

Finishing Well

I Corinthians 9:3-10:6

11/06/05

Intro

Paul is writing to strengthen the church in Corinth. Yes, it is in trouble, but Paul knows the answer in the Lord. He knows they need to grow in spiritual maturity.

Paul is stirring them and us on to run the race well. Some people have fits and starts in their spiritual walk of faith and they stumble badly at times.

The key is to run the race of life by the principles of the Lord.

These are the principles of not just starting, but finishing well in life.

I. Run for the Prize

A. Keep the love you had at first

- Verse 23 – Paul wrote that he does all things for the sake of the gospel. His faith is foremost in his life because his first love is Jesus.

Revelation 2:4-5, “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first;”

Illus – Do you remember when you first came to the Lord and the joy that was in your heart? Keep that love alive, the Lord is telling us.

- The Lord remembers, too.

Jeremiah 2:2-3, “I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest;”

B. Don’t just be a spectator

- Paul writes that we should all run to obtain the prize, but in order to do that, we must first decide that we will run.
- Don’t just watch the faith of others, you yourself need to be involved in the faith yourself.

Illus – At the end, when victory is at hand, you’ll want grass stains on your jersey. A hard fought football game; but your team wins. You will want to be part of it.

I Peter 1:13, “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

C. Aim for the finish line

- In a cross country race, you could get off in direction. The key is to stay pointed in the right direction.

Hebrews 12:2-3, “...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by

sinner against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

- When run in such a way as to obtain the prize, we have our eyes set on the finish line and the reward at the same time. Paul speaks of an imperishable crown.
- But the greatest thing we gain is the Lord Himself.

Lamentations 3:22-24, “The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, therefore I have hope in Him.”

II. Run the Race with Endurance

A. Laying aside every encumbrance

- In a cross country race, there could be many things that can get in the way; that can hinder us.
- Illus – Stay away from the briars, they will grab at you and get you tangled up, pulling at you. This is about sin.

Hebrews 12:1-2, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,”

- Don’t let anyone discourage your faith; don’t let anyone cut in on you.

Galatians 5:7-8, “You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.”

B. The testing of faith produces endurance

- God allows our faith to be tested, knowing that it results in endurance.

James 1:2-4, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

- God allows testing of faith that prepares us for greater things in store for us.

Jeremiah 12:5, “If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?”

- God intends that we will be able to run with the horses, and in the thicket of the Jordan.

C. Hold fast -- persevere

- The key to the race is perseverance. There are many things that can discourage, but to run with perseverance, is to hold fast without wavering, and the result is very good.

James 1:12-13, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

- Don't let anything shipwreck you faith.

I Timothy 1:18-19, “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.”

III. We Will Need Self-discipline to Finish Well

A. We need spiritual exercise

- Paul gave an analogy regarding athletes. They have to have great self-discipline to compete in the games; we should do the same in a spiritual way.
- An athlete has to watch what he/she eats and how they maintain their body, how much more is this true of the soul?

I Timothy 4:6-10 Spiritual exercise of great value

B. Poco a poco – little by little

- If we just stay steady and gain in little steps, we will be amazed at how far we can run.

Illus – Many things in life require steady progress; whether playing an instrument, or getting in shape, or dieting...

Philippians 3:13-14, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to

what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

- The idea of pressing on is to keep pressing forward toward the goal of the prize.
- This is the key to not growing weary.

Galatians 6:9-10, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

C. Sometimes we need self-confrontation

- Paul writes that he beats his body; he means he confronts his body and refuses to obey its beckonings.
- This is a different thought to some people; that we should confront ourselves, but that is exactly what we need in order to be victorious.

II Corinthians 10:5, “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,”

- Without this, we cannot finish well, and that is exactly what the Lord wants us to do.

II Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge,

will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Conclusion

The wonderful news is that there is a finish line for all, and there is a crown of life, the crown of victory for all in the Lord. It’s so important that we finish well. Run the race with endurance; fight the good fight of faith.