

SUPER BOWL SUNDAY SERMON

Objective: To relate the Super Bowl to the life of faith, so as to clarify our "opponent" and be confident of our certain victory in Jesus Christ.

Text: 2 Timothy 4:7 ***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.***

Introduction

The Super Bowl is the annual [championship game](#) of the [National Football League](#) (NFL), the highest level of professional [American football](#) in the United States, culminating a [season](#) that begins in the late summer of the previous calendar year.

The day on which the Super Bowl is played, now considered by some a de facto American [national holiday](#), is called "[Super Bowl Sunday](#)". It is the second-largest day for U.S. food consumption, after [Thanksgiving Day](#). In addition, the Super Bowl has frequently been [the most watched American television broadcast](#) of the year. Super Bowl XLV (45), played in 2011, became the most-watched American television program in history, drawing an average audience of 111 million viewers and taking over the spot held by the previous year's Super Bowl, which itself had taken over the #1 spot held for twenty-eight years by the [final episode of M*A*S*H](#). The Super Bowl is also among the [most watched sporting events in the world](#), mostly due to North American audiences, and is second to soccer's [UEFA Champions League](#) final as the most watched annual sporting event worldwide.

Because of its high viewership, [commercial airtime during the Super Bowl broadcast](#) is the most expensive of the year. Due to the high cost of investing in advertising on the Super Bowl, companies regularly develop their most expensive advertisements for this broadcast. As a result, watching and discussing the broadcast's commercials has become a significant aspect of the event. In addition, many popular singers and musicians have performed during the event's pre-game and [halftime ceremonies](#) because of the exposure.

--Wikipedia

The life of faith is sometimes compared to athletic competition:

1 Corinthians 9:24 ***Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 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. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.***

1 Timothy 6:12 ***Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.***

2 Timothy 2:5 . . . ***if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.***

While we usually think of spiritual conflict in terms of "war," since it's Super Bowl Sunday, let's see if we can learn anything more about spiritual conflict by thinking of it in terms of athletic competition.

For example, in football, the highest level of professional competition is between the National and the American Football Leagues or Conferences. Is there anything comparable in the spiritual realm?

At the highest spiritual level we might imagine there is . . .

I. Competition Between God And Someone Or Something Else

The "Game of Opposites" (up/down, left/right, black/white, right/wrong, God/ . . . Satan?)

No! God has no equal opposites; He is over all—even Satan. God is not playing some kind of "super bowl" with Satan, other gods or idols, or even sin, but He uses and even causes all things work together for His purpose and His glory.

And even if there *appears* to be competition between God and anything or anyone else, we can be sure God wins; you can bet your life on it!

If God is not competing with Satan, is Satan competing with someone?

II. Competition Between Satan And Someone Or Something Else

For example, we might imagine that it's . . .

A. Satan Verses Jesus Christ

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Christ was God's *first* creation, that He is the reincarnation of Michael the archangel, created by Jehovah, rather than *the Creator Himself*. The "Watchtower" teaches that Jehovah God created Michael the Archangel before the foundation of the world; Michael was His only begotten son by virtue of the fact that he was the only creature directly created by Jehovah. It was this *created* Michael who became the Jehovah's Witness's *Jesus*.

But the Bible clearly says that Jesus Christ ***is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*** (Col. 1:15-17)

Colossians 2:9 . . . ***in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form . . .***

So can we really say Satan is in *competition* with Jesus?

We might think of the "duel" between Jesus and Satan in His temptation in the wilderness. Was this not a "competition" of sorts?

No! Jesus is the Creator of and Lord over Satan. The Bible says though Jesus was 6 . . . ***in very nature God, [He] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!*** (Philip. 2:6-8)

Jesus did that to defeat Satan on our behalf—not as God, but as the Son of God and the Son of Man. The writer of Hebrews explains it this way:

14 ***Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he [Christ] helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a***

merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Heb. 2:14-18)

So, there was no real "competition" between Satan and Jesus, but Jesus soundly defeated Satan on our behalf and for our benefit.

