

# Why Run the Race?

Saturday, August 28, 2021

Presented by Elder Curtis Horton

[Read: 2 Timothy 4:7-8](#)

Several times in the Bible, our everyday life in Christ is described as a race. We're off and running in this marathon, and each sunrise presents new challenges as we hurry along. All the while, we know that God has provided the path we're supposed to take.

Paul wrote this letter when incarcerated in a Roman prison, and he knew without a shadow of a doubt, that he was already being poured out as a sacrificial offering to the Lord. Indeed, in previous verse we read, "For I am ready being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come.

Paul was ready and willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice for love of the Lord Jesus and he considered his life-breath, which was soon to expire on the executioner's block, as a drink-offering that was about to be poured out to the Lord he loved so dearly. Paul's witness to Timothy in this meaningful epistle was, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith.

Verse Thoughts (Let's create image)

Second Timothy was the last epistle written by the great apostle Paul to his son in the faith, for our learning, shortly before his impending death. Paul wrote his letter when incarcerated in a Roman prison, and knew without a shadow of a doubt, that he was already being poured out as a sacrificial offering to the Lord. Indeed, in the previous verse we read, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." Paul was ready and willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice for love of the Lord Jesus, and he considered his life-breath, which was soon to expire on the executioner's block, as a drink-offering that was about to be poured out to the Lord he loved so dearly. Paul's witness to Timothy in this meaningful epistle was, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith."

Paul knew that he was soon to be removed from this earth under the 'axe' of the executioner, but his letter to Timothy was to become the greatest encouragement to the young pastor - and to us as well, to fight the good

fight of faith, to run the race that is set before us, and to honor the Lord in all we say and do, by keeping the faith and enduring to the end. Paul knew that having completed the work that God had given him to do, that in the life that is to come, there was reserved for him the crown of righteousness - an honor which the Lord, the righteous Judge of the earth, would give to him when He comes in the clouds to take the Church to be with Him... and to ALL who have longed for His appearing.

From the moment that he encountered the risen, ascended, glorified Lord Jesus, this man, Paul, had become an ardent follower of the Christ. He was humbled by the encounter on the road to Damascus, and committed himself to lifelong surrender, under the Lordship of Jesus. But Paul also learned that the Christian life is a spiritual battle and a continuous struggle against evil. Paul recognized the grace of God that had been extended to him, despite his impassioned persecution of the Christian Church, and he labored for the gospel more fervently than any of his fellow apostles. He was beaten with rods, lashed with whips, stoned by angry crowds, and imprisoned time and again. Paul was even in danger of being shipwrecked, while being held captive on board a Roman vessel.

Paul had also been in danger from rivers, from robbers, from his fellow Jews, and from pagan Gentiles, which he recognized as spiritual attacks from the enemy of the Lord. He had survived dangers in the city, hazards in the wilderness, and perils on the sea - but Paul discovered that God's grace was sufficient in EVERY eventuality of life that he faced.

He had faced hostility from evil men, apostate teachers, and false brethren... and the apostle Paul suffered much antagonism from his enemies, causing him many hardships, sleepless night, hunger and thirst, heat exhaustion, and hypothermic exposure, together with external hazards and internal pressures from many quarters.

Paul had learned that living a spiritual life and maturing in the Christian faith, did not depend on his own ability, wisdom, intelligence, or efforts, but on the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, working in him and living through him. It was his passion for his Lord that caused Paul to press on for the upward call in Christ Jesus, until he could say, "it is not I that live- but the Spirit of Christ, living in me and working through me, for His greater glory and praise."

Source: <https://www.knowing-jesus.com>

This was Paul's beautiful message of encouragement to Timothy as he wrote his final letter to his precious son in the faith. He had fought the good fight, he had finished the course, and he had kept the faith. And we are exhorted to do the same as we watch for Jesus' imminent return for His Church-age saints.

Let us follow in Paul's footsteps and fight the good fight of faith, so that we may say, with Paul, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith and in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge of the earth, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

### **Read: Hebrews 12:1**

*Hebrews 12:1* "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us"

### **Why should we run the race?**

But how exactly can we run this race that is set before us? Thankfully, we are not running in the dark. The author Paul of Hebrews provides three proven ways to keep us on the right track.

Paul states Three Proven Ways to Run the Race That Is Set before Us.

- 1. The Race Set Before Us**
- 2. Throwing off the Sin that Entangles Us**
- 3. Look to Jesus for Endurance and Strength**

We get our start in the race of life by remembering that we're not alone:

**Hebrews 12:1** "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...."

(Example)

When ancient sprinters dashed off in their quest for victory and the laurel crown, they often did so in a large arena filled with spectators (much like sporting events today). Peering up into the stands full of billowing clothes and moving people looked somewhat like looking up into the clouds.

And that's what it's like for us in our race, too. We're not the only ones to take this journey. People have run this way before, as [Hebrews 11:1](#) shows (a chapter that's often called the "hall of faith"). Our spiritual ancestors, such as [Abraham](#) and [Noah](#), answered God's call and set out on the race set before them. Their example gives us encouragement.

But we don't have to look back to find "heroes of the faith." We can find them today—right in the pews and chairs on any given Sunday morning. Christians are meant to make this journey together, and we're much stronger when we do. Seeing the powerful examples of faithfulness around you can give you the courage you need to charge ahead.

[1Corinthians 4:17](#) "For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church."

Sometimes, however, other problems can keep us from running our race, even when the crowd is cheering us on.

## **Throwing off the Sin that Entangles Us**

If we're to keep chugging along on the right path, we can't do so if we're constantly tripping up. The writer Paul of Hebrews describes it this way:

[Hebrews 12:1](#) "... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

In the sporting events of the ancient world, competitors usually ran in a much more “natural” way than athletes do today. Long before the days of special sprinting attire, the clothes of the time either had to be tied up away from the legs or taken off before running. Otherwise, the runner would get tangled up and fall on his face.

Our Christian race isn’t much different. We can’t run very well if we’re bound up in the snares of sinful living. Those things that seem so satisfying in the moment can take our eyes off the prize and instead, keep us fixated on temporary thrills. But we’re called to a much better path:

**Romans 8:13** “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live”

Life works best when we follow God’s Word and obey His commands in the Bible. He didn’t give us those commands to trap us, but to free us to run our race with endurance. When we do so, our true goal comes into view.

## **Look to Jesus for Endurance and Strength**

While we may glance at the crowd of witnesses around us and we may throw off the things that tangle us up, our ultimate encouragement is in the prize that awaits those of us who live by faith:

**Hebrews 12:2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

At the beginning of the race, Jesus may seem far away in the distance. We know of Him through the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We’ve heard how He has changed other lives. But our race is still new.

Before long, however, we realize that the prize awaiting us is the Savior of our souls, and He's not content to just sit and watch us from the finish line. He's busy working on us as we run the race:

**Philippians 3:10-11** "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

As we run and keep our eyes on Jesus, God works on us, making us more and more like His Son. Ultimately, He will bring us to our long-awaited reward:

**Philippians 3:14** "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Run the race that is set before you. But run it with the hope that God wants you to have in Christ.

## **Why should we run the race?**

### **My Prayer**

Heavenly Father, help us to preach the Word of truth, with all long-suffering and doctrine. Enable us to exhort and encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ, with the same godly passion for the good news of the gospel of Christ that was demonstrated in the life of the apostle Paul. And I pray that in due time we may also say, I have finished the work that You have given me to do - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, to Your praise and glory. This I ask in Jesus' name, AMEN.

Source: <https://www.knowing-jesus.com>

Source: Dr. Edgar J Goodspeed (Paul)