

# Run the Race Marked Out For You (Part 2)

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## Review 1

### Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, 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.** <sup>2</sup>Let us fix 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.

A quick review on what we covered last Sunday –

## The importance of correct perspectives

- I. To develop a good sense of **purpose**.  
“**Develop**” suggests a journey, a process - we need to be very clear on our purpose as a person in a family, in the community we live in. We need to be clear why we are who we are, why we are where we are. Nothing in our life occurs by chance.
- II. We need to **plan** - God is a God of order. The opposite of planning is chaos. There is order in natural life - the Earth revolves around the sun.

### Genesis 8:22

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.

God has destined order from the beginning, he has ordained that as long as this Earth remains there will be 4 seasons, day and night. They will never cease for as long as we are on this Earth. This is order. The human body functions in order as well – the entire biological make up of our physical selves. There is order within order.

- III. And we must **pray** as a posture of total dependency on God.
- IV. And we must have **priorities** because of the conflicting demands on our time.
- V. We need to **work hard** - God gave Man work even before he fell.

The question we must ask ourselves is **why we want to run the race marked out individually for us.**

(I) **Why Run the Race?**

**1 Timothy 4:1**

Now the Spirit expressly says that in **latter times** some will **depart from the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and **doctrines of demons**

We are living in end times, these are perilous times. Some will depart from the faith as they are sucked in by the philosophy of the world. The pervading relativism, the liberalism – that says that everybody has a choice that there is no one sole truth. The same goes for beliefs – you can now choose whatever you want to believe in that it is all the same. And if it is all the same, this god is a schizophrenic god. Anything goes with this god – but of course this is not the way it is. The God of the Bible has absolutes, there are absolute truths about God.

**Proverbs 23:7**

For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

We need to be clear on what we believe. Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits. The Father of all lies, the Devil, will turn those unsure away from God. Our belief systems will determine our lives, our lifestyles.

**2 Timothy 3:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>But know this, that in the **last days perilous times** will come: <sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>**having a form of godliness but denying its power**. And from such people turn away!

The world will give an acknowledgement to whoever this Supreme Being is. This is what the verse refers to as “**a form of godliness**”. They accede to its directions, duties, and then go back to their lives without being changed. There is a form of godliness but these people are denying its power. The Bible says from such people turn away – watch the company you keep. If not we ourselves will deviate from the course God wants us to go through. Be sure you are running God's race for you, keeping to God's agenda for you.

(II) **Ensure you are running the RIGHT race**

i.e. God's Agenda For You.

1. **Who** am I becoming?

**Romans 3:23**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Originally God wants us to be on the level of the image of God, operating and ruling with God in the heavenly realms, in heaven and on earth. But Man fell short of this glory of God, and Christ has come to save us. And our journey on earth should be working towards the goal of returning to the image of Christ. One of the vehicles

to grow and move towards this goal is to belong to a Cell Group (CG), not just coming to church. Only in a CG can 1 John 4:20 be realized.

## **1 John 4:20**

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

Discipleship is when the rubber hits the road in the CG. We want everyone to learn partake to the word of God, to feed your spirit man. Physically our bodies will cry for food in order to be sustained. Likewise, we read the word of God because we are hungry, not because we are obligated to. Do not grow insensitive to your spirit man if it is starving for the Word of God. Everybody must **read** the word of God, **record** what is important, **reflect**, ponder, meditate – do not allow the birds of the air to snatch away the seed – and lastly, **respond**. Like the wise and foolish builder, both have heard the word, but only one responded and survived the winds and rains of life. If your house is built on the rock, as a response to what the Word of God tells us, you will weather the storms of life.

We need to apply the word of God, and we can only learn how to do this in a CG. You need to belong to a community where you can open your heart, be plugged in to a support group covered by the blood of Christ. You can never relate to the whole world, but you can find 3-4 people you can relate to in a meaningful manner. We need to conform to the image of Christ.

## **Romans 8:29**

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

## **Hebrews 12:1**

... the sin which so easily ensnares us...

2. Am I fulfilling God's **Purpose** and **Destiny** for me?

Fulfilling God's purpose and destiny for us – Run the race marked for YOU. God has a purpose, a destiny for you. Everything in our lives – our spouses, our children, our friends - these are our **ministry** meant especially for us.

## **Ephesians 2:10**

For **we are His workmanship, created** in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The natural good works that we do are to those we live with, interact with. We need to make the effort to nourish our marriages. We need to begin in the home – to fulfill our roles and responsibilities to be a blessing to those who cross our paths. We need to learn to love, care, pray and be a blessing to our children.

