

Did You Finish Well?

2 Timothy 4:1-8

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Dec. 29, 2002

#1: You Better Evaluate Your Commitment to Do Spiritual Battle

Ed Welch says, “There is something about war that sharpens the senses, especially when the enemy constantly hides... The problem is that as Christians we often forget we are in a war. Or worse, we don't even know that there is a war. Unlike most warfare, where at least we know that there is an enemy somewhere, spiritual warfare tends to be especially covert. No one is getting shot and many people... seem to be managing their lives fairly well. It all looks like business as usual. Add to this the fact that we actually like the enemy, and it is easy to understand why many of us act as though we're on vacation.”

(Edward T. Welch, *ADDICTIONS ~ A Banquet in the Grave*, p. 226 & 227)

1 Corinthians 9:25 “...And everyone who competes (agonizomai) in the games exercises self-control in all things . . .”

Jesus used it in **Luke 13:24** when he called men to "Strive to enter by the narrow door”

Ephesians 6:12 “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

#2: You Need to Evaluate Your Self-Discipline in Staying on Your Divinely Appointed Course.

Paul said, “I finished the race... I finished the course”

Proverbs 4:25-27 “Let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.”

Hebrews 12:1 “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...”

1) “*encumbrance*” = is not evil in itself (may be harmless or actually a good thing)

2) “*sin*” which does so easily entangles us

3) ROUTINE - Our flesh chafes against routine and monotony. We crave the flashy... the spectacular... the melodramatic made-for-TV moments. But most of our lives are filled with the ordinary. So if you don't learn to persevere and go on in the ordinary times, you just won't make it.

Oswald Chambers said, “The test of a man's religious life and character is not what he does in the exceptional moments of life, but what he does in the ordinary times, when there is nothing tremendous or exciting on. . . .

I Cor. 9:24-27 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore, I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air, but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection..."

The enemy (Satan) does not mind if you are spiritually active. He just doesn't want you to be spiritually effective. Spiritual activity does not equal spiritual effectiveness.

Hebrews 12:2 "FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

C.S. Lewis expressed it well in his book, *The Screwtape Letters*. Lewis wrote the book as a set of letters from one older seasoned demon to another, describing the most effective strategies for ruining us and turning us away from God.

The long, dull monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather. You see, it is so hard for these creatures to persevere. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair (hardly felt as pain) of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives and the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it—all this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition. If, on the other hand, the middle years prove prosperous, our position is even stronger. Prosperity knits a man to the World, He feels that he is "finding his place in it," while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth which is just what we want... The truth is that the Enemy (God), having oddly destined these mere animals to life in His own eternal world, has guarded them pretty effectively from the danger of feeling at home anywhere else. That is why we must often wish long life to our patients; seventy years is not a day too much for the difficult task of unraveling their souls from Heaven and building up a firm attachment to the earth. *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis, p. 95

2 Timothy 2:4 "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

#3: You Need to Evaluate Your Sacred Trust Regarding the Word of God.

Paul said, "*I have kept the faith*" = This carries the idea of watching over, obeying, or preserving God's Truth

- Did this past year 2002 show your commitment and trust to God's Word – the Bible?
- Did you grow in your personal disciplines of study, memory, meditation?

Conclusion: Sometimes evaluations hurt – because of the truth! But they can also give you a chance for a mid-course correction. If you

don't like the grade you got today... CHANGE! Start 2003 with new goals... right goals... biblical goals.

Alfred Nobel dropped the newspaper he was reading and he put his head in his hands. The year was 1888... and Nobel was a Swedish chemist who made his fortune inventing and producing dynamite. His brother Ludvig had just died in France... but now Alfred's grief was compounded by dismay. He'd just read an obituary in a French newspaper- and it wasn't his brother's obituary... it was his own! The editor had confused the two brothers... and so the headline read, "**The Merchant of Death Is Dead.**" Alfred Nobel's obituary described a man who had gotten rich by helping people kill one another. Nobel was so shaken by this appraisal of his life, that he decided right then and there to use his wealth to change his legacy... and so when he died 8 years later, he left more than \$9 million to fund awards for people whose work benefited humanity. The awards became known as... the Nobel Prizes. Alfred Nobel had a rare opportunity--to look at the assessment of his life at its end and still have a chance to change it.

And so before his life ended, Nobel made sure he had invested his wealth in something of lasting value. British Missionary C. T. Studd inherited a fortune, but gave it all away and invested his life as a missionary in China, India, and Africa. And he said, "Only one life, so soon it will pass; only what's done for Christ will last."

FIVE MINUTES AFTER WE DIE, we're gonna know exactly how we should've lived. But you don't have to wait till then! God has given us His Word so we don't have to wait until we die to find out how we should've lived. You can know now! And on top of that He's given us His Spirit to empower us to live out what the Bible teaches us right now.

- ASK YOURSELF, Five minutes after you die, what will you wish you'd given away while you still had the chance? How will you wish you'd invested your time... and money... and talents? When you come up with that answer, why not start doing it now? Give it away now? Invest in it now.
- Why not spend the rest of your life closing the gap between what you'll wish you'd done and what you really did?

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 *NIV* "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."