

Sunday, May 27, 2012

## **Running Your Race #1** **Pastor Charles Mendenhall**

The foundation scripture is taken from the last epistle that Paul wrote to Timothy before he was martyred.

**2 Timothy 4:6 (AMP)**

***<sup>6</sup> 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.***

**2 Timothy 4:7-8 (KJV)**

***<sup>7</sup> I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:***

***<sup>8</sup> 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.***

How many of us when we are about to make the transition from heaven to earth can say I have really fought the good fight and finished the course that God had mapped out for me in this life and I have kept the faith and I have poured out my life as a drink offering? And I am not going to say at the end of my life I wished I could have done better.

In the spiritual race that we are in we don't want to get to the close of our life and say, well I really didn't fight a good fight and hang our heads and say we didn't finish the course and I flipped flopped all around and didn't keep the faith. That's tragedy in a Christian's life. We want be able to say as Paul did and run into the arms of Jesus.

How do we run our race? How do we train and prepare for the race that you are in? You may be a couch potato spiritually and say you are not in a race, but if you are a born again Christian you are. If you aren't born again you are in a race to hell. Get into the Christian race.

There will be a fight and struggles along the way but you can finish your course.

First the emphasis must be on finishing the course. Many start and never finish. Everybody is going to have opportunity to quit. They get tired spiritually and get discouraged and that's an opportunity to quit, but the spirit of God resided within you and you are empowered by him in your inner man to be off and running again.

**1 Corinthians 9:24 (KJV)**

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

Obtain means here to seize possess or find and receive the reward.

We must run to win. We cannot have the attitude to just finish. I must run to win.

We must have some spiritual discipline.

**1 Corinthians 9:25 (KJV)**

***<sup>25</sup> 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.***

**1 Corinthians 9:25 (MSG)**

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

Temperate means you have self-control or a restraint. It can also be to struggle or contend with an adversary, to labor fervently.

We must discipline ourselves to spend quality time with God and if we continually forsake the gathering of ourselves with believers it will affect how we run our course spiritually. We have to have quiet time alone with God. And if we can't even get out of bed to come to church you really don't want to win. We cannot let our flesh control us.

**1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (KJV)**

***<sup>26</sup> I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:***

***<sup>27</sup> 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.***

We bring our desires and emotions under control that is pulling us away from the things of God. We bring them under control that is separating us from church where the answer is at. We bring our flesh under control because the spirit of man is being renewed day by day by the word of God that has the life of God in it. That spirit man is getting stronger because we are exercising it and disciplining it in the things of God. Then the spirit man will dominate and we will start running our spiritual race with better clarity. The spirit man becomes stronger because we have put it into training. Now we are ready to get out in the race. Then the obstacles will be overcome.

**1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (MSG)**

***<sup>26-27</sup> 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.***

Don't quit.

**Hebrews 12:2 (KJV)**

***<sup>2</sup> Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

If we quit looking to Jesus we are going to fall by the wayside along the and without a wakeup call in our lives we will never get back in the race because it takes a greater measure of courage to get back into the race than to just stay in it. It's easier to stay up than to catch up.

## Mountain Climbers Halfway House

A popular activity for tourists in Switzerland is mountain climbing—not the type of climbing the world-class mountaineers do to scale the world's highest peaks. Maybe it would be more accurate to call it high-altitude hiking. Groups depart from a “base camp” early in the morning with the intention of making it to the top of the mountain by mid-afternoon.

I talked to a guide about his experiences with these groups, and he described an interesting phenomenon. He said that for most of these expeditions, the group stops at a halfway house where the climbers have lunch, catch their breath, and prepare themselves for the last leg of the rigorous climb. Invariably some members of the group opt for the warmth and comfort of the halfway house and decide not to climb to the top. As the rest of the group leaves, the ones who stay are happy and talkative. It's a party. But when the shadows begin to lengthen, many make their way over to the window that looks up the mountain. And the room gets quiet as they wait for the climbers to return. Why is that? They realize they've missed a special opportunity. Most of them will never be in that part of the world again. They won't ever have a chance to climb that mountain again. They missed it.

We are all going to have the opportunity to sit down in the comforts of life and not keep running our race.

Paul wrote Philippians from prison. While he was in prison he said he wasn't giving up.

**Philippians 3:13-14 (KJV)**

***<sup>13</sup> Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,***

***<sup>14</sup> I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.***

In running our spiritual race even when circumstances are against us, maybe we missed the mark; we are not going to give up. We are going to get back into fellowship with God and keep pressing towards the finish line of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

**Philippians 3:13-14 (MSG)**

**Focused on the Goal**

***<sup>13-14</sup> By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.***

**Philippians 3:15 (MSG)**

***<sup>15-16</sup>So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it.***

**Philippians 3:17 (MSG)**

***<sup>17-19</sup>Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I've warned you of them many times; sadly, I'm having to do it again. All they want is easy street. They hate Christ's Cross. But easy street is a dead-end street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites.***

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 it.

Champions are disciplined. They do what they ought not just what they want.

**Hebrews 12:1-3 (KJV)**

***12 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,***

***<sup>2</sup> Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

***<sup>3</sup> For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.***

The definition of patience from W.E. Vines is that quality that doesn't surrender to circumstances nor succumb under trial. It is the opposite of despondency and is always associated with hope.

In running our race we don't give into adversity we don't cast away our confidence or lose our hope. How do we do that? Verse two in the above.

He never lost sight of where he was headed and never lost course.

**Hebrews 12:1-3 (MSG)**

**Discipline in a Long-Distance Race**

***<sup>2-3</sup> 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!***

We can put up with anything as long as we keep our eyes on Jesus.

**John 17:4-5 (KJV)**

***<sup>4</sup> I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.***

***<sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.***

**John 17:4-5 (MSG)**

**Jesus' Prayer for His Followers**

**<sup>4-5</sup> I glorified you on earth**

**By completing down to the last detail**

**What you assigned me to do.**

**And now, Father, glorify me with your very own splendor,**

**The very splendor I had in your presence**

**Before there was a world.**

Jesus and Paul spoke the same.

When we finish our course our reward is at the end. Jesus. Let's finish what we are assigned to do.