
Finishing Well

Part 1 - Perseverance

Starting well is relatively easy - finishing well is a different matter! Genuine faith in Christ perseveres to the finish line.

The apostle Paul finished well.

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (NIV)

What does the apostle have to teach us about finishing well?

1. Live for Others

- + Paul could finish well because he had reproduced himself in others.

The commission to reproduce our life into the lives of others applies to every Christian at some level. If you know Christ as Saviour and are walking with Him, then He calls you to make disciples of others. This starts at home but spreads throughout the church.

- + Paul could finish well because he viewed his life as an offering to God.

Paul did not view his execution as a cruel tragedy or as unfair treatment in view of his many years of dedicated service. Rather, he saw it as the culminating offering of a sacrificial life.

2. Live with No Regrets

Paul was able to look back on his past in Christ and say confidently that he had done well. Through all of the problems and trials, Paul lived with no regrets.

+ “I have fought the good fight” (4:7).

It is not just any fight, but the good fight, the fight of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

+ “I have finished the race” (4:7).

There is joy, but there also are many trials that require endurance (Acts 14:22).

+ “I have kept the faith” (4:7).

For Paul keeping the faith was so much more than just hanging on to a belief system or a core set of doctrine. To Paul, keeping the faith meant that he was engaged in living the good news every day.

3. Live with the Reward in Mind

Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)

By faith Paul sees beyond his own imminent death to a day (“that day”) when he will receive his reward from the Lord. What will that reward be like?

- + It will be a guaranteed reward.
- + It will be a glorious reward.
- + It will be a personal reward.
- + It will be a shared reward.
- + It's a reward we enjoy both now and forever.

Conclusion

Perhaps your circumstances seem pretty dismal today. Maybe you are considering dropping out of the Christian race. From his dungeon, the aged apostle calls out to you: *"Don't quit! Keep going! You can finish well!"*

Keep in focus that you can reproduce yourself in others to carry the torch after you. View your life as a sacrifice to God – Live for others.

Live with no regrets! If you live this way for Christ you will be able to look back and say that you engaged in the struggle for the cause of Christ. You didn't drop out of the race! You were a participant not a spectator, a pilgrim not a tourist.

Keep in focus the reward you will receive to spur you on. Soon you will stand before the Lord, the righteous Judge, vindicated by His grace. Live in view of that day! If you live with Paul's focus, you will finish well!

Discussion Questions

1. With whom are you currently trying to reproduce yourself? If the answer is "no one," ask God to direct you to someone.
2. When do you most feel like dropping out of the race? What are the distractions and temptations to divert our focus from finishing well? What encourages you to keep going at those times?
3. Should believers be motivated by the thought of heavenly rewards? How can we keep that motivation pure?
4. If there is no better way to live than in Christ (John 10:10), how is it that we share in that reward even now?
5. Spend time encouraging one another and praying for one another to persevere in our faith.