**The Faithful Finish the Race: Living by Faith Series # 8 Handout**

**2 Timothy 4:1-8 NIV**

**4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:2Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.**

Timothy, and each of us are commanded to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Those who can preach, should preach with excellence. Those who can teach should teach with all their ability. Those who bear witness of what God has done for them should testify to everyone who will listen. We must get the good news of Christ out.

**2 Timothy 4:3For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.**

There will be a season, a set time in God’s plans leading up to the return of Christ when people will not admit, bear with, nor endure wholesome Christian teaching and the lifestyle it espouses.

In a time like when people reject God’s truth, we are commanded to keep our head. Be calm, think carefully and biblically.

**2 Timothy 4:6For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. 7I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.**

Paul has boldly preached, suffered hardships, used every acceptable means to make clear the truth of Christ, and defended the faith from falsehood and teachers using the word of God for illicit purposes. But more than that, Paul told us what he saw across the finish line.

In a word, Paul is telling us that everyone who believes in Christ and runs the race of this life in loving obedience to Jesus will be awarded the crown of righteousness. This is why we don’t merely start the race and give up, we start and we persevere so that we can finish. The crown is not earned, it is bestowed upon those who live by faith day in and day out because they have been transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ!

**Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV**

**12 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, 2fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

If you have believed in Jesus Christ for salvation, then you have started the most important race there is. All around us, in the heavenlies and on the earth right now are others who have lived or are living the life of faith. They are watching, but not as mere spectators, but as examples, as cheerleaders, as coaches, and as champions.

Right now, you and I are running the marathon. As we run we are heralds of our God and King’s holy message and good news. None of us runs alone. For the cloud of witnesses includes God. In fact, God set all the records in Jesus Christ. We are to live like Jesus, serve like Jesus, endure hardship like Jesus, but also we are to triumph like and with Christ.

This means:

We need to avoid sin, temptations that pull us off course, and obstacles that might get us tangled up and make us stumble. To do this we must focus on truth, sound teaching, and holy living.

We need to have the mindset of a marathoner. It takes stamina and determination to successfully run a long distance. Pace matters. We pace ourselves by our utilization of holy rhythms. These are things like keeping Sabbath, regular prayer, devotional study of the Bible, intentionally serving others so that we minister to them in Jesus’ name, participating in the sacraments, and in acts of cheerful sacrifice through the use of our time, talents, and treasure.

We need to keep following Jesus. He marked out the racecourse. He successfully completed it, and He is our encouragement.

Run the race of the life of faith so that you finish it!