## **Acts 20:24**

But none of these things move me; nor do I count **my life** dear to myself,<sup>[a]</sup> so that I may **finish my race with joy**, and **the ministry** which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul's goal here is to preach the gospel of the love of Christ. We move from our homes to our CGs, our churches, our neighborhoods as we mature in Christ. Faithful in little, faithful in much.

(III) **We must run this race with an aim to finish WELL.**

**Luke 14:28-30**

<sup>28</sup>For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and **count the cost**, whether he has enough to **finish it**— <sup>29</sup>lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'This man began to build and was **not able to finish**'?

At the back of our minds we need to have a spirit of excellence, to put in the maximum effort to finish our race well. The key here is to **finish well**. The rewards come when we finish well. Our race in life are not sprints, but marathons. Many people start out very well, but do not end well.

**Biblical Examples of those who did NOT finish well**

**King Saul** was humble. God told him that if he did all things right, his position would be established, he would be prosperous. But Saul got jealous and envious of David – he ended up in jealousy, murder, and consulting a witch – a place of a fool.

**Solomon** was well brought up by David and Bathsheeba – he was a wise young man who governed the children of Israel well. But he had a weakness for all kinds of women – and his heart was led astray by the many different religions of his women – the wisest yet the stupidest man.

When we rebel against God there is a deterioration process in our thinking, our ideas, our decisions and manner of living. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. This applies to all of us as believers. If we live independently on our own strength, we are on dangerous ground. God exalts the humble but opposes the proud.

In Colossians **Demas** abandoned the faith and went to the world, despite the fact that he was initially a man who labored with Paul.

**Biblical Examples of those who Finished Well**

**King David** was not a perfect man, but he was a man after God's own heart. Even in his years of adultery and murder, he repented and recovered, ending up as a man after God's own heart. God knows our frailty, our weaknesses.

**Joseph** began as a man who did not know how to deliver his dreams and visions but ended up as the second most powerful man in Egypt.

**Paul** on the other hand says he kept the faith and ran the race. If we want to finish well, we must run victoriously. It means that we are more than conquerors; we are on top of a situation, not buried at the bottom of it. This does not mean an absence of trials. It means that as we go through it we come out on top, God will come through for us.

## The **PERSON** we are becoming.

1. Work on our **Relationship** with God.

In order to become like Christ, we must work on our relationship with God. It means regular intake of the word, coming to the house of God, gathering with believers in your CG.

Being in the presence of God is like charcoal in a BBQ fire. If a piece of the charcoal is extracted, the flame in it dies out. We need to gather as often as possible to hear the word of God, feel the presence of God, to build our relationship with God together. We need to strengthen the cord of our relationship with God. We need to develop the fruit of the spirit year by year. We need to manifest the love of God.

2. Grow in **Christ-likeness**.

### **1 Corinthians 13:4-5**

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Do not keep a record of wrongs, we do it to our own defilement and hurt. We must grow and mature in Christ-likeness this year.

3. Personal **Significance**, **Self-esteem**, **Self-image**.

### **1 John 2:15-16**

<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

Our personal significance and self esteem, our self image must be rooted and established in the love of God so that we will not crave for the things of the world. We must be centered in Christ, not easily shaken, not easily jealous and not easily disturbed by the world around us. We should be rooted in the love of God and secure in the Lord.

4. Work on our **Bodily Health** and **Fitness**.

We must also work on our physical fitness this year. Set goals for all aspects of your life, not just the social and spiritual.

5. Aim for **Financial** freedom.



Aim for financial freedom. The debtor is servant to the creditor. We have to make good financial decisions. As young adults we are earning salary on a steeply rising curve. As we grow older we must make a choice to be more prudent. Be wise, your money is your servant. Money is neutral, it should not be your master. Plan to use it wisely.

## The **PURPOSE** of all our relationships.

### 1. Our Family - Marriage and Children

We must intentionally nurture our families, first our marriages, then our children. Every child must be intentionally parented. Do not let them grow up by themselves. As long as they are under your household, your covering, they are your responsibility.

### 2. Our Oikos - People with regular contact

People we come into regular contact do not come by chance. Do they know you are a believer? We are in the position to influence them.

### 3. Our Work/Job - Money, Fulfillment, Salt and Light

Our jobs allow us certain comforts in life. Determine your contentment level. If not, such a level is never-ending. What kind of lifestyle do you want to have?

