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Football Is In The Bible

by Mike Farris

In Texas where I grew up, football on all levels... high school, college, and the pros... is a religion. The amateurs play on Friday and Saturday, and the professionals on Sunday. Since God is sovereign and nothing exists without His hand in it, I began to ponder the question: "Why is American style football so popular, and what lessons can be learned from football?"

So, let's examine football from a Biblical perspective. First, football is a game which only the elect can play on game day. Many are called to try out for positions, but few are chosen. Second, football is about overcoming the opponent. Third, football is about reaching a specific goal and winning. And fourth, football is a game of rules and has coaches to instruct the players.

When God calls Christians to become overcomers, many are called but few are chosen. Only the elect get in the game. Most of the team sits on the bench (church pews) and observe the game. But at least they are on the field, and when their team wins, they are all winners... "for we are all one body (team)." Does this mean that the bench-warmers don't have to do anything except show up? Absolutely not! ALL players must practice overcoming and be ready to get in the game when called upon by the Coach.

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Coach Paul gives his team the pre-game pep talk and reminds them to check their football gear. I'll paraphrase here... "the hip pads of truth, the shoulder pads of righteousness, shoes of preparation, above all the face mask of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit which is the game strategy from the Play Book." Then Coach Paul asks his team to kneel for a

locker room prayer, and prays that they may persevere and overcome their opponent.

When the team takes the field, there is much rejoicing and praise. The Cheer Leaders (choir) and the Band Director (song leader) lead the fans (congregation) in fight songs. ("Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war") Sounds like a religious service to me.

There are eleven "starters or first stringers" on a football team; originally there were twelve. but Judas broke the rules and was booted off the team. The game is played in four quarters with a set time limit. Man's years on earth are divided into four quarters and have a set time limit. Life is hard and then you die. Football is hard and you either win or lose. Every winning team has a winning Head Coach, and the Christian Head Coach has never lost a game. John 1:1 gives us some insight... "In the beginning was the Head Coach, and the Head Coach was with God and the Head Coach was God..." (ask anybody who ever played for Bear Bryant, or the great Eddie Robinson... look up their records)

The football field is laid out in ten yard increments (Ten Commandments). There are two side lines (statutes: physical & spiritual laws), and two goal lines (judgement: eternal life or eternal death) at each end zone. There are also two time clocks in football. One is the "game" clock which represents your time on earth, the other is the "play" clock which represents your spiritual decisions. The play clock gives you a very short time to call and execute your next play. Making the right decision determines whether you win or lose. There are five officials on the field(the five-fold ministry in Ephesians 4:11) who make sure the game is played by the Rules. Penalties are assessed for each violation (sin). At the last trumpet (whistle) the game is over.

To start the game, the football is kicked to the opposing team. The team is given

four tries to go ten yards called a first down (hear, believe, confess, repent). The ball can be likened to the gospel (Good News of the Kingdom). This Good News is fumbled, kicked around, passed, and run with. The offense (the team in possession of the ball) wins games, but it's the defense that wins championships. In the Spiritual game, Coach James says..." be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself into thinking that possession of the Good News is enough..." James 1:21-26. When a team gets the football across the opponent's goal line, it's called a touchdown and is worth six points (the number of man), but with a kicked extra point (conversion) the total is seven (spiritual completion). However, when a team chooses to run or pass the ball, it's two points (prayer & fasting) for a total of eight. The team that kicks a field goal is awarded three points (faith, hope, and love). Tackling your opponent in his end zone is two points (trust & obey).

A team is judged by the quality of its opponents. The Father of the Head Coach owns the team and approves the team schedule. All Overcomers must defeat the following opponents to become champions: Adultery, Fornication, Impurity, Lust, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Strife, Jealousy, Anger, Contention, Disunity, Heresy, Envy, Murders, Drunkenness, and Rebellion. Galatians 5:19-21. That's a 17 game schedule that Overcomers must fight to win. (17 is $1+7=8$, the number for a new beginning). In 1972, the Miami Dolphins of the National Football League went 17-0... but against much lesser opponents that Overcomers must face.

There are two types of Christians... overcomers and non-overcomers. Non-overcomers believe that the goal of salvation is to populate heaven with "saved sinners". Overcomers know the real goal of salvation is to become like the Head Coach. Do what He did... crucify the works of the flesh, and get what He got... the crown of Life and championship ring, or reign if you prefer. Read it for yourself in James 1:12 and Revelation 3:21.

Professional football is a violent game and requires utmost faith in the Head Coach and His game plan. Overcomers are warriors. “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.” Matthew 11:12. Overcomers are professional assassins of their own carnality. An overcomer asks himself three questions every day.

1. Is what I am doing now building Christ-like character?
2. Is what I am doing now producing the fruit of the Spirit? Galatians 5:22.
3. Is what I am doing now helping me overcome the carnal mind?

What if you asked yourself these questions several times a day? Write these questions on 3X5 cards or on the back of business cards. Carry one with you at all times. Post one on your desk at work. Affix one to a conspicuous spot inside your car. And place another one on the mirror you use most at home. Read these questions several times a day. Focus on becoming the person the Head Coach chose you to be. Before you know it, you’ll find yourself actually headed in the direction you want to go. And even if you are tackled for a loss, step out of bounds, or get the wind knocked out of you, get back in the game. Quitters never win and winners never quit! The fearful and unbelieving will never know the sweetness of victory. That’s the lessons to be learned from football. “Be instant (ready) in (football) season and in the off season”... 2 Timothy 4:2. “There is a (football) season and a time to EVERY purpose under heaven...” Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Football is the reason God created pigs... down to this very day, a football is called “the pigskin”. Other football traditions are straight out of the Bible also. Take tailgating... the Bible calls it feast days and burnt offerings. There are three times in the year when all males must present themselves... the playoffs (Passover), the league championship game (Pentecost), and the Super Bowl (Tabernacles). I can’t quote chapter and verse, but it’s in there.