

was the center of advanced learning. Intellectual, as well as athletic, ability was the measure of a man."

### The Christian's Response

The Lord Jesus Christ is our example of faith to follow, and according to **Philippians 2:3-8**, he was a humble servant that made of himself no reputation in the world. If we are to be Christ-like, we must promote others above ourselves (**Romans 12:10**) and this is hard to do in competitive sports. In **Romans 12:16**, we are told, "*Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate,*" and in **James 4:6**, "*God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.*" It's hard to display and promote humility while trying to knock down the opponent. The fruit of the spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23** are these, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*" This is the exact opposite of what is cultivated in competitive sports. The point being, the spirit of most sporting events is not the spirit of Christ, **Matthew 7:12**, "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*"

### Conclusion

The Lord God said that we as Christians are a peculiar people (**I Peter 2:9-12**). God put a difference between the Israelites and Egyptians. Many Christians try to justify sports in that they say they teach discipline, character, etc. But, if they would be honest, they would have to admit otherwise. We must cultivate a spirit of humility. There is nothing wrong with wholesome games with family and friends to exercise and develop the mind and body. It is good when believers can enjoy one another's company in this setting while maintaining a good spirit. But nothing good, holy, or pure has ever come from organized, competitive, spectator sports. In other words, it is not of God.

*"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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."*

**I John 2:15-16**



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**"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."  
Acts 16:31**

# The RICHES OF GRACE

"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

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# Sports

*"And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."*

### + America's Amusements +

Sports are highly esteemed in our day and thereby can be considered an abomination. Competitive spectator sports have become big business in America. There is a national obsession with year-around sporting events. Nothing gets more publicity or draws larger crowds than athletic competition. Many colleges today are identified by their big sports' programs. This "sports" craze has idolized many athletes and made earthly gods of them. These athletes are some of the highest paid people in our country today, because the spectator is willing to support their addiction. Sports' fever has caused many to gather around their family altar (TV) to worship on the Lord's day, for athletic events now take place year round. God help us to wake up, for we need a praying church, not a playing church.

*"This know also, that in the last days . . . men shall be . . .  
lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."*

**II Timothy 3:1-4**

Between God's Word and history, we have plenty of material concerning the subject of sports. In this article we will discuss the origin and danger of sports and the Christian's response to the issue.

## THE ORIGIN OF SPORTS

The highly competitive spectator sports was born in pagan societies that worshiped the creature more than the Creator, the deification of reason and the glorification of the body. This is the religion that Satan introduced to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:5**). This athletic mentality did not originate in the house of God. In Hebrew history, athletics as we know it today cannot be found. These were foreign to the Jewish culture until influenced by the Greeks and Romans. In Scriptures, we do not find gymnasiums or competitive sports. It was not until after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great that sporting games were introduced among the Israelites. Even though Alexander the Great died at 33, his legacy is seen in the Middle East as well as other places: in the architect of public buildings, gymnasiums for games, and open-air theatre. It was the Greeks that built a gymnasium at Jerusalem for the use of competitive sports and the Romans continued these events when they rose to power. The Romans became obsessed with amusement, erecting their coliseums, circuses, and theaters for the pleasure of their citizens. The gladiator shows were highly attended among the Romans. In these events, the people took great pleasure in the brutalizing of others when they were thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheaters.

The early church fathers did not speak against bodily exercise, but did speak against the vainglory of competitive sports and public games. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul uses athletic imagery to illustrate the commitment that a Christian should have to Christ in **I Corinthians 9:22-27**. But, in no way was the Apostle justifying the idolatrous pride, nudity, or brutality of the Greek or Roman games. He simply used imagery because the Greeks would be familiar with it. Other athletic references are used in Scripture (**II Timothy 2:1-5, II Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 12:1**). Paul also uses the imagery of a soldier, but obviously he did not approve of every military practice of his day.

Humanism was the religion of pagan cultures that led to great emphasis on competitive, spectator sporting events. America is highly influenced by the Greeks and Romans, especially in our day. In most capitals around our country, there are statues of naked gods and goddesses, and many of our buildings are designed after these ancient cultures. I do not speak against bodily exercise, for it profiteth little, but I speak against this humanistic philosophy of worshiping the body. The following is taken from an article: "Summoning the Olympic Spirits," the origin of athletic games lies in the ancient world, where they were treated as a ritual festival, especially in

Greece. Modern historians have the games beginning in 776 B.C. or earlier. They lasted well over one thousand years, until A.D. 394. . . Olympia, the town where (the Olympic games) were held, was devoted to the worship of Zeus, who was the sky and weather god of the ancient Greeks. . ." The temple of Zeus at Olympia was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It contained a gold and ivory statue of the god that was more than forty feet high." . . . In the beginning the games were few and were held in less than a day. However, by the sixth century B.C. there were thirteen events, and the contests lasted several days. The first day was devoted to worship and preparation. . . on the second day the contest began. . . day three of the Olympics began with religious rites. A parade of judges, priests, athletes, and trainers marched to the sacred altar of Zeus. There one thousand oxen were sacrificed to the god. . . Thus the Olympic games were pagan festivals for believers in the polytheistic Greek pantheon. By the fifth century B.C. Olympia was the holiest place of ancient Greece, because so much religious ritual was tied to the game." When an athlete won an event, he was supposed to give public thanks to the deities.

## THE DANGER OF SPORTS

In **I John 2:15-17**, we are told to *love not the world*. The book of **James** in **chapter 4:4** warns us about being a friend of the world and in **Romans 12:2**, we are not to be conformed to the world. An excessive love of pleasure and amusement was the downfall of the empire of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Most colleges are known by their sports' programs today. These colleges stand against everything the Bible teaches and yet Christians follow and support these school programs.

Competitive sports promote pride, rivalry, idolatry, drunkenness, and nudity. Athletics introduces nudity into a culture, emphasizing the form and movements of the body. The players, cheerleaders, and commercials display much nakedness; while commercials and sponsors promote drinking in these sporting events. Many of the events are held on the Lord's Day. Many athletes violate the Sabbath by playing sports on that day and influence others to violate it. God said in **Exodus 20:8**, "*Keep it holy.*"

The word gymnasium actually comes from a Greek word meaning to "exercise naked." To further reiterate this, please see Strong's Concordance (numbers 1128, 1129, and 1131). Also, the following quote is taken from the book, *A Generation Which Knew Not the Lord*, "The word for athlete comes from the Greek goddess Athena. She was known as the goddess of wisdom, skill, and warfare. The Greeks' love for sports was a natural outflow of their love for their gods. In the peak of their political might, the Greeks saw humanity as something to be indulged in as far as their development of human reason and the human body." "A true discovering of the individual." Humanistic – to say the least. The gymnasium of Athens