Series: General

Message: The Last 90 Day Challenge 2 Tim 4\_7

Text: 2 Timothy 4:7

Theme:

Date: December 30, 2018

Location: Christ Community EFC

Dana, her sister, and Dana’s niece all took part in what is called the last 90 day challenge.

The idea behind this 90 day challenge is this. We all know that a lot of people will start the New Year with a New Year’s Resolution.

But what happens is, knowing that in January, we are going to start a new diet, we are going to start exercising, we are going to do make some kind of change to improve ourselves…in January.

So we kind of give up on doing anything now…I’m going to starting eating right in January so I might as well take a second helping tonight.

I am going to start exercising in January so I am not going to walk today.

So the idea behind the Last 90 Day Challenge is, rather than giving up on making change until January, what if we committed to living our last 90 days of this year as hard as you are committing to living the first 30 days of the New Year?

What if instead of a downhill slide into 2019, you are ramping up—you finish well!

In other words, instead of planning how we are going to start next year, let’s focus on how we are going to finish this year.

Full disclosure: So they started, October 1st. I, being a supportive husband—well all I can say is that I cut way down on my ice cream.

This whole Last 90 Day Challenge has got me thinking, not just about my physical wellbeing, but what about my spiritual health?

And not just about how am I going to finish 2018 or 2019, but how am I going to finish the next 20 years or so?

How different will thangs be it we focus on how we want to finish rather than on who we want to start?

[Watch video]

**If you have your Bible, please turn to 2 Timothy chapter 4, and, for context, we will be reading the first 8 verses. (page 996)**

As we head into 2019, I don’t want us to just focus on how we hope to start the year. Rather I want us to consider how we are going to finish—2019—how we are going to finish our time on earth.

It has been said that: “Our life in Christ on earth is a journey and a race. It is not won in a moment but in a life-time of walking with the Lord, obeying the will of God and suffering against sin.

Salvation and eternal life is offered freely (Ephesians 2:8) in a moment but the walking out of this grace is every moment of our life on this earth.

What greatly matters is how we finish in the Christian life not just how we begin.”

Here in in 2 Timothy 4, we’re looking at the last chapter that the apostle Paul wrote before he was executed, beheaded, under the persecution of the Roman emperor Nero.

We are in a race. This race is not so much to finish first as it is to finish well. We need to maintain our focus if we are going to finish well.

Throughout the Bible we find people of God who start well and yet finish poorly. Others who run well and who stumble along the way. And some who start poorly but finish well.

I want to encourage you that no matter how you have been doing on this journey of life, there is still time to finish well.

The apostles Paul is a great example of finishing well on the journey of life. Paul did not start out so well.

He was a persecutor of Christians. He was even there at the stoning of Stephen, giving his approval.

But the Lord gave him the opportunity for a fresh start. He then took the next steps of faith and continued on in the journey.

He stood firm when things did not seem fair and he finished well. Even as he faced execution from a Roman prison, he finished well.

Let’s see what we can learn from Paul so we might finish well too.

2 Timothy 4:1-8 “**I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.**

**3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.**

**5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

**6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.**

**7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

**8 Henceforth there is laid up 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 loved his appearing**.”

Paul, nearing his execution, is concerned for others to come to salvation and encourages Timothy to “discharge the duties” of his ministry.

How is it that Paul is able to face what he is facing and yet come to the end of the race, the end of his journey of life and still be focused on others coming to Christ?

It is because Paul is focused on the eternal, not the temporary.

If we are going to finish well, we need to keep our focus as well.

Keeping our focus on the eternal is what is going to enable us to do the other things that are required for finishing well.

What are those other things? Well, Paul tells us in these verses.

**First, finishing well requires fighting the good fight.**

2 Timothy 4:7a “**I have fought the good fight**…”

Notice this does not say fight each other, but fight the good fight.

What is fighting the good fight? Well, I’m glad you asked.

Hebrews describes fighting the good fight as running with perseverance.

If you would turn over to Hebrews chapter 12. You’re in 2 Timothy, so keep going, past Titus and Philemon and you’ll get to Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:1 “**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance** [or perseverance] **the race that is set before us**…”

Note first of all you must persevere—run with endurance if you are going to fight the good fight. This is not a one and done kind of thing.

