

When Sports Becomes Idolatry

(Every Trophy Becomes an Idol of Worship)

Penned by: A Servant of God
Date: September 28, 2026

To the Reader: I'm writing this article concerning those Christians who are so wrapped up in Competition Sports. And yes, I'm sure that there may be those who oppose what's being said here. However, if we read through the scriptures (including those which were supported by the early New Testament church), we can see that God hates pride. And isn't it true that competition sports are built upon pride a well? I say this because don't we play to strut our stuff and show that we're better than our competition? For why else would we be doing it? So then, every trophy that's held high by the victory becomes an idol of worship? Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, shouldn't we be putting away this sin of pride from among us. For why should we be running alongside with those who chase after the vain glory of this world?

Now, I do include the books of Maccabees to get my point across how I feel concerning competition sports. For it's true that these books (along with the rest of the Deuterocanonical books) were included in both the 1560 Geneva and the original 1611 King James bible. In fact, it wasn't until the 1800 hundreds that publishers started printing bibles without the books of Maccabees in it. But what is

interesting is the fact that there was a desire to start up the Olympics in Europe during this time as well. And according to the book of Maccabees, this is the practice of the heathens.

So, did the desire to reestablish the Olympics inspire its removal? Or was it just a coincident that it was removed around that time? Well, only God knows (and of course those who sought its removal). However, that all being said, there are still some publishers who still rightfully include Maccabees in today's bibles. They can be found in such places as Amazon.com, Christianbooks.com and other stores as well.

Learning from Maccabees

Now, I find it disappointing to see fellow Christians so wrapped up in the things of this world. For we are seen running alongside those who are seeking after empty vain pursuits. And as already mentioned above, one of those vain pursuits is competition sports. For don't we hear fellow Christians talking and bragging about their favorite teams and players? And don't we see parents spending so much time running their children to-and-fro from one practice to another? And what's even more disappointing is seeing churches getting involved in supporting sporting events. Yes, one such church even went so far as to use the bible itself as a football. Watch video here: Mega Church "Pastor" kick bible of the stage

Now, we read in the books of Maccabees concerning a falling away of the children of Israel who gave themselves to the ways of the Gentiles. And we see that one of those ways was building themselves a gymnasium and thus giving themselves over to sports. "*In those days lawless men came forth from the sons of Israel, and they persuaded many, saying, 'Let us make a covenant with the Gentiles surrounding us, for ever since we were separated from them, many evils have found us.' This proposal found favor in their eyes, and some of the people eagerly desired to enter into this agreement. So they went to the king, and he gave them authority to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. Then they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem according to the customs of the Gentiles, and made themselves as the uncircumcision. So they fell away from the holy covenant, yoked themselves to the Gentiles, and sold themselves to do evil*." (1 Maccabees 1:11-15 GOSB)

So, we read above that there were certain Jews who: "*sold themselves to do evil*" by getting involved in sport activities. And wouldn't this be due to the fact that sport activities are based on pride that lusts after victory and feeds on attention from its onlookers? Just look at the frenzy and cheering of the crowds and the prideful reactions of the players. And as said before, it's even more disturbing that our assemblies (churches) are getting involved by holding sport events in honor of it. Shame on us for allowing this to happen.

Therefore, my fellow brothers and sister in Christ; do you really believe that God approves of this? For we read in Proverbs that: "*He takes no pleasure in the strength of a horse or in human might. No, the LORD's delight is in those who fear him, those who put their hope in his unfailing love.*" (Psalm 147:10-11 NLT) So, God is not impressed or please with what man can do in these vain sporting

events. Therefore, please don't point to the sky as if you're giving glory to God. For do you really think that he favors one team over another? Or do you really think that he is giving you the strength and ability to wine? I ask this because there are unbelievers who are very successful in sports as well. So, is he helping them as well? I believe the answer is a big NO.

