**Finish Strong 2022**

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# SERMON DESCRIPTION

It is more important where and how you finish than how you start – finish strong!

# SERMON QUESTIONS & OBJECTIVES

1. What do they need to know?
* Be intentional about closing the year strong.
1. Why do they need to know it?
* This will prepare you for the new year and the new season.

1. How should we apply it?
* Implement the power principles to finish strong.

# OPENING LINE

*The end of one season and the beginning of another are connected.*

# SERMON INTRODUCTION

In car racing, the qualifying event determines what position the drivers start for the main event. The most coveted starting position is called the pole position and it is awarded to the fastest car. The pole position is located on the inside of the front row. One would think this starting position would give the driver a winning advantage, however, the reality is that the driver in the pole position does not necessarily win the race as the other drivers can come from various positions to win. Therefore, it is not where you start that matters; it’s how you finish.

* Redeem the times for the days are evil:
* Time of sorrows
* Covid - falling away has begun
* The return of the Lord is near.
* Today is the day of salvation
	+ It’s in the daily
	+ Tomorrow is a mystery
	+ Yesterday - all you can do is forgive.

# CENTRAL TRUTH

The finish line is much more critical than the starting line. The winner, of any race, is always declared at the end of the race and not at the beginning.

# MAIN PASSAGE

**Philippians 1:6-7**

… 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; 7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

**Acts 20:24**

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

**OPENING THOUGHTS**

* Seasons of our life are like a relay race—one track that has multiple “legs”
* One leg/season leads to the another
* The track is a combination of straight legs and bending legs, all of which are part of the same track (note image below)
* The challenge here is that we do not exactly know where and when it will end
* The focus is not the end or the destination
* He is working in us through the process
* Philippians 1:6 He who has begun a good work in you will complete it.

**OPENING POINTS**

* The work was **begun by Christ not us**
* The work is “**in” you not “by” you**
* Jesus on the inside, working on the outside
* Finishing strong is less about the external and more about the internal work of Christ in us that is then reflected externally
* It is not a list of accomplishments, fame, likes, or follows
* With the work that has been started, we should have both:
1. **Confidence (Phil 1:6)**
	* Our confidence is not in our ability but in the work of Christ that He is able to complete what He started.
2. **Joy (Acts 20:24)**
* We do not just start with joy, but we strive to end with joy
* This is difficult if joy is based on our performance rather than on the person of Jesus
* Our joy is not found in us as individuals, it is found in Jesus. Whatever happens, if we have Him, we can have joy.

**WISDOM/POWER PRINCIPLES**

* **PRAYER** - Bathe your decisions and actions in prayer – the plumbline of God
	+ The prayer of faith - what is plaguing your life? Repent.
	+ **Ephesians 6:18**

…praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— …

* **REST/GRACE** - Allow the Lord to work through you – *operate in His rest rather than your strain* – it is Jesus that is working in the believer producing the results and the New Covenant lifestyle
* **EXPECTATION** - the manifestation – stir up your faith
* **TRANSITION** - You cannot pick up the "new thing" of the next season until you lay something down in the current one.

**MAIN POINTS**

1. **Eyes that are looking forward**
* In other words, they are focused straight ahead into the new season and into the future.
* Be about the Father’s business in all that you do.

**1Corinthians 9:24**

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.

* When running in a race, one of the things you are taught is not to move your head from side to side looking at those in the race with you or behind you as it will ultimately slow you down
* You are still aware of the surroundings, but you are focused on optimizing yourself to get across the finish line.
* **Finish strong to start strong with momentum**
* Being intentional with our finish in one season (“leg”) allows us to have **momentum** or a head start in the next
* Momentum gives a runner an advantage in a race (for example, the subsequent relay runners start running before they are handed the baton from the previous runner
* **Momentum is a competitive advantage**
* We can get to the finish line faster and achieve a longer distance with momentum (for example, a runner who starts two meters before but with a head start can reach their maximum speed before the one who starts from a stationary position)
* **Momentum is only good if it’s going in the right direction**
* **It’s the daily that creates the momentum (i.e., the snowball effect).**
* **Finishing strong does not mean finishing quickly or in haste**
	+ - Find the rhythm for the next by leveraging the waves in the current
		- Life is not about speed, it is about the flow (for example, a highway that is 100% utilized is not effective, by contrast, a highway that is 80% utilized allows more cars to reach their destination
		- We need to pray, plan and be intentional with our destinations.
1. **A heart that is immovable**
* A heart that is rooted and established in the Lord
* Its affection is set on the Lord first and foremost, and pleasing Him
* Guard your heart
* We have no life apart from Christ
* Our life belongs to God
* Our life fulfilled by God Himself
* Don’t do it without God.
* **When our gaze, our focus and our confidence is in the Lord, “the things of this world grow strangely dim”**
* Keep check and watch that the motivations of our hearts do not move away from Christ at the center to ourselves at the centre
* We can tend to focus on reputation, but Jesus made Himself of no reputation. As we follow Christ our hearts are set on Him.
1. **Shake the dust from your feet**
* Feet that dust off the previous season
* Forgetting the things which are behind and pressing towards the high call in Christ Jesus
* This is not to say that we are flippant in our attitudes but rather we have dealt with heart issues. Your feet walk where your eyes are focused, and your eyes are focused with your heart ground in what you believe
* You must lay it down before you go forward (for example, stale bread does not bring life)
	+ **The enemy tries to slow you down or even take you off track**
* The enemy is like a roaring lion seeking who he may devour (1Peter 5:8)
* Lions are patient and wait for their prey to be vulnerable and/or stray away from the pack
* When he sees that opening, that is when he pounces.
	+ **Do not allow the dust of the previous season to take you off track or** pull you away from community and into isolation.
* Spikes under our shoes allow us to dig in deep. The traction/progress may be evident to all (1Timothy 4:15)
* Dust on the track can cause us to slip and not dig in.
1. **A mind that brings closure**
* Rethink the areas that require closure - as much as it is in your power
* Close the loops and gaps
* *Renew your mind to protect your heart*
* You must be honest with yourself
* **Your season and those closest to you may NOT be in sync**
* Do not let someone else’s hurdles become your stumbling block on the track
* Sometimes we can lose track of our goals because we are focused on bringing those in past seasons with us in current season
* Not everyone who has been with you will be there throughout the whole process. Don’t get side tracked by that.
* God started the work; He will finish it.

## ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT TO FINISH STRONG

* Commit to daily habits/routines to achieve your short and long-term goals
* Evaluate if you are still on track with the right momentum
* Declutter your life from “noise” and focus on flow and rhythm
* When failure comes, fail forward and fail fast. Get up and keep going.

# SERMON CONCLUSION - THE CALL TO ACTION

Be strong in the Lord and the POWER of HIS MIGHT!

Put on the whole armor of God.

**Ephesians 6:10**

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The secret of your life is in the daily - what people do is in the daily – what should you do daily?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What daily actions will you implement for 2023?
2. How much of the “rest” of the Lord are you operating?
3. What “dust” do you need to shake off from the old or current season?
4. What things do you need to bring to closure in this season?
5. What does “strong” look like next year?
6. Has your heart moved away from God? If yes, in what area? How are you going to bring it back?
7. Why did Jesus place so much emphasis on the end rather than the start?