

# Athletics: a Religion which Rivals that of Christ Jesus

Text: **Gal.1:6**—*“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:”*

**Gal.3:1**—*“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”*

**1Thess.1:9**—*“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;”*

**1Cor.4:7**—*“For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”*

We are fast approaching the season known as “Fall”. With it comes several things: that changing of the color of the leaves, of which God said would not cease (**Gen.8:22**); children & adolescents returning to school. But there is something of which I am greatly concerned about in my own life, and that of the lives of the children of God: **ATHLETICS AS A RELIGION WHICH RIVALS THAT OF CHRIST JESUS.**

Permit me to present my case before you, before you set down this article. I want to speak to each and every one who professes to be a “Christian”. That word is found three places in the Scriptures ( **Acts.11:16; Acts.26:28; 1Pet.4:16** ). In **Acts.11:26** “Christian” is first mentioned, and its meaning is “followers of Christ” or “Christ-like”. Now I believe that this has to do with more than simply saying “I’m a Christian”. This country is filled with people who call themselves “Christians”, but in reality have never been washed in the blood of Christ, have never repented of their sins and never believed on Jesus as their substitute for sins penalty. Rather, my dear reader, many more people have a ‘sport’ as their religion! And I declare unto you that these ‘sports’ have become a religion that is in direct confrontation with the religion of Christ Jesus my Lord and Savior.

Permit me to use the example of Football. Let me give you the average “devoted fans” schedule for the upcoming season of football (I know what it is because I speak from personal experience with a few exceptions). Upon Wednesday evening, prayer meetings will be skipped because they must go to the local ‘middle school/junior high’ football game. Thursday evening, Freshmen and Junior Varsity are playing while a College Football Game is being recorded at home. Friday night, Varsity Football has their game (which we all know is already a religion in and of itself in Texas). Then on Saturday, the average devoted fan will get up and watch *College Game Day* before the football games begin. All day Saturday will be spent in-front of the T.V. watching different games. On the Lord’s Day (Sunday), from 12:00 (noon) till 11:00 PM many so-called “Christians” will devote their time, energy, and *outrages* upon their television sets as they live vicariously through their idols (of which they will claim not to worship all the while having posters, jerseys and certain rituals they perform before each game ensuring their team will win). Upon arrival at work on Monday, discussion will be had all day about the past weekend’s events and debates on bad calls, good calls, what one should have done, and so-on and so-forth. Further discussion will be had about the upcoming game on Monday Night. Then when one arrives at home, dinner will be eaten; the children ushered off to bed, or permitted to stay up to watch the game. The normal fan will stay up over 3 hours to watch this game, but they would never sit for three hours listening to a sermon or reading their Bible. The following day, Tuesday, the Monday Night game will be debated at work and the upcoming middle school/junior high game will be brought into the discussion. This will repeat itself add-nauseous from August until the beginning of February. That is over 6 months; OVER 6 MONTHS! EVERY SINGLE DAY OF THE WEEK FOR 6 MONTHS this sport/religion will be spoken of by people and so-called “Christians”.

Now let me ask you, so-called “Christians” and even you who really are “Christians”: When is the last time that you spoke to someone or some people for every single day for 6 MONTHS about Jesus Christ? about the Scriptures? about Salvation? about the Lord’s Kind of church, about the coming of the Lord? about your Sunday School Lesson, or the sermon? When is the last time that was done? When is the last time that we ever, on a Monday said, “Hey, let me tell you about what we learned about at Church yesterday.”? But we are so easily distracted, so easily able to talk about things that really do not matter. Many “Christians” are even distracted from the Lord’s work by the ungodliness that is happening in Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Oval Office. We are so quick to talk about these things, but we seem to be tongue tied when it comes to

what really matters: THE BIBLE and Preaching Christ (**1Cor.1:23**—“*But we preach Christ crucified...*”).

Now let me ask you again, “Christian”, when is the last time you have spent all day Saturday, in preparation for services on Sunday? When is the last time you spent all day in prayer that God might save your children, your neighbor, your friends, your wife, etc.? When is the last time you spent all day Saturday handing out tracts, going door-to-door witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ? Probably never, that’s when! And yet you call yourself a “Christian”, yet where is the “Christ-likeness”? WHERE IS IT? As we already quoted **1Cor.4:7**—“*Who hath made thee to differ?...*” This implies that there is a difference between the saved and the lost. But where is the difference? For a child of God, there is a godly difference that will be, yea **MUST BE** manifested and will do so in a godly way, and will not cause us to devote all of our time to chasing after the carnality of this world! Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying you are lost, that you are on your way to hell, but I am saying that you are not following Christ when you have devoted half of a year unto a sport! We at the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, Kansas have worship services two days a week; four services a week (counting Sunday School). Yet if you are saved and you are going to or following football seven days a week for six months; one would be devoting around one hundred-eighty two days out of the year to a sport. If one attends church every Sunday and every Wednesday for one year they still only worship God one hundred-four days out of the year. That is nearly double the time spent with football as is spent worshipping God in and through His kind of Church!

