THE SECRET TO FINISHING WELL

(2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Starting the race is relatively easy. Finishing the race and finishing it well is a totally different story. **God calls us to faithfully finish the course of our Christian life and ministry and eagerly hope for His eternal reward.** That is the core message of Paul's final words to Timothy and to all of us who believe in and belong to Christ. Paul's dying words recorded in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 provide us with three essential lessons about faithfully finishing our Christian race.

1. ***We must face our death with _____.***
   We must all acknowledge the fact that we are one day closer to the end of our earthly life (Hebrews 9:27). Since the day of our death is already scheduled on the calendar of God, how should we approach it? The Apostle Paul shows us how to face death in a God-honoring way. Paul does not view his death as a tragic or a dreadful event. On the contrary, he considers his death as a glorious act of offering himself to God and a glorious departure to be with Christ forever (2 Timothy 4:6; Romans 12:1; Luke 23:46; Philippians 1:21,23; 2 Corinthians 5:8).

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2. ***We must fulfill our _____.***
   The overarching purpose of every believer's life is summed up in the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* The Christian life is an agonizing battle. It is not a pleasant picnic or an entertaining ride. All true Christians are vigorously engaged every day in this noble war and good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12; Luke 13:24). The Christian life is also a race or course uniquely laid out, designed and mapped out for us by God Himself (Hebrews 12:1). There is no greater fulfillment in life than finishing the course and ministry that we receive from our Lord Jesus (Acts 20:24). Furthermore, the purpose of the Christian life is keeping the faith. The secret to finishing well is being grounded in God's Word, established in the Christian faith and rooted in the gospel of Christ (2 Timothy 1:13,14; 4:7).

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3. ***We must fix our hope on _____.***
   The Christian on his deathbed has a blessed hope and a promising future. As Paul has testified, there is an imperishable crown reserved for all believers in eternity future (2 Timothy 4:8). It is the greatest quality of a crown for it is the eternal crown of perfect and permanent righteousness which will be awarded to us by our Lord Jesus Himself on the glorious day of His return.

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