

February 2024 Newsletter

From Heaven's Heart

"Finishing the Race"

This morning, I was reading Timothy 4:7, a scripture most of us are familiar with. Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful." As I was reading this, I thought about myself. "I want to finish the race remaining faithful, faithful to my Heavenly Father, faithful to my wife and family. And faithful to you.

I know why I feel this way. It's pretty simple. The older I get, the closer I feel to God, to Andrea, my family and to you. And I know why I feel closer. It's pretty simple. I know His love, their love and your love is real and day by day, love is changing my life in a way that I want to finish the Race being as faithful as I can.

A lot of us start out the Christian life with so much promise. We get off to a great start but sometimes, we collapse so to speak and fall and sometimes it's difficult to get back. Falling is painful. Not getting up is even more painful. Not getting up causes pain and nothing will soothe our pain except getting back up, taking a few steps and eventually running again.

We can read most anywhere in the New Testament and discover over and over that the Spiritual race all Christians sign up for and run is not for the weak. It's tough. It's long and grueling.

When Paul was approaching the end of his life, he wrote, "As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful."

Paul didn't say, I ran the race. He said, "I finished the race". This is the key point in this month's newsletter. It's not enough to start well, we need to finish well. It's not enough to run fast; we need to build up our faith muscles so we can keep running and finish strong. This is a long-distance run and the goal is to make it across the finish line.

Can you imagine the thrill Paul experienced as he came to the end of his life here on earth knowing he had done his very best. He had endured the pain of running the race and finished well.

Peter said, "So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This is the thrill Paul, Peter, John and all who chose to follow Christ experienced.

So, keep running, because you're going to leave a legacy. Paul wanted to join the ranks of those who had crossed the finish line before him. Should your goal and mine not be the same?

This is a long-distance race. And like Paul, you and I, we are in the race and my job, your job is to keep encouraging each other to stay in the race, to keep running, to keep praying, keep spreading the Good News of the Gospel with our words and more importantly, with how we are running the race...which is the way we live our lives with love and grace, confidence in Him and offering encouraging words for each other.

If you need encouragement, I have some sound advice. Show up on Sunday mornings for Sunday school and worship service. Show up for a Tuesday evening prayer meeting. Show up for our quarterly church business meeting. I know this last one sounds strange but our business meetings are different than any I have ever attended. We discuss the financial health of the church. We discuss all the things different groups are accomplishing. We discuss future plans. And we pray. FYI...our meetings are always short and right to the point and purpose. And the results are this...we are all encouraged by the hard work that's been accomplished and the health of our church...His church. We are all running the race and we will finish this spiritual race together. Thank you for running this team event together. God's promise is when we enter Heaven, He will be thrilled by what we have accomplished for Him.

With the deepest love for you and for all the hard work you are doing for Him,

Pastor Steve