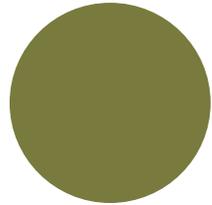
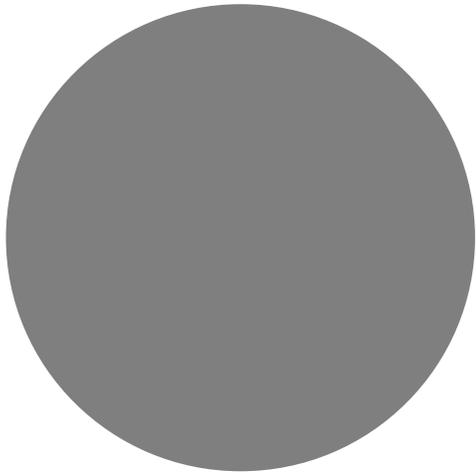
A religious painting depicting the Son of Man seated on a throne of clouds, surrounded by angels playing trumpets and holding scales, set against a dramatic, cloudy sky. The central figure is seated on a throne of red and orange clouds, wearing a white robe and a golden crown, holding a scepter. He is surrounded by numerous angels with large, golden wings, some playing trumpets and others holding scales. The background is a dramatic sky with dark blue and purple clouds, and a bright, golden light emanating from behind the central figure.

“...they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” – Matthew 24:30



# Running the Race of Life

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”  
(Rom. 13:11)

# 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

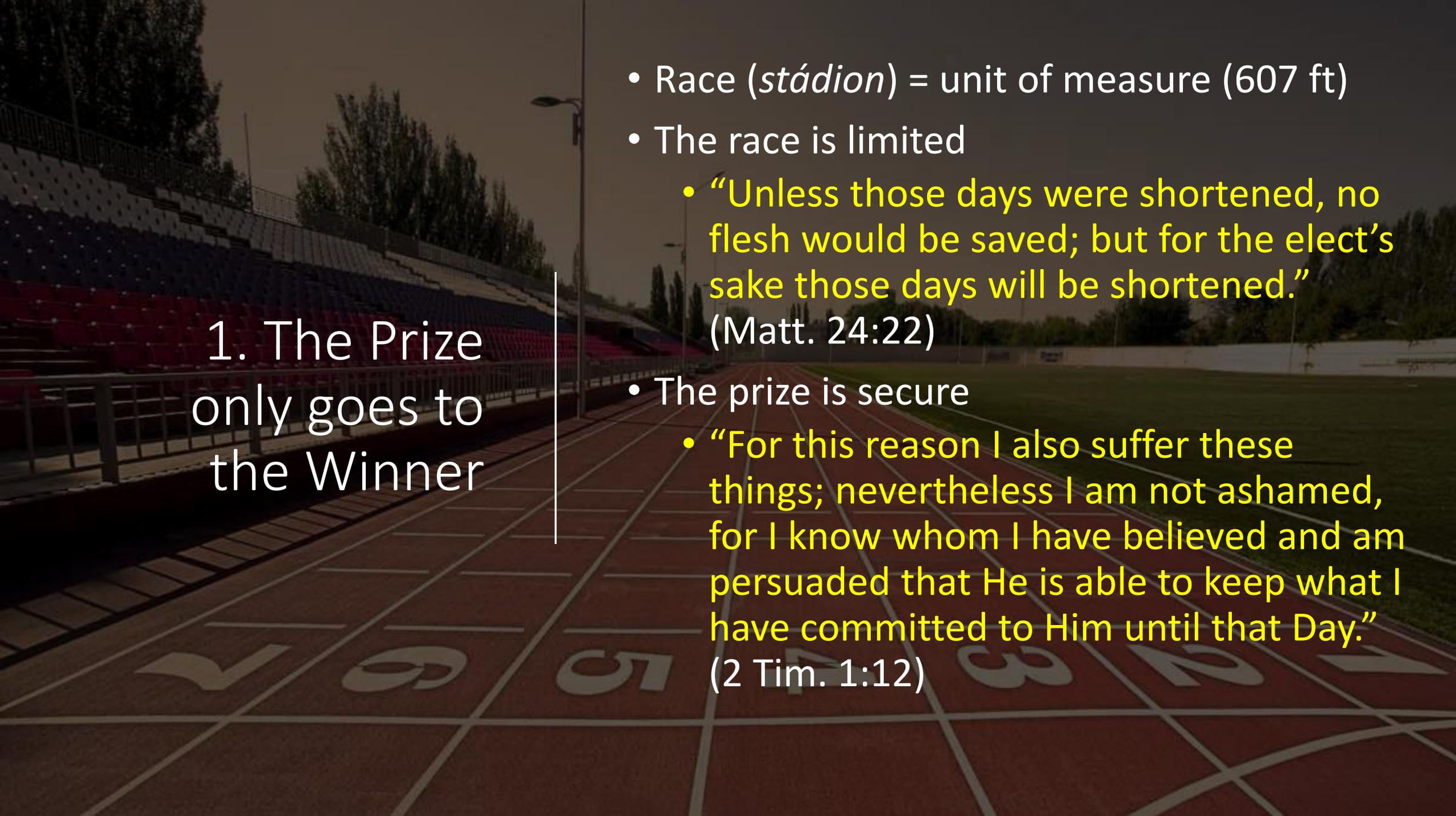
“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”



# 1. The Prize only goes to the Winner

- “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” (1 Cor. 9:24)
- Compete (agōnízomai) = to fight, struggle, or sacrifice oneself
  - “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” (Heb. 12:3-4)





## 1. The Prize only goes to the Winner

- Race (*stádion*) = unit of measure (607 ft)
- The race is limited
  - “Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”  
(Matt. 24:22)
- The prize is secure
  - “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”  
(2 Tim. 1:12)

## 2. Preparation is Key

- “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things...” (2 Cor. 9:25)
- “Temperate” = to keep oneself
- Involves strenuous exercises and strict discipline



### 3. The Prize (The Crown)

- “Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. (1 Cor. 9:25)
- A Perishing Crown vs. An Imperishable Crown
  - “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21)
- Our crown is eternal
  - “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)





## 4. Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

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- “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty.” (1 Cor. 9:26)
- “Uncertainty” = to run without having a clear goal in mind
- When the reason for running is unclear or the goal is deemed to be unworthy of the degree of labor to be endured, the struggler will soon abandon his course.

