

The Running of the Bulls

August 1995

In Pamplona, Spain, it is an annual tradition to turn loose bulls with sharp horns and nasty dispositions to run through the streets. One would think that the good citizens of Pamplona would bar their doors, cling to their children and hunker down until the thundering herd had passed. *But no.* These people actually get a charge out of being chased by the bulls. Occasionally, as happened recently to a slow-footed young American, the bulls score a road kill.

Why would people do such a thing? Don't they realize that they could die? Would they enjoy being gored and trampled to death? They understand the risk, but it is the risk itself that makes the challenge so exciting.

Fear, alone, is a poor motivator. The very real threat of contracting AIDS from homosexual activity or prostitution has not caused these practices to decline. The possibility of developing cirrhosis of the liver or lung cancer rarely curbs drinking and smoking.

In fact, some people engage in potentially self-destructive behavior because they *enjoy* the element of danger. Some are living meaningless, unfulfilled, unhappy lives, and the emotional stimulation of danger gives them an artificial sense of substance.

Younger people have an immature notion that flirting with disaster makes them independent and "grown-up." It has been said that a boy *starts* smoking in order to prove that he is a man, and as an adult he has to *stop* smoking to prove that he is a man.

Those looking for a thrill do not have to look beyond a Christian life to find it. One doesn't have to run from a bull to find a challenge: just try to "flee fornication" (1 Cor 6:18). Artificial stimulants aren't needed for a "high": just try to top the emotional satisfaction that comes from helping someone who can't help themselves. One need not climb Mt. Everest to find a sense of accomplishment: just watch one person that you have taught obey the gospel and see how it makes you feel. Need a challenge? Want to face danger? Just stand up to your friends, co-workers or fellow-students and tell them that God doesn't approve of raunchy jokes, divorce, abortion, etc. You'll have all the excitement you can stand.

If we insist on putting ourselves at risk, we should at least make it for a worthy cause. "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness ...*" (2 Tim 4:7-8).