

# Daily View

*"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" Hebrews 3:13*

August 4, 2020



Competition is common, even among Christians. And, that's sad. [Stock photo].

## Steve Caldwell

I entered 6th grade in Vallejo in the middle of the school year. I didn't know anyone at the school but I fit in OK. One day, as I was involved in playing some sport, one of the boys said to me, "You're pretty fast; I bet you could beat Steve Caldwell in a race." I had no idea who Steve Caldwell was and I had no desire to race anyone. But since I was the new kid, I was pressured into accepting the challenge.

The boys set up a time for the race and Steve Caldwell showed up. He was clearly the most popular boy in school and I realized that this was a no-win situation for me. If I win the race that could backfire — he and his friends might be indignant and make life harder for me. My aim as a new kid was always to lay low, not draw attention to myself, but now I'm about to enter a footrace with most popular boy in school.

The day of the race came. To my chagrin, there was a large crowd gathered. Steve Caldwell beat me by a couple of steps and he was a gracious winner — "Hey, Pose, you almost beat me..." he said, which wasn't true; I ran my fastest and if I raced him ten times, he would have beaten me ten times. Meanwhile, the kids who pressured me to race were patting Caldwell on the back, giving him lots of attaboys... and ignoring me and I was perfectly OK with that.

That was my only contact with Steve Caldwell, ever. I hardly ever saw him at school and he was not in the company of the kids that I hung out with.

My only connection with Steve Caldwell was that one race. Yet, oddly enough, I remember his name and this incident well. Why is that? I suppose it's because I'm competitive. When it comes to sports or games, I love to compete and I love to win.

However, as a Christian, this can become a thorn in the side. There is no place for competition among Christians — *period*. That's what was going on in Corinth and it prompted Paul to write his first letter to them. In 1:11-13, he says,

For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Paul is addressing the distressing case of Christians competing with each other. He nails his point in chapter 3 when he says,

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>1 Corinthians 3:1-5</sup>

I love competition and there is a lot of it to watch and enjoy in America. But it had better not seep into the church because it leads to all kinds of deadly issues. James said,

"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice." <sup>James 3:16</sup>

If we all look at our work properly — as "*servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each*" — the church will thrive and we will not fall into the trap of competing with others who are also trying to serve the King to the best of their ability.

And, beware of those who would pressure you to race against their "Steve Caldwell." They are probably setting you up.