# The Hunting Dogs

- *“So also the brother who wishes to follow after the love of Christ must fix his gaze upon the Cross until he catches up with Him that was crucified upon it, even though he sees everyone else has begun to turn back.” (St. Hiliarion)*



# 4. Keep the Prize before your Eyes

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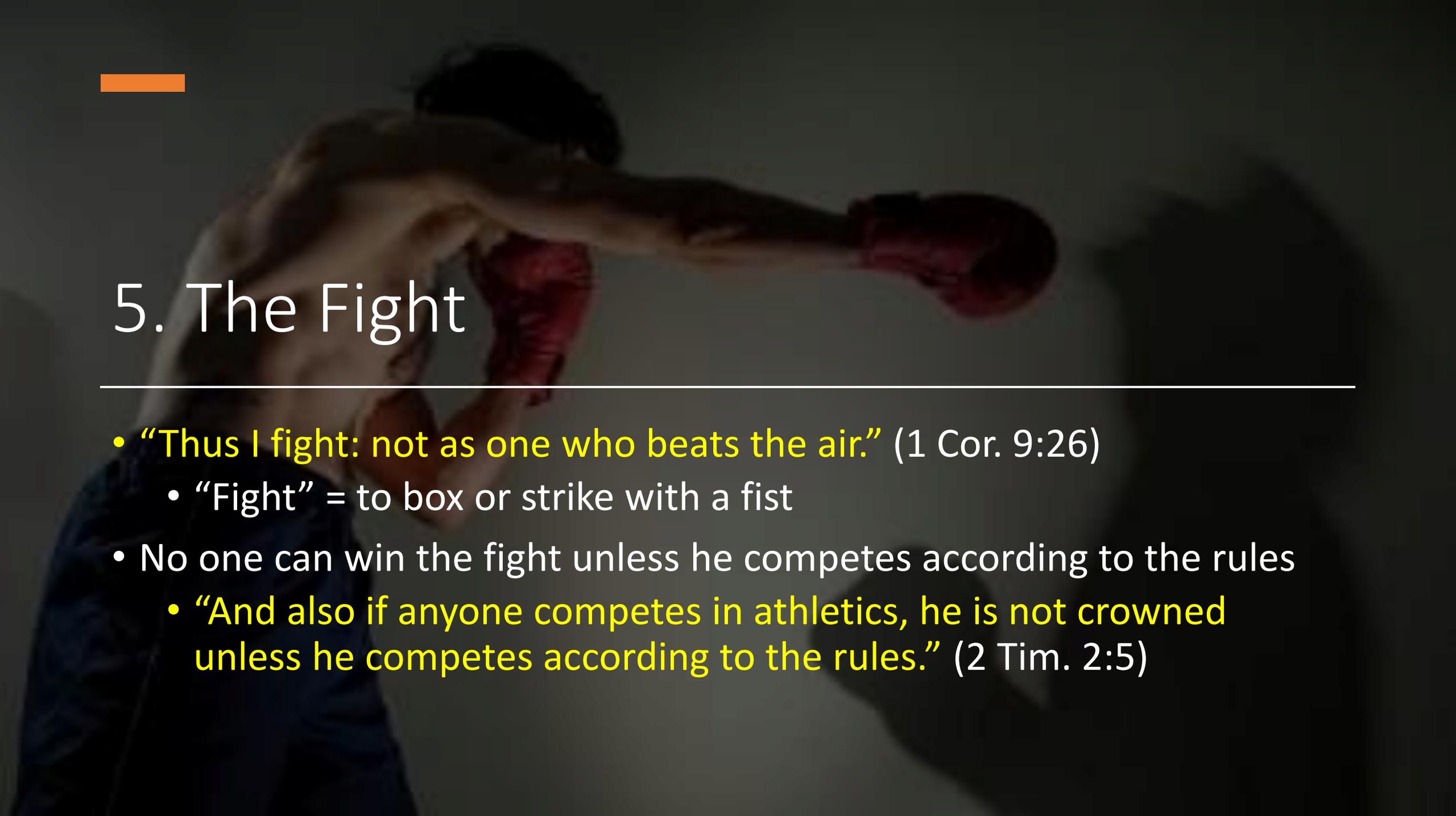
- Two Temptations
  - Looking Back
  - “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13-14)



# 4. Keep the Prize before your Eyes

- Two Temptations
  - Looking Around
  - “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:1-2)





## 5. The Fight

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- “Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.” (1 Cor. 9:26)
  - “Fight” = to box or strike with a fist
- No one can win the fight unless he competes according to the rules
  - “And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” (2 Tim. 2:5)



## 5. The Fight

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- We cannot win the fight without the Lord Christ
  - “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12-13)
- Humbly hide behind the Strong One
  - “No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.” (Mk. 3:27)

## 6. The Reality of Being Disqualified

- “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9:27)
- *“If Paul, who had taught so many, was afraid of being rejected at the end, what can we say? Mere belief is not enough; we must behave in a way which is blameless if we hope to inherit salvation” (St. John Chrysostom)*

