

Message Two

Finishing the Course

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 4:7b; Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:24-26; Heb. 12:1-2a

I. “I have finished the course”—2 Tim. 4:7b:

- A. Paul began to run the heavenly race after the Lord took possession of him, and he continually ran (1 Cor. 9:24-26; Phil. 3:12-14) that he might finish it (Acts 20:24).
- B. Now at the end he triumphantly proclaimed, “I have finished the course” (2 Tim. 4:7b); for this he will receive from the Lord a reward—the crown of righteousness (v. 8).

II. A proper Christian life involves running the course, running the race, for the carrying out of God’s economy according to His eternal purpose—1 Cor. 9:24; Eph. 1:11; 3:11:

- A. We need to seek out the journey that the Lord has ordained for us and faithfully walk on it, paying any price to wholeheartedly continue on our journey until we reach the end—2 Tim. 4:7b.
- B. The journey that the Lord has ordained for us is the race that we all run—Heb. 12:1.
- C. We need to “run with endurance the race which is set before us”—v. 1:
 1. Like the apostle Paul, all Christians must run the race to win the prize, not salvation in the common sense but a reward in a special sense—10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14-15; 9:26-27; Phil. 3:13-14.
 2. We need to run the race with endurance, suffering the opposition with endurance—Heb. 12:2-3.
- D. We run the Christian race by “looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith”—v. 2a:
 1. Jesus is the Author of faith, the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith—v. 2:
 - a. The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith—Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16.
 - b. Our believing is our appreciation of Christ as a reaction to His attraction—Rom. 10:17.
 - c. We need to look away unto Jesus with undivided attention by turning away from every other object—Heb. 12:1-2a; S. S. 1:4; Psa. 27:4.
 - d. When we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element.
 2. Faith is a substantiating ability, the ability by which we substantiate, give substance to, the things unseen or hoped for—Heb. 11:1:
 - a. We must exercise our spirit of faith, our mingled spirit, to believe and to speak the things that we have experienced of the Lord—2 Cor. 4:13.
 - b. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit—1 Cor. 6:17.
 3. We do not regard, look at, the things that are seen but the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal—2 Cor. 4:18:

- a. The Christian life is a life of things not seen—Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8; Gal. 6:10.
 - b. The degradation of the church is the degradation from the unseen things to the seen things; the Lord's recovery is to recover His church from the things seen to the things not seen—John 20:25; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 8:24-25; 1 Pet. 1:8.
4. Jesus is the Perfecter of faith, the Finisher and Completer of faith—Heb. 12:2:
- a. As the Completer of faith, the Lord Jesus continually infuses Himself into us as the believing element and ability.
 - b. When we look away unto Him, He ministers heaven, life, and strength to us, transfusing and infusing us with all that He is, so that we may be able to run the heavenly race and live the heavenly life on earth—2 Cor. 3:18.
 - c. As we look away unto Him continually, He will finish and complete the faith that we need to run the heavenly race—Heb. 12:1-2a.
- E. We need to be encouraged and warned by the type of the children of Israel, whose journey toward the good land typifies the Christian race toward our good land, the all-inclusive Christ—1 Cor. 10:1-13:
- 1. We have been redeemed through Christ, delivered out of Satan's bondage, and brought into the revelation of God's economy.
 - 2. We may yet fail to reach the goal of God's calling, that is, to enter into the possession of our good land, Christ, and enjoy His riches for the kingdom of God that we may be His expression in the present age and participate in the fullest enjoyment of Christ in the kingdom age—Phil. 3:12-14; Matt. 25:21, 23.
- F. The last part of the journey ordained by God for each one of us is the most difficult part of the journey—cf. Mark 6:45-51:
- 1. An important thing in the Christian life is to seek out the journey that the Lord has ordained and faithfully walk in it.
 - 2. We may be delighted to be on the right course, but how we run and end it is still a question.
- G. We should not grow weary, fainting in our soul for any reason (Heb. 12:3); rather, we should be those who run the race to the end:
- 1. To be weary is to be without strength in the soul; everything seems to be in vain.
 - 2. The one who falls down and rises again is the best runner: "Do not rejoice against me, O my enemy; / When I fall, I will rise up; / When I sit in the darkness, / Jehovah will be a light to me"—Micah 7:8.
 - 3. We should not give up, become weary, or faint in our soul but look away unto Jesus and run the race set before us—Heb. 12:2a.