Learn to be a blessing to others you come into contact with through your job. Your job must give you **fulfillment of the personality and talents** that God has given you. You are **salt and light** in your job. Think through about your **purpose** in your job. Every work that we do must be **meaningful**. Even as a parent, we have to create an environment that is conducive for a good home. There are cries for strife-free homes, cries for peace in the family.

### 4. Our Place in the Body - Life in Church, in a Cell Group

What is our place in the body of Christ? We must come and be blessed, spiritually uplifted, strengthened, comforted. We must also be equipped to grow in Christ. New believers must be properly rooted and grounded in the word of God. Everyone must grow in spiritual maturity as disciples of Christ. We must be blessings to others.

Being blessed - Edified and Equipped

Be a blessing - Serving and Sharing Christ

(IV) Be clear on these 2 doctrines, they are fundamental

### 1. The Doctrine of **SALVATION**.

### **Ephesians 2:8-9**

<sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.

We are saved by the grace of God. We have eternal life through faith. Faith is to believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is not by good deeds, not by a priest praying for you, not through charity or philosophy of life. There is no other way to be saved but by the grace of God. We need to receive Jesus into our lives.

Paul repeats that we are saved by grace; it is a gift from God, not of works. Even as Christians we continue to live the rest of our Christian life by the grace of God. Our salvation is entirely the mercy of God. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation, our eternal life through Jesus Christ alone. It is not by works of righteousness that we have done.

### **Titus 3:5**

he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit

According to God's mercy we are washed clean, renewed and empowered by the Holy Spirit – there is no other foundation anyone can lay besides that which is laid.

### **1 Corinthians 3:11**

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The truth is vital to be grasped, because we will otherwise live our Christian lives on the performance treadmill trying to earn the favor of God, constantly under guilt and under condemnation. This foundation of the doctrine of salvation says that we are completely forgiven in Christ.

### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

God made him who had no sin to be sin[a] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We have the righteousness of God. We are doomed to be crucified and dead – but Jesus as sinless died in our place. This is the divine exchange. We continue to live our Christian life all because of the grace of God. Throughout our Christian life we must learn how to believe and how to receive the grace of God. The cross of Jesus makes all the difference between the old and the new covenant.

### **Deuteronomy 28:1-2**

<sup>1</sup>If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. <sup>2</sup>All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God..

With the old covenant the Israelites were blessed only when they obeyed God, but when they disobeyed negative, evil consequences came. That is why Hebrews states that the old covenant was inferior.

### **Deuteronomy 28:15**

However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you..

God knew that Man on his own would never be able to fully posture himself to obey his commandments. That is why Jesus came – from Son of God to Son of Man. And by his one sinless, perfect sacrifice, by his obedience to God – all that is required of us is to believe in Jesus and receive what he has done. This is the difference between the old and the new covenant. The cross of Jesus makes all the difference, and we must grasp this.

Failure to grasp this will cause to continue reverting to the old covenant – we will continue to mix grace and the law. We must learn how to believe and receive. That is why the new covenant is the better covenant, premised on better promises. This is the foundation that says:

“I am completely forgiven in Christ, my past, present and future sins. When I do wrong because I am human, I come back to the cross. God is faithful not because of me, but because Jesus has already paid the penalty for our sins, His blood has been shed.”

### **1 John 1:7**

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

**1 John 1** Talks about fellowship with God. Position-wise we are all perfect in Christ. Constantly remind yourself this: “I am completely forgiven by Christ, I am deeply loved by God, I am protected by God.”

## 2. The Doctrine of **WORKS**.

A. Works involve **Efforts, Energy, Time, Resources** and **Sometimes Pain**.

Not for our salvation. Works involve effort, energy, time, resources. And sometimes works involve pain, when we have to go the second mile, to tolerate a difficult CG member. Works pertain around these 2 broad areas:-

- i. Our **Being/Living** - the **Person** we are becoming
- ii. Our **Serving** - Fulfilling the **Purposes** of God in our lives

B. Our works will be tested by **Fire**.

### **1 Corinthians 3:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup>his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.

Broadly Paul gives 6 picture depictions of our works - our lives. Wood, hay and stubble or gold, silver, precious stones. They will all be tested by fire. Stubble is very dry grass, easily burnt up by fire. Hay is grass rolled up together, but with moisture retained, thus fire cannot burn it up as fast as stubble. Wood will be the slowest to be burnt. When fire is used to purify gold or silver, a lot of heat is needed to purify these metals. These are picture languages of our works, our lives and the purpose we are fulfilling. The fire will test each one's work. Works are either good or bad.

