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Finishing Your Course
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In John chapter 17 Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure. Verse 4 states:

John 17:4 (MSG)

***I glorified you on earth
By completing down to the last detail
What you assigned me to do.***

We all have been assigned a purpose in life. God has a purpose for you no matter you do in a job for a living. That purpose is to reach people for Him.

In Second Timothy chapter 4 Paul is sharing some things with Timothy and you and I. Paul knows the time of his departure is at hand. He is giving instruction on being strong in the faith and begin to impart some things to faithful men that have the ability to impart to others. He is speaking of passing the torch of faith to the next generation.

2 Timothy 4:6-7 (AMP)

***⁶ For I am already about to be sacrificed [my life is about to be poured out as a drink offering]; the time of my [spirit's] release [from the body] is at hand and I will soon go free.
⁷ I have fought the good (worthy, honorable, and noble) fight, I have finished the race, I have kept (firmly held) the faith.***

2 Timothy 4:6-7 (KJV)

***⁶ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.
⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:***

To finish your course you will have to fight the good fight of faith or you will not finish your course.

1 Timothy 6:12 (KJV)

¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

2 Timothy 4:8 (KJV)

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

God is a rewarder.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV)

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Part of our reward is not just Heaven, but it is that crown of righteousness from fighting the good fight, finishing your course and keeping the faith.

God hasn't called us to just begin our race. He has called us to finish our race. And you and I can do it with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Run your race to win. Not just to finish. You are a winner. Don't look to the left or right. Don't look at those around you. You are not running your spiritual race against anyone else. What they are doing and where they are at has nothing to do with your race. Your race is different than anyone else's so it matters not what is going on around you or even to you? Matthew chapter 25 versus 14 – 30 is the story of the talents that shows that we all have been given differing talents but the same reward.

How are we to prepare to run our race? And How to run to win. There is discipline and training.

1 Corinthians 9:23-25 (KJV)

²³ And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

²⁴ Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

²⁵ And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

The word obtain means to possess something.

Runners run for a prize, a ribbon or a medal that will fade away but we are running for eternity. When a coyote is chasing a rabbit, the coyote is running for his dinner, but the rabbit is running for his life.

Strive means to struggle or work at something, or to contend, there is opposition and to contend with an adversary.

There is always something that doesn't want us to keep running our race, whether it be our flesh or maybe demonically related from the adversary himself.

Being temperate is a word used for being disciplined or using self-restraint.

Paul is saying that if we are going to run our spiritual race we are going to have to have self-control. There has to be striving against the opposition. It will not always be easy and at times will be a struggle.

Pastor shared a word. On the plains of hesitation lie the bones of hundreds of bodies on the threshold of victory laid down and quit.

There is always going to be opportunities to quit, there is always going to be opportunities to become lukewarm but if we run to obtain we are going to strive

1 Corinthians 9:26 (KJV)

²⁶ I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

How do we run uncertainly? Sometimes the easiest time to quit is when you have been somewhat successful and have gone through a season when there is no challenges and then become somewhat lukewarm. There is always the initial adrenalin rush when we start and when that ends it is tempting to bail out and follow through with the commitment made. To give in a quit is simply mediocrity. There is no excellence there. Quitting again and again ensures we spend more time starting over again and again and less time doing what we ought to be doing. Thank God we can start over but repeatedly doing it over we spend more time doing that than running our race.

Dwight Eisenhower said there are no victories at bargain prices.

If you want to be superior at what you are doing you are going to have to pay the price.

When we get serious God will as is in Ephesians 5 God can cause us to redeem the time that we have lost. We will be enabled supernaturally by God redeemed of the time and we may not like how it happens but it can happen. The story of Samson was used as an example.

Vince Lombardi stated that A man can be as great as he wants to be if you are willing to sacrifice the little things in life to pay the price for the things that are worthwhile.

1 Corinthians 9:27 (KJV)

²⁷ But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Paul is making a statement that we all have the power within us to control our body, five senses or our flesh if we so desire.

Subjection here means to be a slave driver, or to make it a servant or lead it away in control. To be stern or rigid in its discipline.

In all simplicity Paul is saying in running our race use discipline.

1 Corinthians 9:24 (MSG)

²⁴ You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win.

2 Timothy 4:8 (KJV)

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Everyone runs their race and when they cross the finish line they win. They win when they stay on course. It is so easy to get sidetracked and run someone else's race and try to run like they are running. We are to follow others as they are following Christ, and we don't need to be following anyone who isn't following Christ.

Success isn't free there is a price to pay. We are the only ones who can choose to do what God has called us to do.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (MSG)

Discipline in a Long-Distance Race

12¹⁻³ Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!

Our finish line is heaven. Don't lose sight of that!

Champions do things they don't want to do when they don't want to do them, so they can do what they want to do when they want to do them.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (MSG)

²⁵ All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.

²⁶⁻²⁷ I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself.

What keeps you from running your race? Guilt, shame, feeling unworthy or just plain lazy? We must deal with it. It is a spiritual injury sustained. If you have sustained a spiritual injury it must be healed.

You are not second rate. The blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed it, blots it out.

Father, right now you said your people would be far from shame. I speak to the tormenting spirit of shame and break its power in Jesus name. You desist in your maneuvers and still its voice of lies and that religious spirit that brings us under the law in Jesus name. Father, I

release the liberty of God to rest upon these your people, in Jesus name. Hallelujah ! Glory to God!

Father, I release shame, I am free, I am free, I am free, I am free! I am not going to quit! I am not going to quit! Hallelujah! I am not going to quit! Glory to God!

Father, I purpose to run my race with purpose. I will be diligent and I will finish my course. I will fight the good fight and I will keep the faith. Thank you Lord for your benevolent heart to me. I am free in Jesus Name.

We are not quitters we are winners!!! No shame in Jesus!!