Satan is actually an angel, ***anointed as a guardian cherub*** (Eze. 28:14). And so we might imagine that it is . . .

B. Satan Verses Angels

And we do see such angelic conflict in the Scriptures. In Daniel 10, an angelic being (Gabriel?) appeared to Daniel and told him of a conflict between himself and ***the prince of the Persian kingdom*** (a demonic angel, Dan. 10:13), with ***Michael, one of the chief princes*** (an archangel like Gabriel, Dan. 10:13) coming to help him.

And in Revelation 12:7, John saw a ***war in heaven. [With] Michael and his angels [fighting] against the dragon [i.e., Satan], and the dragon and his angels fought back.***

And while this "competition" may seem somewhat equal, we know who wins in the end, because we're told in Revelation 20:1-3 that John 1 . . . ***saw an ANGEL coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.***

So we see that Satan is no match for God or even angels. But what about . . .

C. Satan Verses Man?

Is there a "competition" between Satan and mankind?

There certainly is! We see it throughout the Scriptures. And Paul clearly tells us, . . . ***our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*** (Eph. 6:12)

And Satan appears to be winning the game, which explains the evil in the world!

But for those covered with the Armor of God, victory is certain—unlike today's Super Bowl! Indeed, we are more than victors *through Christ Jesus* who loved us and gave Himself for us.

So as far as the "spiritual conferences," God has no equal opponent, but we can see "competition" between Satan and angels, and between Satan and mankind.

On a "lower" level—what we might call the "minor leagues," we can see another kind of "competition."

III. Competition Within

The apostle Paul speaks of this "competition" in Galatians 5:16-17

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Every person, at one time or another, and to one degree or another, senses this conflict in their life between their spiritual nature, which is created in the image and likeness of God, and their carnal nature, which has been corrupted by sin (i.e., a lack of faith in, and obedience to God).

Professional athletes work full-time at conditioning their bodies and honing their skills. While some may be "natural" athletes, all work hard at their sport so they can win over their opponents.

I've heard of a wise tale attributed to an unnamed Native American elder, who said, "Inside me are two dogs. One of the dogs is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog all of the time." When asked which dog wins, he reflects for a moment and replies, "The one I feed the most."

The apostle Paul puts it this way: ***The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*** (Gal. 6:8)

We would think the team that only practiced an hour once a week and expected to win a game to be foolish.

But if we feed our spirit only an hour once a week, we are even more foolish to think we can win the battle against Satan and our sinful flesh—both of whom work "full-time" at opposing us!

If we are disciples of Christ, we need to remember that the word "disciple" is related to the word "discipline." And the discipline of a disciple of Christ includes daily reading of the Word, constant prayer and obedience to the Spirit's leading.

Conclusion

The objective in football is to score more points than your opponent. What is the objective in life?

I've seen a bumper sticker that expresses what some people think the objective of life is: "The one with the most toys, wins!" Achieving, accomplishing and/or acquiring, as much as we can in this life is what most people think is the objective of life.

While the players in the super bowl take home a pretty good paycheck, and the winners take home the title and a ring, we don't get to take any of our "toys" home when we finish this "game."

So what do we get if we "win?"

Jesus said, ***The thief*** [i.e., our "opponent," Satan, and our carnal nature] ***comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*** (Jn. 10:10)

In Christ we "win" *full or abundant* life, which includes a peace and a joy in this life (even and especially in the face of the *competition* or trials and tribulations of this life), along with the eternal peace and joy of everlasting life, where there'll be no more *competition*, trials and tribulations, no more pain or sorrow, no more death or parting.

Athletic competition can be good in that it teaches teamwork and good sportsmanship, and it challenges individuals strive to be and do their best.

And athletic competition is popular because it provides opportunity for participation—both as competitors and as observers living vicariously through the competitors.

Although life may be compared to athletic competition, it is far more serious with far greater rewards and a far greater potential for loss.

As you watch the Super Bowl today and cheer for your favorite team, imagine having the same intensity and enthusiasm in your own life of faith, and then "play" or live so as to be able to say with Paul,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7)