So in this good fight, what must we preserver in doing?

There are two things that go hand in hand in this fight and the author of Hebrews outlines them for us in Hebrews 12:1-2

Your in 2 Timothy, keep going past Titus and Philemon and you will come to Hebrews 12:1-2a: “**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus** [let us fix our eyes on Jesus]**, the founder and perfecter of our faith**…”

We need to fight against any hindrances and sins that seek to invade our life.

We need to fight for keeping our eyes fixed on Christ and not on the hindrances and sins and temptations that Satan puts in front of us.

Now this is not nearly as easy as it sounds. This is why it is a fight. It is difficult and requires that we battle.

And we need to keep our faith strong. How do we keep our faith strong?

We keep our faith strong be spending time with God in prayer and devotions, reading his word and meditating on it. Doing Bible study as a group. Being connected and accountable to other Christians.

Doing these things will help us fight the good fight by being strengthened to resist temptation and keeping our eyes on Jesus so we can walk worthy of the calling he has given us.

These are the things that are going to keep you running well on your journey and bring you to the point of being able to finish well.

**Finishing well** not only requires fighting the good fight, but it **requires that you finishing your work.**

Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7 that not only had he fought the good fight but that he has “…**finished the race**”.

Finish the race…Does that mean just getting to the end and dying? No.

In Acts 20, while talking to the Ephesian elders, Paul fleshes this idea out.

In Acts 20:23-24 we read: “…**the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.**

**24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God**.

Paul says that he considers his life worth nothing, if only he can finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given to him—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.

Now, Paul had a special calling, testifying to the gospel of God’s grace from Jerusalem to Rome. That was his special mission in life.

Not every one of us have been given the same mission as Paul, but God has given each of us the purpose of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.

We need to work toward our purpose. For most of us a major part of our testifying is found in what many of us consider normal life.

We testifying to the gospel of God’s grace as husbands who loves his wife.

We testifying to the gospel of God’s grace as wives who respects there husband.

We testifying to the gospel of God’s grace as the way you raise your kids in a godly manner.

We testifying to the gospel of God’s grace as you live your life.

Don’t overlook the tasks that God gives you that seem small to you, that may be less visible to people, but are so important and visible to the Lord, like your family.

We must continue to remain faithful to the few things even as we have been given more responsibility.

Maybe He has called you to mission work. Maybe He is calling you to service in the church. Maybe He is calling you into full time ministry.

Not following His call and finishing the work He gives you will only cause you to finish this journey of life with regrets.

If you are going to finish well, I echo Paul’s statement.

“**See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord**.”

Finally,

**Finishing well requires faithfulness to Christ.**

2 Timothy 4:7: “**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith**.”

We must keep the faith. We must continue to trust Christ.

Hebrews 11:1 “**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen**.

If we are going to put ourselves in a position of finishing well, we must be faithful to follow Christ.

Even when we don’t fully see how He can work it out. Even when we are fearful.

He has given us the faith we need to take the next step in front of us so that we will be in position to finish well.

So, I want you to ask yourself the question, “What can I do now that will help put me in the position of finishing well?”

Do you need to be more faithfully working at your job? We are to work as if we are working for the Lord. That is being faithful.

Do you need to be more faithfully raising your kids in the Lord?

Do you need to take a step of trust in giving a tithe of your income or at least moving in that direction?

Tithing is an act of trust in the Lord. We trust him to provide for our needs on 90% of what he gives us and honor him with the first part of our income.

Do you need to be sharing what God has done in your life with someone else? Maybe you think God hasn’t done much in your life.

Is that because you are stuck in neutral unwilling to take the step of faith that God has placed in front of you.

What God is laying on your heart that you need to do now?

We are going to pray and ask God to help us make moves toward that so we will find ourselves in the position of finishing well.

We are not going to be able to finish well in our own strength.

That is why we need to pray and ask for His help. Our Lord not only is able to help, but desires to.

Let us not forget that we have a Redeemer who is alive and able to help us so that when we come to the end of our journey of life and we have walked with Him in faith, we will be able to hear the words that we long to hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Let’s pray.

**Benediction**

**“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Num. 6:24-26)**