



Paul often used the analogy of things around him when trying to communicate a message to people concerning God, His word and His love.

In this case He used athletes and competitors.

I Corinthians 9:24-25 (CEV)

You know that many runners enter a race, and only one of them wins the prize. So run to win! Athletes work hard to win a crown that cannot last, but we do it for a crown that will last forever.

Paul encourages us: You are in a race - your Christian life - it's a race. RUN TO WIN!

They work HARD to win a crown (or the GOLD) that does not and will not have any lasting meaning or effect.

We do it for something that lasts FOREVER.

STRONGER

But first let's look at the Olympic symbols - the rings.

You don't have to know anything about much, but when you see those rings, you know what they are, what they are associated with.

Today I want to talk about STRONGER and I want to bring in the symbol that I think has no match:

THE CROSS

- The Cross is a symbol of Christianity.
- The Cross is a symbol of the Gospel.
- The Cross is a symbol of a Death.
- The Cross is a symbol of Pain.
- The cross is a symbol of Victory.
- The Cross is a symbol of a Moment in Time.

For us, I want to talk about how behind the symbol it is our very source of STRENGTH. The symbol is not our strength, but it represents our source of strength. If we are going to run to win the race, if we are to work hard, discipline ourselves, run a race, IT IS IMPERATIVE that we know the source of our STRENGTH.

You are STRONGER when you know the cross.

The cross represents the burden of sin that you do not have to carry anymore.

1 John 2:2 (KJV)

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 4:10 (KJV)

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.



You are STRONGER when you know the cross.

The cross represents amazing grace that provides real power in your real weakness.

“My power is strongest when you are weak.” So if Christ keeps giving me his power, I will gladly brag about how weak I am.

Philippians 3:9-10a (KJV)

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection...

You are STRONGER when you know the cross.

The cross represents a place that you can go any time, any day, all the time, all day

I have real strength – I am TRULY STRONGER.

So I can (I – Me – Not God – Me – Things He said WE are to do)...

- Run my race
- Cast off sin
- Preach the Gospel
- Teach the World
- Bring Joy to the World
- Heal the Sick
- Be a disciplined follower of Jesus
- Love your Enemies
- Study to show myself approved