- C. Works are either **Good** or **Bad**.

Works that are **Good** will be **Rewarded** whereas works that are **Bad** will **Suffer Loss**. If each family member fulfills the purpose he or she is meant to fill, he/she will be rewarded. All our sins will be recorded. Our sins will find us out, whatever you sow you will reap.

### **1 Corinthians 3:8**

The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

The emphasis is that each one will receive his own reward. We are all one in the body of Christ, each will receive the rewards according to his own labour.

- D. The testing of our works by fire is at the **Judgment Seat of Christ**.

### **2 Corinthians 5:10**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

- E. Bad Works means **Losses**.

### **1 Corinthians 3:14**

If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

And obviously works that are bad will suffer loss. We are not talking about salvation, we are talking about works. The testing of our works by fire will be at the Judgment seat of Christ. Every believer will be judged.

Many people say that the Judgment seat of Christ is for rewards only, but read the verse carefully again. Both good and bad works will have consequences. Bad works will reap losses – blame, fault, offense, shame.

### **1 Corinthians 3:15**

If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

### **1 John 2:28**

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Jesus is coming back as we all know – when Jesus appears, don't be ashamed before him. There is an accountability day when we stand before him at the Judgment seat of Christ. This is what the Bible exhorts us to be, to be blameless and without fault.

### **Philippians 1:10**

so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ

This is the posture that Paul took. He strived, suggesting intentional effort, to have a conscience clear before God and before Man. Whoever we are and whatever we do must be pleasing to God. This is because if we try to please everyone, to have a fear of Man, we are caught in a snare of the Devil. Do everything to the best of your ability. Just do what you can, commit it to God through prayer and leave it to God.

### **Jude 24**

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

The Bible continually exhorts us to pay attention to our lives, to be without fault.

#### F. Good Works mean **Rewards**

### **1 John 2:28**

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Rewards bring us confidence and joy, there is confidence when we serve God. Judgment begins in the house of the Lord, thus we must get our lives in order. But remember that there is no comparison, competition or condemnation. We should each examine our lives, be provoked to live our lives right before God, not go into a condemnation mode. But should we abort our race half way through, be deviated from the course we should go, we lose our reward – the things we have worked for.

### **2 John 8**

Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.

Like Demas, when he became lukewarm towards God, we will lose our reward, or get less than our full reward.

### **Revelation 3:11**

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

The crown is a symbol of your reward. The Devil will work day and night to steal kill and destroy, to use people around you to distract you, to backslide.

### **Revelation 2:25**

Only hold on to what you have until I come.

The whole idea of persevering and enduring is striving to finish well. We must be plugged into the body life of Christ – stop being a spectator – sink your roots into a church that the Lord leads you to. Hold fast to what you have. Our journey in discipleship will be rewarded. Discipleship is to follow Christ, to be like our master and lord Jesus Christ. It is to become like Christ, growing in Christ-likeness, taking up our cross. This the Lord will reward.

## **Conclusion**

### **Matthew 16:24-27**

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup>What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

To deny yourself and put on Christ to go the second mile to help a brother, to listen to a fellow CG member, to encourage another in Christ – this is serving the Lord. Serve others as Jesus served, and you will be rewarded.

The works to deny yourself, works to take up your cross daily, your works to follow him – everything that we think and do are recorded by our guardian angels.

### **Malachi 3:17-18**

<sup>17</sup>"They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. <sup>18</sup>And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

God makes a distinction between those who serve him and those who do not. To serve God is to be a channel of God's blessing, to yield yourself as a vessel to speak the word of God, be His messenger of words of comfort and encouragement.

### **Revelation 22:12**

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Jesus knows that the Church is living in a fallen world, his sons and daughters are persevering in the midst of a world laden with sin in the end times as lawlessness and discouragement increases, as darkness gets darker and the light gets brighter. God will give to everyone his reward according to his work, remember this is not Salvation. He will come ready to give his reward – an opportunity to reign and rule with Him.

Run in such a way that you may obtain your prize. Do not run blindly, run the right race. Do not live your life with uncertainty, know who you are, know whose you are. To clarify uncertainty you need to be clear, developing the 9 purposes of you as an individual. Discipline your body such that there is order in our lives. Plan for everything and examine our lives carefully this year. Know the person we are becoming, the purpose we are to fulfill and all that God has planned for us.