

Finishing the Race **2 Timothy 4**

Introduction:

1. In our text, the apostle Paul is penning his last words before he would die a martyr for Christ.
2. The aged apostle had many battle scars from a life that was dedicated to serving the Lord Jesus Christ (stoned, whipped, beaten with rods, three times shipwrecked, imprisoned, etc.).
3. But notice what he says in verses 6-7, at the end of his life. *"I have finished my course."*
 - The word *"course"* literally means "race."
 - It was not unusual for Paul to liken the Christian life to a race. He did this in other places in Scripture also.
4. Today there is a big race in Daytona Beach. It is called The Daytona 500. It is not the Daytona 20 or 50, but 500! It is a 500-mile race. It is a race of endurance. Every driver wants to finish his course.
5. The Christian life is the same way. It is not a 50-yard dash; it is a marathon. Just like the race here in Daytona today, endurance is the key. 2:3, 10; 3:11, 4:5
6. Some Christians start out well, but then they give up and quit. They run out of gas.
 - There won't be any trophies given out today for the driver leading lap #1.
7. Christian, you must finish your course. Finish the race. All of us will trip and fall and make mistakes. But the question is, will you get up and keep going? Will you stay in the race, or let Satan knock you out of the race? Maybe you are fighting discouragement today. Don't give up!
8. How can we finish the race? Let's look into 2 Timothy 4 and see.

First, look for Christ's appearing. vs. 1, 8

1. Recently we had a family come over to our house for some fellowship. Do you know what I kept doing? I kept looking for their appearing (Deniece told me to). I had the window blinds open, and I would walk by and look, and look, and look, until I saw their appearing.
2. Christian, somebody very special is coming and will appear, and that person is none other than our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus is coming!
 - Where is He coming from? *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven..."*
 - How is He coming? *"...with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."*
 - What is going to happen when He returns? *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..."*
 - What happens after His return? *"...and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*
3. Are you looking for His appearing? Do you love His appearing? Paul said that there is a crown of righteousness to all those that love His appearing. vs. 8
4. If you know that somebody could show up at your house at any moment, what do you do? You make sure the house is clean and that you are ready.

5. In the same way, if we live every day in expectation of Christ's appearing, it will cause us to live pure and holy, and be ready to meet Him! It will keep you in the race!

Second, overcome adversity. vs. 2-5

1. Whoever wins the Daytona 500 will probably have to overcome adversity to some degree. A driver does not usually lead lap #1, stay out in front uncontested, lead every lap of the race, and coast across the finish line. There are mechanical issues to fix, pit problems to overcome, drivers ahead of you to pass, wrecks to avoid, steering issues to subdue, etc.
2. It is the exact same way in the Christian life. If we are to finish our course victoriously, we will have to overcome some adversity, guaranteed. Look at verses 2-5.
3. There will be people problems to overcome (vs. 3-4). There always are in the ministry. People will turn on you, turn against you, attack you, disappoint you, hurt your feelings, etc.
4. There will be afflictions to overcome (vs. 5). The phrase "*endure afflictions*" means "to undergo hardship." There are going to be some hurts and some scrapes and bruises spiritually.
 - It won't be smooth sailing.
5. If we are going to finish our course, we cannot allow afflictions to "*move*" (to shake or disturb) us. 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4
 - So many times, believers allow problems and afflictions to shake them up and disturb them. "Why is God doing this to me?" God has graciously saved you, forgiven you, redeemed you, given you eternal life, and provided you a home in heaven forever. That is the wrong question to be asking. God warned you to expect trouble down here. This earth is under the dominion of Satan and his evil world system. Problems are inevitable. Christ had them!
 - Adversity will swallow you up if you get that kind of attitude. I like the song, "He ain't never done me nothin', done me nothin' but good."
 - Victory doesn't come by God waving a magic wand and making all the troubles go away. Victory comes many times by endurance. vs. 5

Third, place your love in the right place. vs. 8, 10

1. What did Paul love, according to verse 8? He loved Christ's appearing, which means he loved Jesus Christ! If you love somebody's appearing, it means you love them!
2. But notice a guy named Demas in verse 10. Demas had been one of Paul's co-workers in the ministry. What did Demas love? Demas loved the world system of Satan. This was his downfall. This is what kept him from finishing his course.
3. It is so easy to fall in love with the world. The world promises pleasure and fun. It doesn't deliver.
 - **Illustration:** You see a beautiful, multi-colored stick laying on the ground. It has amazing colored patterns on it and you think, "Wow. How beautiful. That is so unusual." You got to pick it up and realize it is a poisonous snake.
4. Christian, we are not of this world (1 Corinthians 2:12). The world is a venomous poison that will drain you of your spiritual life and strength. As our love for the world increases,

our love for Jesus Christ diminishes (1 John 2:15). Jesus said that you cannot love and serve two masters.

5. If we want to finish our course strong, we must love the right thing. Love Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
6. As you love Jesus Christ and keep your eyes upon Him, He will strengthen you to overcome every adversity of life and finish your race!