip-top physical condition get tired by the end of the fight. But there is a remedy for that, keep your hands up! Trainers and boxers often relate that in some of the greatest bouts in history the final rounds of the fight were won because the fighter kept his hands up.

-There is a passage in the Bible that describes Gideon's men that you have to love. Judges 8:4 tells us that his 300 were faint, yet pursuing!

-Have you ever been there? I have been there more than I would like to remember! I knew I wanted to gain the victory but inside there was a weariness that was beyond me.

-We can get tired for various reasons:

- The greatness of the work.
- The lack of help.
- The need for better tools.
- The unwillingness of others to take up the cause.

-Many times in the past and I am sure that it will take place even in the future, I have watched people limp in, drag in, and almost crawl in. They were faint but they were still pursuing and as long as they were still pursuing. . . God could do something in their lives.

-I wanted to yell:

- Keep punching.
- Keep your hands up.
- Keep moving.
- Keep praying.
- Keep worshipping.
- Keep giving.
- Fight above your weight. . .

-You have never been as close to victory was what you are right now. . .

III. CONCLUSION—I FEEL LIKE TRAVELING ON. .

My heavenly home is bright and fair
I feel like traveling on
No pain nor death can enter there
I feel like traveling on.

Yes, I feel like traveling on

I feel like traveling on
My heavenly home is bright and fair
I feel like traveling on.

Its glittering towers the sun outshines
I feel like traveling on
That heavenly mansion shall be mine
I feel like traveling on.

The Lord has been so good to me
I feel like traveling on
Until that blessed home I see
I feel like traveling on.

Yes, I feel like traveling on..