

3 Training Tips to Finish the Race

By Greg Baker –

I want to finish the race. Three years ago this month I repented of my sins and decided to give my life to Jesus. My life has changed so much since that decision. I am so thankful that the Lord has put me in a good church, blessed me with an amazing wife, and has given me the opportunity to serve Him in the civic arena. The Lord has been teaching me so much, but there is a lot more I want to do and learn. I want to give everything I have in this life and not hold anything back. I want to finish the race.

My favorite books to read in Scripture have always been Paul's letters. Paul has always been an inspiration for me to give everything I have for Christ and consider my life worth nothing. He was a man that finished the race. Through Paul's life we get to see an example of what it truly means to become a follower of Christ. He also showed us the cost. Paul was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, mocked, and martyred. God has given us everything He gave to Paul. **We too can be as effective as the Apostle Paul was.**

*"I can do anything through Christ, who strengthens me."
Philippians 4:13*

Two weeks ago, I read 2 Timothy and I have been unable to get it out of my mind. Reading this letter is like reading a letter that a dying father wrote to his son. Shortly after writing it, Paul was martyred by Emperor Nero. It was his final words to Timothy – when you are writing your final words, you only write what truly matters! In 2 Timothy we get to see what truly mattered to Paul and learn a final lesson from one of God's greatest servants. For those of us who are

working to finish the race, God gave us an excellent resource in Paul's final letter.

1. Live for the second life

In 2 Timothy we get a close look at Paul's mindset. "That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." (2 Timothy 1:12) Paul is **not at all ashamed at his accomplishments** of which many of the world would call a waste of time. Paul was a Roman soldier, a Roman citizen, and Pharisee, yet he gave his life to persecution, imprisonment, tent making, constant travels, and eventual death. Many people today would call that a wasted life. Paul, however, was not ashamed of it. Why? Well, Paul truly believed in Christ and not only did he believe in Him, he believed in all of Christ's promises, which included greater riches in Heaven and eternal life. Paul did not live for this life, he lived for the second life. If we too want to finish the race we must live for the second life.

2. Equip yourself with the Word

Not only was Paul's mindset in the right place, **he was successful in completing good works for the kingdom.** We Christians also desire to complete good works for our Lord, but as sinners ourselves it is difficult for us to keep those works pure.

"All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16)

So if you truly want to do good works that will benefit the kingdom, you better be equipped. If you want to be equipped, you better train yourself and the way you can do that is by

reading God's word. Christians, we must be in God's word daily if we are going to be effective for the Gospel. In Ephesians 6, Paul talks about putting on the full armor of God. He compares God's word to the sword. No soldier would ever go anywhere without his sword and no soldier today would go anywhere without his gun. Christians, we are at war, a spiritual war every day. **We must not leave our swords at home or we will lose.** If we are going to finish the race we must equip ourselves with God's word.

3. Train yourself to qualify

Paul wrote timeless truth and advice throughout 2 Timothy, but it was towards the end of the letter that stood out and inspired me the most. Throughout Paul's letters he wrote about training himself so he would not be disqualified for the prize. He spoke about finishing the race. In 2 Timothy 4:7-8 he writes,

"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 me on that day and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearing."

Paul finished the race. After years of persecution and struggles, Paul finished the race. A question I have for you and one for myself: **if you keep living the way you are currently living will you be able to say "I finished the race" someday?** I know I want to, but in order to I know I have to give the Lord everything and rely on His power alone. "For the Lord did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Let's take the example from Apostle Paul and surrender everything we have to Christ. **Let's consider our lives worth nothing to us and give absolutely everything to the Lord.** Let's walk in His ways and learn from His word and do every work for the kingdom no matter what it costs us; and the

hardest part of all, let's do it all in love. If we all walk as Jesus walked, someday we will be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Let's finish the race!

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