Paul said of the church at Thessalonica in **1Thess.1:9**—“*...how ye [the Thessalonians] turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;*” Now if one is saved, then there was a time when you did NOT worship the Lord God. And then after He saved you, you began to serve HIM as opposed to those idols or false gods. But, even though many confess to have been turned, there are many “Christians” who spend more time at the altar of T.V. watching sports than they do worshipping Jesus Christ in His kind of a Church; there are more saints who spend more time on the internet with their fantasy football than they do reading God’s Love letter to His people (the Bible); and then after several years, these parents will wonder why their children know absolutely nothing about the Bible, nothing about Jesus, that they cannot name one single apostle, that their children know not one single Bible Doctrine, but they can name the starting quarterback for the University of

Michigan football teams since they were six years old! My friend, we are in that day already! Is that not the case with many children today?

Let me put it to you in these terms: If a man spent seven days a week, speaking to a woman (who is not his wife) on the phone, at work, on the internet, learning things about her, missing time with his family to spend time with this woman, thinking about this woman all the time and yet claimed to 'love his wife', would anyone honestly believe him? And yet that is what the majority of 'Christians' are doing today. They claim to love the Lord Jesus Christ, but they spend all their time with this sport or that sport! You answer me, "Whom Do You Love?" I declare unto you that if I came into the homes of many so-called "Christians" and took their Bibles, they would not even know it. However, if I removed their *Sports Illustrated Football Preview Edition*, or took their *Internet* away so they could not gamble on their *Fantasy Football*, or took their *HD Television*, or removed their *College Football Sports Pack and NFL Sunday Ticket Package* from their satellite provider, they would be up in arms! My dear friend, to whom is your love towards: Jesus or Football? Let me quote Jesus Himself:

*"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, And love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [money]. **Matt.6:24***

I want to tell you that you cannot serve God and something else. Remember what Joshua said?

*"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD." **Josh.24:15***

And what of Elijah who spoke to Israel prior to Jehovah manifesting whom was God:

*"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow Him. And the people answered him not a word." **1Kgs.18:21.***

*“How long halt ye between two opinions?”* If Football is god then serve it; but if God is God, then serve him, but you cannot have a mixture of the two. Now do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that Football is evil, that it is ungodly. I am saying that when a Child of God devotes more time, more energy, more money, more knowledge to something than the Lord Jesus Christ, he has something between him and God. Satan knows your hearts. He knows how to distract your affection for the Lord. He knows how to divert your attention in subtle ways from following the Lord. We are not ignorant of the Devil’s devices, wiles, and tricks. We are familiar with how he deceived Eve in the Garden (**Gen.3:1-5**). Read those Scriptures and note Satan’s subtlety, his disguise, his lies so carefully covered with bits and pieces of truth to make it believable. But what happened? Adam and Eve died (spiritually) and the whole of the human race was plunged into sin and only way to be redeemed is through the blood of the Son of God!

I am not calling for a complete boycott of all things athletic. What I am asking everyone that nameth the name of Christ is to “examine yourselves” (**2Cor.13:5**). I am asking you to compare your life with that of the Bible and see if there is anything in it if you have devoted their life to more than the cause of Christ. Can one honestly profess themselves to be a “Christian” when they never attend church? When they will spend over \$200.00/month for *NFL Sunday Ticket*, but will rob God through tithes and offerings (**Mal.3:8**)? Can a man call himself a “Christian” when he spends more time on the internet in *Fantasy Football* than he does in the house of God worshipping the Lord in *Spirit and in truth* (**Jn.4:24**)?

To you who are able to do this: —“*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*” **Gal.1:6**.

And I wonder: —“*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*”—**Gal.3:1**.

Beloved, we are fast approaching the day in which the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and we who are saved shall go home to be with him. There we shall stand before the *Judgment Seat of Christ*. There we shall give answer for our faithfulness or lack thereof. And I am afraid, that the those 50,000 so-called “Christians” in every stadium on the Lord’s Day will have to give answer as to why they were not

in the Lord's House on the Lord's Day. I doubt seriously, if every person in a stadium on Sunday is saved. I believe rather that many of them ARE worshipping their god at that moment: carnal lusts. Perhaps football is not your rival to Christ. I chose it because it was mine. Every fall I must make a decision and I must ask God for help in it. Whatever it is that is between you and Christ, may you now lay aside that weight which does so easily beset you and follow on after the Lord (**Heb.12:1**).

How about you? Are you saved? Then why won't you serve the Lord. I am not asking you to stop watching sports; but I am advocating that it is a religion in its own right when it interferes with worship and service to Jesus Christ. *"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity".* **2Tim.2:19**. God knows if you are His & if you are His, then you need to depart from following others and follow God. Let me close with the second verse of the hymn *Nothing Between*, written by C.A. Tindley:

*Nothing between like worldly pleasure;  
Habits of life, though harmless they seem,  
Must not my heart from Him ever sever,—  
He is my all, there's nothing between.*

In Christian Love,  
Bro. Nathaniel R. Hille  
—Pastor—