

## 00(M041) – Finish Well CD SUN

*2 Timothy 4:7; Jude 1:3; Hebrews 12:4; Ephesians 6:11-12; Mark 1:13; Philippians 12-14; Acts 20:24; 2 Timothy 3:1, 12; John 15:19-20; 1 Timothy 4:1; Romans 8:38-39*

08-16-2020 - By Pastor Jeff Wickwire

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### **Bible Verse**

2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

**New International Version (NIV)**

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### **Note**

Paul sums up his life just before his martyrdom with one verse. He says he had a FIGHT to win, a RACE to finish, and a FAITH to keep, and he accomplished all three! Notice that he places “THE” before every one of them. It wasn’t just any fight, it was THE FIGHT; not any race, it was THE RACE; and not just any faith, but THE FAITH. Placing the word “the” in front of each of them is to say that there was no other fight, or race, or faith more supreme, more important than they were! Jude similarly exhorted all Christians

### **Bible Verse**

Jude 1:3 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup>Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.

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### **Note**

Every professing Christian on planet earth should have the same three goals—fighting the good fight, finishing the Christian race, and keeping the faith. So let's deal with them one at a time: I have fought the good fight. Notice that he didn't say, "I have lived an easy life," Or even, "I have lived the good life," or, "I lived my best life now." No, Paul looked back, not on a life of ease, but on a life of warfare and said, "I have fought the good fight!" The word "fought" is *agónizomai* from which we get the English word *agony*—it pictures an athlete contending for a prize—struggling, straining, striving, sweating, exerting himself. It's an intense word! In the Greek language Paul uses what is called the PERFECT TENSE with the words—"I have fought." The perfect tense means that his struggle against the devil and sin had been courageously sustained in the past, and was now being bravely sustained to the end. In other words, he never let up in his battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil—he was a lifelong warrior that never put up the white flag and walked away. Paul's Christian journey hadn't been easy. But by God's grace he fought the battle to the end!

Now, notice that he describes the battle as the "GOOD" fight. There's lots of fights and battles in this world... Some are right to fight, and some are not worth the time and trouble. Paul says the Christian fight is a good one! Now, when he used the word "fight" what does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean to get physical and beat people up till they get right with God. It's not talking about coercing people to come to Jesus.

- First, The good fight is the battle against SIN.

Hebrews compares our sufferings to what Jesus suffered and says,

## **Bible Verse**

Hebrews 12:4 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup>In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

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## **Note**

Note, the writer identifies Christians as those who "struggle against sin." Rather than doing whatever our sinful flesh wants us to do, we obey the word that says,

## **Bible Verse**

Romans 6:12 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

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### **Note**

- Second, PERSECUTION is also part of the good fight.

## **Bible Verse**

2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup>In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

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### **Note**

Jesus told his disciples,

## **Bible Verse**

John 15:19-20 (NIV)

<sup>19</sup>If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

<sup>20</sup>Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

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### **Note**

Enduring persecution is part of the GOOD FIGHT.

- Third, combat with the DEVIL is part of the good fight.

I was amazed to read in a recent Barna survey that, four out of ten Christians(40%) strongly agreed that Satan “is not a living being but only a symbol of evil.” This is

shocking! Because the Bible couldn't be more clear about the reality of Satan, and our battle with him!

## **Bible Verse**

Ephesians 6:11-12 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

<sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

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## **Note**

We note that Jesus wasn't dealing with "symbols" of evil when demons came screaming out of people at his command. He wasn't battling a "symbol" of evil when being tempted in the wilderness. It says,

## **Bible Verse**

Mark 1:13 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup>and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

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## **Note**

So Satan is real and part of the good fight is our battle with him. So the good fight is the battle against sin, enduring persecution, and combat with Satan. Paul says, I fought the GOOD FIGHT and by God's grace, I was a VICTOR!

Secondly, he says:

2. I have finished the race

The word "race" immediately conjured in the minds of his readers an Olympic type track race. The runners line up, the shot is fired, and the race is on. They have X number of laps to complete and whoever breaks the finish tape first is the winner. Now, for Paul the "race" was an illustration of God's purpose for his life—what God

had called him to do. Finishing the “race”—what God had called him to accomplish—was everything to him! He said in Philippians,

## **Bible Verse**

Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

<sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

<sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

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## **Note**

For Paul, the only thing that mattered was finishing his heavenly assignment, the PATH God had laid out for him! He told the Ephesians elders,

## **Bible Verse**

Acts 20:24 (NIV)

<sup>24</sup>However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

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## **Note**

We should all ask ourselves today if this is how we feel! Have we set our hearts to finishing what God laid his hand on us to do? This would include becoming a mature believer, living for Jesus, using our gifts to glorify Him, putting the kingdom of God first.....is that our mindset today?

Finally, Paul says:

3 . I have kept the faith

Isn't it interesting that Paul would say, “I have KEPT the faith.” If he KEPT it, then something must have been trying to take it away! The word “kept” means “to watch

over, to guard.” You don’t have to guard something unless it’s being targeted by a thief. And our faith, THE faith, is evermore targeted by the devil.

THE faith is summed up this way:

Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, died on the Cross for our sins and mine, was buried in a borrowed tomb, on the third day rose again from the dead, was seen by many eyewitnesses for a period of 40 days, and ascended back into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of the throne of God, and will someday return to rule the world.

Paul says I held it close. Never deviated from it. Locked it away in my heart and threw away the key! Why does this matter to us today? Because the Bible predicts that in the Last Days, many will walk away from *THE* faith. Paul warned,

## **Bible Verse**

2 Timothy 3:1 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.

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## **Note**

The LB says, “You may as well know this too, Timothy, that in the last days it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian.” One more version puts it, “Remember this: There are some terrible times coming in the last days” (ERV). What will make them so terrible?

Paul points one of several things:

## **Bible Verse**

1 Timothy 4:1 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

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## **Note**

In the Last Days, deception will be so widespread that those not well-grounded in 'THE FAITH' will be lured away. But praise God, those that truly love the Lord have a promise:

## **Bible Verse**

Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

<sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

<sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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## **Note**

Paul says "I guarded *THE* faith in my heart. We must do the same! I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith!"