



# “FINISHING STRONG”

Joshua 1:2 Fellowship

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Monthly Newsletter

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### Acts 20:24

Paul said, “I consider my life worth nothing to me, **IF ONLY I MAY FINISH THE RACE AND COMPLETE THE TASK** the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”

Paul was talking about finishing strong. He wanted God’s plan for his life to be fulfilled! We must be careful that we are not sidetracked in this race that we are in. We must count the cost if we are going to finish strong.

*Lk. 14:27-30 says, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower.*

*Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to **FINISH IT**, everyone who sees it will*



*ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to **FINISH**’.*

Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and **TO FINISH HIS WORK.**” Jn. 4:34

In 1945, twenty-seven-year-old evangelist Billy Graham came storming out of nowhere to fill auditoriums across America preaching Jesus. But Billy Graham was not the only young preacher packing auditoriums in 1945.

Chuck Templeton and Bron Clifford were achieving the same thing - and more. All three were in their mid-twenties. Chuck Templeton was called “the most gifted and talented young man in America for preaching.” Out of

the three young evangelists Templeton was thought to be the next Babe Ruth in evangelism.

The church had not seen such a powerful and gifted preacher like Bron Clifford was in centuries. At the age of twenty-five Clifford touched more lives, influenced more leaders, and set more attendance records than any other preacher his age in American history. Graham, Templeton, and Clifford started out on fire! We have heard of Billy Graham, but what happened to Templeton and Clifford?

In 1950, Templeton left the ministry to pursue a career in radio and television. He no longer was a believer of Jesus Christ. By 1954, Clifford had lost his family, his ministry, his health, and then... his life.

Alcohol and financial irresponsibility had destroyed him. At the age of 35, this once great preacher died from cirrhosis of the liver. In 1945, three young men with extraordinary gifts were preaching the gospel to thousands across the nation. Within ten years, only one of them was still in the race!

The way it looked; Billy Graham was going to **FINISH STRONG!**

Today God is looking for some finishers.

### **THE TWELVE SPIES**

Num. 13:1-2 “Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, “Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel: you shall send a man from each of their fathers’ tribes, **EVERYONE A LEADER AMONG THEM.**”



Moses picked 12 proven leaders to spy the land that God was about to give Israel. Out of those twelve, only two finished strong. Israel waited for forty years to enter the land because ten guys **STARTED STRONG**:

...ten guys who had seen God send the plagues to Egypt...

...ten guys who had seen God open the Red Sea for them and their families, and then close it on Pharaoh's army...

...ten guys who had seen God work time and time again on their behalf, freaked out because there were giants in the land.

These ten leaders (Christians) had a great start but could not finish. They delayed Israel from entering the Promised Land for forty years. How many of us are delaying from entering the Promised Land because of fear?

- ❖ The fullness of Christ
- ❖ The desires of your heart
- ❖ An answered prayer
- ❖ A double portion of God's anointing
- ❖ A ministry from God

Of the original twelve, ten did not finish but Joshua and Caleb.

What did Joshua and Caleb have that the other ten did not? **ENDURANCE**

It is endurance that separates the men from the boys. It is endurance that determines whether a man will finish strong. Endurance is the fruit of godly character.

The Christian life is not a hundred-yard dash but a **long race**. Long races do not require speed. They require **guts, determination**, and **finishing power**.

Heb. 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, **AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US. FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS.**"

Christians who do not hit the finish line strong have chosen to remove themselves from the Lord's protection and power. Where is the finish line? It is different for all

of us. The finish line is when we go to be with the Lord. You might have forty years before you die, or you might have six months. No one knows where the finish line is but God. We do not finish strong by **FOCUSING ON THE FINISH LINE** because we do not know where the finish line is. We **FINISH STRONG BY FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS**.

"...and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS.**"

The twelve disciples of Jesus finished strong ...with one notable exception. Why did Judas quit the race? He never did submit his life to Jesus. He did not have his eyes on Jesus - he had his eyes on money.

Where do you have your eyes? Money? Fame? Women? Drugs?

But the other eleven kept their eyes on Jesus. The disciples were not perfect. They all fell away from the Lord for a brief time.

*"Then everyone deserted Jesus and fled." Mk. 14:50*

But Jesus calls them back and puts them back in the race.

"Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He **CALLED OUT TO THEM...**" Jn. 21:4-5 (**Jesus is calling out to you if you have fled also!**)

They continued in the race preaching the Word and turning the world upside down. Despite the trials, persecution, and opposition they all **FINISHED STRONG**. Caleb and Joshua also finished strong because they ran with endurance and their eyes on Jesus. Men who do not hit the finish line strong have chosen to remove themselves from the Lord's protection and power.

## **THE BIBLE SHOWS US FOUR DIFFERENT KINDS OF FINISHES**

### **Cut Off Early**

Cut off early means they were taken out of leadership, assassinations, killed in battle, prophetically denounced, and overthrown. Some of these examples are:

- ❖ Abimelech - Judges 9:52-54
- ❖ Samson - Judges 16:23-30

- ❖ Josiah - II Chr. 18:28-34
- ❖ Josiah - II Chr. 35:20-24
- ❖ John the Baptist - Matt. 14:1-11
- ❖ James - Acts 12:2

Some of these men were good leaders but most were bad. John the Baptist and James were cut-off early but finished strong for Jesus.

### **Finished Poorly**

Finished poorly means they were going downhill in the latter part of their lives. Some examples of finishing poorly are:

- ❖ Gideon - Judg. 8:27
- ❖ Eli. - I Sam. 2:22-34
- ❖ Saul - I Sam. 31:2-5
- ❖ Solomon - I Ki. 11:1-6

These guys were barely able to crawl across the finish line.

### **Finished So-So**

Finished so-so means they did not do what they could have done or should have done. They did not complete what God had for them to do.

Some examples of finishing so-so would be:

- David - II Sam. 11:1-27
- Jehoshaphat - II Sam. 20:32-37
- Hezekiah - II Chr. 32:24-32

David was a man who was after God's own heart. But David really did not finish strong.

### **Finished Well**

Finished well means that they were walking with God personally at the end of their lives. They were strong in their faith and close to the Lord. Some examples of finishing well are:

- ❖ Abraham
- ❖ Elijah
- ❖ Paul
- ❖ Joshua
- ❖ Daniel
- ❖ Peter
- ❖ Caleb

### ❖ John

Some of these leaders did not finish strong because they did not survive the ambushes, getting through the ambushes is what separates the men/women from the boy/girls. We can expect to encounter at least three major ambushes as we attempt to finish strong.

The ambushes of another **woman/man**

The ambush of **money**

The ambush of **neglected family**

Solomon got ambushed by women. He had over 700 wives and 300 concubines. He was ambushed by money. His wealth could not even be counted. He was ambushed by family. His foreign wives turned his heart against the Lord.

### **CONCLUSION:**

**If you want to finish strong do not remove yourself from the Lord's protection and power.**

