

# Christian Olympics

R. Stanley, 25 July 2021

The medal tally of **Olympics 2021** is what we primarily look for today in TV or newspapers. Olympics is an international athletic and sports meet held every four years. The Olympics of this year in Tokyo, Japan, is actually Olympics 2020 postponed by one year due to the pandemic, and is called Olympics 2021. Over 11,000 athletes from 206 Countries participate in this mega Meet. We from India with high expectations have sent 127 competitors. This festival of games was first celebrated in Olympia, a city in Greece. The winners were crowned with a wreath of wild olive leaves which Apostle Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 9:24-26 as a “perishable crown.” He compares Christian life to running race and fighting games (v26; 2 Tim 4:7). The major difference is that in Olympics there would be only one winner for each event whereas in Christian race everyone can be victorious. The Christian race is not a competition but it aims at successful completion. Olympics is for sixteen days only (23 July - 8 August 2021), whereas the Christian race is for lifetime!

The Biblical name for the Christian who completes his life successfully, victoriously or triumphantly, is “**OVERCOMER.**” This word with its related words occurs more often in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, than in any other canonical book. A Sunday School student summarised the Book of Revelation before her teacher as “Jesus wins!” What an understanding! According to Jesus, His victory is ours! (Jn 16:33b). He desires all His children to overcome the earthly battles and celebrate victory with Him in eternal bliss. He has prescribed the knowhow for us in the 2nd and the 3rd Chapters of the Book of Revelation. This is contained in the messages He voiced through the Holy Spirit to the seven Churches. Everyone of the seven letters ends with the phrase, “To him who overcomes ...” (Rev 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21).

Apostle Paul must have been a sports-lover. Having lived in the Greco-Roman world, he has made numerous references to running and boxing in his writings or speeches (1 Cor 9:24-27; Gal 2:2; 5:7; Phil 2:16; 3:13,14; 2 Tim 2:5; 4:7; Acts 20:24). He would have witnessed several sport events. (I’m ashamed I don’t understand Cricket till date!). But for his weak body, Paul would have become a boxer or a wrestler! He stressed the absolute necessity of sticking to the game rules (2 Tim 2:5). Jesus our Unbeatable Victor has prescribed for us clear-cut rules and regulations for us in Revelation 2 & 3 if we are to be victors or overcomers. I have listed 25 of them here. These are based on what Jesus the Head of the Church commended or condemned in these Churches. First read through these two chapters carefully and then ponder over the following exhortations with your Bible open.

(1)

Abound in the work of God with perseverance amidst odds and difficulties.

Do not grow weary in doing good to people.

It’s always too early to quit. (Rev 2:2,3)

(2)

Do not compromise with evildoers.  
Stand strong in the Lord with backbone. (2:2)

(3)

Beware of self-made apostles and leaders who boast of their titles.  
Self-exaltation is demonic. (2:2)

(4)

Renew your first love for God, His Word and His people periodically.  
Resist the natural tendency to cool down. (2:4)

(5)

Repent wherever you are backslidden and have drifted away from God.  
Frequent self-examination helps. (2:5)

(6)

Have nothing to do with those who elevate themselves as so-called clergy  
above God's people and treat believers as second-class citizens. (2:6,15)

(7)

Stand firm as you go through persecution and tribulation  
because of the Gospel even if it would mean imprisonment.  
The days of martyrdom are not over. (2:9,10)

(8)

Do not become disheartened by the reproaches and mockery  
from nominal Christians. Jesus was crucified by the Jews  
who valued their Temple and traditions over God's Word. (2:9b)

(9)

Do not fear those who can kill only your body, and not your soul.  
Martyrdom though painful is a rare privilege. (2:13)

(10)

Stay clear of all forms of idolatry, including bowing before crosses,  
altars and crucifix. (2:14,20)

(11)

Flee from sexual immorality.  
Do not justify failures or compromise on convictions.  
Maintain marital sanctity. (2:14,20)

(12)

Keep abounding in the work of the Lord, never growing weary.  
Slackening or slowing down must be checked early. (2:19)

(13)

Keep your mind and heart pure by walking transparently before God,  
and being washed moment by moment by the blood of Jesus. (2:23)

(14)

Be God-conscious and not Satan-conscious.  
Do not be overly interested in the subject of spiritual warfare  
or curious about hidden things. (2:24)

(15)

Be real and not formal or nominal.  
Avoid all forms of hypocrisy with the awareness  
of the all-seeing eyes of God. (3:1)

(16)

Strengthen the weak and unsteady areas of your life  
by vigilant prayer and diligent Bible meditation. (3:2)

(17)

Be watchful in prayer mainly to stay prepared for the imminent Return of Christ.  
Fill yourself with the positive expectations of His Second Coming. (3:3)

(18)

Stand with God's minority, saying no to the devil's majority,  
especially in the matter of holy living. Do not slide into grey zones. (3:4)

(19)

Make best use of the open doors for evangelism before they get closed.  
Tomorrow is not ours, but today is the Day of Salvation.  
Never deny Christ under any circumstance. (3:8)

(20)

Continue in the love of God which will attract folks towards you.  
Do not become too heavenly-minded to be of any earthly use. Be human. (3:9)

(21)

Walk in consistent obedience to God so He may be pleased with you.  
It's better to displease men than to lose His smile. (3:10)

(22)

Do not become negligent about your rich spiritual possessions.  
Remind yourself often of them by reading the New Testament epistles. (3:11)

(23)

Be fervent in spirit. Never lose enthusiasm in the things of God.  
Keep the fire on your altar stirred up and alive. Hate lukewarmness. (3:15)

(24)

Examine yourself frequently in God's presence.  
Seek Him to make up your spiritual deficiencies  
by fresh intake of His Word and infilling of His Spirit. (3:17,18)

(25)

Keep your heart ever open to hear God's voice.  
Stay sensitive to His promptings and mild whisper.  
Do not become hardened but stay broken before Him. (3:20)

These 25 lessons are of supreme importance because they are from Christ's "last" message to the Church and its members.

### **Awards or Rewards?**

The medals awarded in Olympics are of Gold, Silver and Bronze. The cheers on the faces of the winners and the shouts of pride in their countries are inexplorable! What Christ has promised to overcomers in Christian walk and work is REWARDS, not awards. They are Fruit from the Tree of Life, Immunity from Second Death, Hidden Manna, White Stone with a Name known only to the recipient, Rulership over Nations, Morning Star, White Garments, Becoming a Pillar in God's Temple, New Name, and the Throne of Jesus and His Father (Rev 2:7,11,17,26-28; 3:5,12,21). And finally the overcomer shall inherit "all things" (21:7). These are guaranteed by the promise of Jesus: Rev 22:12,13, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My **reward** is with Me, to give everyone according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Let's say, "Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"



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