Below are some other passages from the bible that pertain to what was mentioned above:

- When Seleucus died and Antiochus, also called Epiphanes, succeeded to the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias obtained the high priesthood by corruption. For through a petition, he promised the king three hundred and sixty talents of silver, and from another source of revenue, eighty talents. In addition to this, he promised to pay one hundred and fifty more if the king gave him permission to establish a gymnasium as a place for training young men, and for enrolling the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. … So there was the fullest expression of Hellenization and the adoption of foreign customs because of the surpassing wickedness of Jason, who was ungodly and not a true high priest. Therefore the priests were no longer eager to serve at the altar, but they despised the temple and neglected the sacrifices. Instead, they hastened to take part in the unlawful proceedings in the wrestling-school after the invitation to the discus. They counted the honors of their fathers as nothing, but regarded Greek honors as the best. (2 Maccabees 4:7-9, 13-15 GOSB)

A Perishable Crown

"Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." (Proverbs 16:18-19 NKJV)

So again, football, baseball, basketball, soccer, the worlds Olympic events, or any other competition activity does not impress God. This is because all these things are built upon the pride of man which we know that God hates. So, why get caught up into this nonsense my fellow Christians? And let's take note to what Paul the apostle said while using sports as an analogy between us Christians and those of this world. For we read: "*Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*" (1 Corinthians 9:25 NIV) Notice how he distinguishes "they" (those of this world who receive a perishable crown) from "we" (us Christians who receive an imperishable crown).

So, those of this world prepare themselves in strict training to receive their trophy in a sport event. While we who are in Christ (in a metaphorical way to those who are training for a sport event) are to prepare ourselves for ministry by studying and obeying God's word. Now, you may be asking: "why would Paul use such and illustration that shouldn't be practiced by us Christians." But I say, why not? Doesn't Paul also use a thief as an illustration on the return of our Lord when he said: "*For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night*." (1 Thessalonians 5:2 KJV)

And didn't John the apostle record the words of Jesus himself who said: "*Behold, I am coming as a thief*" (Revelation 16:15 NKJV)?

So, do both the apostle Paul and John as well as our Lord Jesus Christ approve the ways of a thief? God forbid, of course not. And let's remember that Jesus said: "*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*" (Matthew 10:16 KJV) So, even though Jesus may be alluding to being sly and cunning as a serpent, he clearly doesn't want us to do it in a harmful way as the serpent did to Eve. Therefore, in the same way the analogy of the sport event is not giving us Christians the permission to be caught up in any competition sports.

Foul Play

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Galatians 5:14 KJV)

According to that passage above, we are to show love to our neighbor. And according to Jesus, our neighbor does include strangers we meet along the road (see Luke 10:25-37). So, does tackling, slamming, or punching someone in the face show an act of kindness or love? And isn't this what one does during football, hockey, boxing, wrestling or rugby? And even in the more "tamed" competition sports, isn't it all about defeating one's opponent? This is something that Jesus never told us to do. For on the contrary, "*To the person who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other as well, and from the person who takes away your coat, do not withhold your tunic either.*" (Luke 6:29 NET)

Now, when it come to the devil, we're not called to defeat him, but to resist him. For the apostle Peter said: "Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour. Resist him, strong in your faith, because you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are enduring the same kinds of suffering." (1 Peter 5:8-9 NET) "*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10 KJV) Yes brothers and sisters in Christ: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*" (Romans 13:10 KJV)

And: "*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having strapped on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* (Ephesians 6:10-17 NASB20)

- “But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 3:22-23 MKJV)
- But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. (Titus 2:1-8 ESV)

Reaping the Fruit of Disobedience

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6 NIV)

Now, for all you parents who are reading this. Do you really think that your child is going to be a better person by getting them hooked on sports? For you must realize that people (whether they’re adults or children) play sports to defeat their opponent. And the only reason they want to defeat their opponent is to show that they are better or greater. Come on brothers and sisters in Christ, isn’t this is an act of pride which God hates? For as said before: “*Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*” (Proverbs 6:18 NKJV) Therefore: “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves.*” (Philippians 2:3 BSB)

So, instead, shouldn’t you be training you child in some kind of skill or trade that is going to be a blessing not only to them, but to others as well? For according to that passage above, you are either going to train them to be fruitful and productive, or to be prideful and thus seeking after vain glory. Because if you don’t teach them the right way to go, you may surely regret it later on. I say this because I witnessed the suffering that a Christian family went through after their son got injured while playing High School football. And because of his suffering, he eventually took his own life. And what was even harder to bear was the fact that his dad was the coach of his team.

