

FINISH THE RACE – Be Encouraged

First Baptist Church Peachtree City

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If you have a copy of the Scriptures, I would invite you to turn 2nd Timothy. When you get there, I'd like for you to write: "LIFE IS _____. I NEED _____." (T-shirt / Forest Gump / Rascal Flatts) Paul says that LIFE is like a race where winning is found in *'finishing well'*. This series entitled, "**Finish the Race**" finds its theme in **2 Timothy 4:7-8**.

For the sake of context, the Apostle Paul met young Timothy while traveling on his first missionary journey (Acts 16). Paul invested much of his life in young Timothy...which led to his ministry calling, and eventually sending him to the city of Ephesus to lead the church there at a very young age. Paul wrote 1st Timothy to the young pastor to help him focused on dealing with ministry and growing a healthy church.

About 15 years have now passed and life is NOT good. Timothy is no longer a young believer, nor a rookie pastor, but he is experiencing great discouragement and fear. Under the Roman Emperor, Nero, these days held the greatest Christian persecution ever known. Paul writes 2nd Timothy from a cold, damp Roman prison where, it appears, he knew that his execution was nearing. Although his situation was grim, Paul writes with great encouragement for God's servant, Timothy, to finish well. (Example)

Like Timothy, we all go through seasons in life where fear or discouragement can cause us to lose focus or seemingly our purpose. Paul challenges Timothy to live every moment with the end in mind...to be determined to finish the race that God has for him...and for each of us. **This message was timely for Timothy...and it is timely for us.** Paul begins with significant encouragement from which I hope we can benefit in two ways:

- (1) We can receive the encouragement God has for us where we are on our journey &**
- (2) We can see 8 ways to encourage others on their journey...so we can all finish well.**

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus, **2** To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

A. Mentor or Fatherly encouragement.

(Example: Paige Patterson)

1. Paul's position gave credibility to the encouragement...ordained by God.
2. Paul's relationship gave credibility to the encouragement...his investment.
3. Paul's encouragement was rooted in their mutual hope through the Gospel.

There is no encouragement like a reminder of the grace, mercy, and peace that come from God and the hope that we have of eternal life through the Gospel. Paul (with the authority of someone who had seen the risen Savior) wants Timothy to reflect.

3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, **4** longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

B. Prayer Encouragement

(Example: Dr. Bill Bennett)

1. We don't know his issues, but Paul did. *Don't assume others know your issues.*
2. (James 5:16) Prayer of a righteous man avails much...not perfect, but guiltless.
3. Ask if you can pray...tell them you are praying...pray with them.

No encouragement like knowing the Holy Spirit prays for you. (Rom. 8:26-27 / Luke 22)

5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. 6 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

C. Personal Encouragement

1. Paying attention to and recalling the details of past experiences is encouraging.
2. Recounting how you have seen God work in a life can be encouraging.

Allowing God (and others) to remind you of His working in and through your life can be encouraging. Sometimes we need to stop and look around to consider how God has and is working in our lives. Deflecting encouragement is pride, not humility.

7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

D. Empowered Encouragement

1. "US" - Timothy's fears or insecurities are unclear...but he is not alone.
2. Interesting - Paul had his own insecurities (Acts 18:9-10 at Corinth)
3. Sometimes we can display fear of association with other Christ followers
4. Paul combats fears with God's promise of His presence and power.
5. This also comes with the equipping derives from discipline... 'spiritual sweat'

Ultimately, our courage, motivation, energy, and endurance to finish the race are not dependent on our ability to push through...but our ability to trust and follow.

9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

E. Purposeful Encouragement

1. Paul reminds Timothy that they are both called to the same team by grace.
2. Paul reminds Timothy that they are both equipped for the team by grace.
3. The Gospel message is primary...bigger than themselves...each has a role.

(Example: Track Team - Spring, 1986)

Romans 12:3-8 tells us that we each play a vital role in God's redemptive plan. One of the greatest encouragements is realizing you are not alone and you have a purpose greater than yourself. This is especially true when we realize that the ONE for whom we run the race has already defeated our greatest opponent...DEATH.

12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

F. Confident Encouragement

1. Paul reminds Timothy of his own personal confidence in Christ.
2. Guard - 'a soldier who is protecting precious treasure'
3. Not only was Christ able to protect a soul, but the ministry of the Gospel

Paul's (our) confidence was in Christ...this is not arrogance, but faith.

13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

G. Ownership Encouragement

1. Your life and ministry matters...own them.
2. Hang on to (sound) Healthy words...Truth...Believing...with Compassion.
3. The Treasure...Every role includes a biblical and Gospel component.

Your life and ministry matter for the Kingdom. Stay true to God's Word, love people, share the Gospel...only you can accomplish your ministry...finish your race. Own it!

(Example: Dave from Wisconsin)

15 You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; 17 but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me- 18 the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day-and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

H. Examples Encouragement

1. Paul did not spend much time bashing the poor examples...we all know them.
2. Paul spent more time building up faithful examples...models for us.

Remember, others are going through exactly what you are, who are handling life better than you...and others who are not handling life as well as you. Be careful about comparisons. (Jesus is our righteous standard for life.) But simply allow the faith journeys of others to challenge you along your own journey. (James MacDonald)

Response: (REVIEW the 8) I would like to conclude by asking three (3) questions:

1. Who has God uniquely placed in your life to encourage today...this week?
I am not Paul...but I believe if you will listen to the Holy Spirit, He will show you who, when and how. You could begin by praying for them now, then send an encouraging note, text or call. The question: **Will you be intentional about it...beginning right NOW?**

2. What encouragement do you need right where you are on your journey?
I am not Paul...but this is the Word of God and He promises to **"...supply everything that you need according to His riches in Glory in Christ Jesus."** (Phi. 4:19)
We all need encouragement...from God's Word...in quiet moments from the Holy Spirit...from a song...and sometimes from a friend. God knows the exact type and timing you need. **It is OK to ask for it...but be ready to receive it.** It is a gift from your awesome Father who loves you. Remember, **deflecting encouragement is not humility, it is pride.**

Often, the best way to start the flow of encouragement is to be an encourager.

3. Maybe you need encouragement today in crossing the line of faith by trusting Christ as your personal Lord and Savior...to experience His grace and forgiveness.

I am not Paul...but I have met Jesus Christ and He can change your life. Whether you want to begin a relationship with Christ...or become a part of this local church body...or have someone encourage you by praying with you...or to pray for someone who needs encouragement...this is your time to respond. **I have asked some folks to join me here around the altar to be encouragers for you. This is a safe, encouraging place...come**