

Finishing the Race

July 6, 2022 in Man in the Mirror Blog

In some of Paul's final words to Timothy, he writes in vivid language that his time on earth is over, and he's satisfied with his life. We, too, want to say, "I gave it all my all" as we're finishing the race. How can we leave a legacy that pleases God?



By Brett Clemmer
President & CEO
Casselberry, FL

"Four score and seven years ago..."

"I have a dream..."

"Give me liberty, or give me death!"

We all recognize these quotes from famous speeches in history. One of my favorites is from Winston Churchill. He went to visit London's Harrow School, the private boarding school he'd attended as a boy, and while there, [he gave a speech](#) to the students.

It was 1941, and it'd been 10 months since his last visit. On the previous occasion, the country had been in a desperate situation. England was trying to fight Hitler's Germany without support—and losing.

But 10 months later, on October 29th, things had dramatically shifted for the better. That day, Churchill said these famous lines to the boys at Harrow:

“Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

As we encounter obstacles and opposition in the Christian life, this memorable speech holds weight for us, too.

[Here on the blog, we've been looking at 2 Timothy through the lens of becoming spiritual fathers and disciple makers.](#) As we get closer to the end of Paul's letter, we find in this week's passage another famous quote that you've no doubt heard before:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** ([2 Timothy 4:6-7](#), emphasis added)

Paul's Home Stretch

After years of pouring into Timothy—his spiritual son—and building the kingdom of God, Paul is near the end of his life.

When he wrote 2 Timothy from prison, he would have chosen his words with the understanding that they might be his last. In verse six, he uses the

metaphor of a drink offering, which symbolized the end of an offering in the Jewish temple: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering.”

Notice he doesn’t say “I am pouring out.” Did he pour himself out for Timothy and others? He did. But he doesn’t say that here. Instead, he says, “I am being poured out.”

Then he writes, “The time of my departure has come.” The word he uses for “time” was one used to connote a significant event or season of opportunity. The word he uses for “departure” is the same one that would’ve been used for an army breaking camp and going home, or a ship pulling up its anchor and heading out of the harbor.

Paul is basically saying, “My whole life has been an offering to God—for Him to use however He wants. He has been in control of my life. Now, my time here is coming to an end, and I am approaching the sacred milestone of going home to the Father.”

Finishing the Race

Paul looks back on his years with contemplative contentment: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

It’s interesting that Paul doesn’t say, “I’ve *won* the fight, I finished the race *first*, I’m *more* faithful than anyone.”

I ran a half marathon 10 years ago, and I vividly remember the home stretch. The race happened to be on Halloween, and so a lot of people did it in costume.

As I was giving it my all to finish, these two young women in bunny ears and bunny tails ran past me. I thought to myself: *There is no way I’m letting someone wearing a bunny costume beat me to the finish line.*

So they’d run past me and then they’d slow down to walk, and I’d old-man-stagger past them. And then they’d start running again, passing me. It went on and on like this until the very end—when they beat me to the finish line.

I may not have won the race. I may have even gotten beaten by women dressed as bunnies. But I ran all the way to the end. I finished the race.

In the Christian life, staying the course until the end *is* victory. Along the way, you have to overcome difficulties, such as those Paul describes in his letter—suffering, false teaching, betrayal, and persecution. The truth is this race is more of an obstacle course!

But participate. Stay the course. Run the race. Fight the good fight. Finish well. That's what Paul did, and that's what we need to do.

A Pace That Pleases God

How will you finish the race? Many of you reading this are mature Christian men who have been busy for a long time doing good things—maybe you've led a small group, volunteered with the youth, served as an elder at church, or helped with sound on Sunday mornings.

But as our careers slow down and our kids move out, we face a choice: we can slow down, or we can keep our foot on the gas.

At Man in the Mirror, our goal is to inspire and equip you to pick up speed. We don't want to see any man let up on the gas to coast into some sort of [spiritual retirement](#).

If you find yourself in a season of life with more time and more margin, then you also have more experience and more opportunities to make an impact. Put the pedal down.

Think about the typical guy between 25 and 40. He's probably starting a marriage, a family, and a career. He's under pressure with demands on his time and competing priorities, all while trying to figure out how to build a meaningful life.

He's short on the very things that you have: time, margin, opportunity, and experience. If you're past that stage of life, you have the margin to fit into the cracks in his schedule.

Will you sacrifice comfort and ease to meet the needs of a younger guy who desperately needs an older guy to invest in him? This is what Paul did with Timothy. And he had no regrets:

Henceforth 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. ([2 Timothy 4:8](#))

Paul is saying, “A wreath of Christ’s righteousness is just waiting for me, and He’s going to put it on my head. But it’s not just for me; it’s for all of you, too.”

You’re going to face obstacles. You’re going to grow tired. But how will you finish the race?

In the words of Churchill: *Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.* We have the power of Christ to overcome the enemy, along with every obstacle, and we need to take younger men along with us as spiritual fathers.

Like Paul did with Timothy, Titus, and so many others, let’s leave a legacy through our investment in the next generations. Let’s live in a way that lets us say with confidence, “I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith.”

THE BIG IDEA: *When we get to the end of our time on earth, we want to be able to say: “I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith.”*

Copyright © 1986-2022 Man in the Mirror