Now, without getting too judgmental, I would like to share another tragic story. For many of you may have heard about a young pro-surfer girl who had her arm bit off by a shark. This happened after she backed down from a mission trip that she committed herself to. For she felt it was more important to prepare for a surfing tournament that was coming up. Now, you may brush this off by thinking it was only a coincidence. But was it? Fortunately, she survived the shark attack. And we can only hope that she learned an important lesson on why we should pursue the things of God instead of the vain glory of this world.

Pride Goes before Destruction

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” (Isaiah 14:12-14 KJV)

So as said before, God hates arrogance and pride because it not only brought about the fall of Satan, but the fall of mankind also. For in Genesis chapter 3:4-6 we read that Eve’s heart was deceived by the Devil’s tempting words. For after listening to the Devil, she wanting to be like God and thus at of the forbidden fruit. Therefore, she brought sin not only upon herself, but upon Adam (who willingly ate of the fruit that was handed to him by her), as well as the whole human race. And we know because of this folly, God out of his heart of love toward us sent his beloved Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins.

So again, God hates pride which is steeped in the hearts of fallen man. And isn’t competition sports based on this? For this would be true whether it’s done by pro athletes in some stadium or in the backyard with your kids. That’s because kids just like adults want to strut their stuff and play to win. And the only reason they want to win is to show that they’re better than their opponent. And just to let you know, I myself was wrapped up in competition sports. I played left field in organized hard ball when I was young, even caching the fly ball that sealed our championship. I was also part of my high School surf team, involved in college Racquetball ball tournaments, Ping-Pong and tennis matches, and more. But where did it get me in this life? Well, I can honestly say nowhere. For I was only strutting my stuff with no real value in return. And here is a reality check for those youngsters that want to become a pro football player. Out of 1,083,308 High School football players in the year 2016, only 251 of them made it to pro. That’s only 0.023%. That’s not very encouraging wouldn’t you agree? So again, train your children in a career that would benefit both them and the rest of the world.

(Please note: I personally don’t consider it wrong to enjoy activities such as surfing, snow skying, water skying, ice skating and the such when it’s done in a non-competitive manner. However, when competition does set in, then pride usually follows. And as said before, God hates pride)

The downfall of pride in one’s life:

- “May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things, who have said, “with our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?” (Psalm 12:3-4 NKJV)
- Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments. (Psalm 119:21 KJV) “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride, arrogance, the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate.” (Proverbs 8:13 NASB20)

- When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2) “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for all his deeds are right and his ways are just. He is able to bring down those who live in pride.” (Daniel 4:37 NET)
- For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Mark 7:21-23 KJV)
- “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” (1 John 2:16 KJV)
- “On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!” Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.” (Acts 12:21-23 ESV)
- “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:2-6 NKJV)

In Closing

So, what camp should we Christians be in? Is it the prideful and self-seeking, or those who are the Kingdom seekers who are doing the things which matters most to God? And let’s remember that Jesus separated the people groups of the world into two classes as stated below. So, read through both classes and decide which one you want to be in. I know for me; I want to be those who are blessed of the Father who are going into the Kingdom of Heaven. And I hope and pray that you feel the same. Amen.

- “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ‘And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ‘When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ “The King will answer and say to

them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’” (Matthew 25:31-40 NASB95)

- “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ “Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ “Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:41-46 NASB95)

So, brothers and sisters in Christ. Let’s stand on God’s word. “*Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.*” (Deuteronomy 11:18-21 KJV)

Below is the different bible versions used in this article. This was done to assist you in your study of God’s word:

- KJV = King James Version
- ESV = English Standard Version
- NET = New English Translation
- NIV = NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
- NKJV = New King James Version
- NASB20 = New American Standard Bible, 2020 edition
- NASB95 = New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition
- NLT = New Living Translation
- MKJV = The Modern King James
- BSB = Berean Standard Bible
- GOSB = Greek Orthodox Study Bible