

Crossing the Finish Line
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Introduction: The Christian's hope is a powerful incentive for living.

- A. We hear news of the death of a Christian that has impacted many lives.
 - 1. Our reaction is one of loss and one of great joy.
 - 2. In Paul's last letter he wrote of crossing the finish line. **(2 Tim 4:6-8)**
 - 3. For those that remained, the finish stood as an inspiration.
- B. When a godly woman, Dorcus, died. There was joy and sorrow.
(Acts 9:36-40)
 - 1. Leaving was a joy for her but those she had helped were understandably sorrowful.
 - 2. All she wanted to do was serve others. Dorcus and Paul were happy to be "spent" as a tool in the hands of the Lord. **(Phil 1:21-24)**

I. The Christian's race begins in death

- A. The entry fee for this race is death! **(Gal 6:14)**
 - 1. What would motivate anyone to freely die?
 - 2. Here is where the power of the gospel is seen.
- B. Our great shepherd showed us the way by His freely giving Himself to death.
 - 1. He plainly spoke of such a sacrifice. **(Mt 20:27-28)**
 - 2. This "ransom" was the only way sinful men could be reconciled to God.
 - 3. Did Jesus die by accident? Never! Look at His willing surrender to the forces that sought to arrest him. **(Jn 18:4-9)**
 - 4. Why did Jesus do this? Consider the alternative for you and me!
- C. We die to self because we were already dead before God. **(Eph 2:1-4)**
 - 1. When I came to see my sin and self before God I was ready to die so I might live.
 - 2. What is my sinful soul worth without a sacrifice? This was a "no-brainer" to die in order to live!
 - 3. Do you remember the day you died? **(Rom 6:3-4)**
 - 4. What kind of race does a dead person run?

II. The Christian's race is one of a slave

- A. We die and become joyful slaves! **(Rom 6:11-13)**
 - 1. We follow a different path from the world. We think differently, we act differently and most of all we die differently.
 - 2. What memories do you have of the faithful Christian that has crossed the finish line? A slave of God works to serve others.
 - 3. When we become a slave we empty ourselves and only follow the instructions given from God.
- B. Living this life means overcoming the flesh and choosing the Spirit.

1. This battle will keep us humble and desiring the finish line.
(1 Cor 9:24-27)
2. How does a Child of God treat others? How do they dress and act? What hard paths do they take in times of pressure and ridicule?
3. I deeply appreciate hearing old soldiers of the cross speak of this struggle. Look at their children and the legacy they left.
4. There is a “world” of difference between the respectable religion of “easy-believism” and the life of a Christian pursuing holiness.
5. Some of the greatest examples are found when they took time and effort to substantially help others. They did not “pass on the other side.”

III. The glorious finish line!

- A. Physical death is just a finish line to another life! (Lk 16:22-23)
 1. Those who are righteous are escorted by the angels of God to a place of paradise.
 2. Those who are unprepared likely have a terrifying death and a worse realization in the world to come.
- B. We know what will happen at our resurrection.
 1. We will be raised in a physical body like Jesus'. (2 Cor 4:13-14)
 2. That body will then be changed to a spiritual body. (1 Cor 15:50-55)
 3. There will also be an angel escort as we prepare to meet God.
(Mk 13:26-27)
 4. The world as we have seen it will be destroyed. (2 Pt 3:10-11)
- C. We have a taste of what heaven will be like! (Rev 21:1-5)
 1. Can you imagine the blessings that the creator of this universe has for us? No, you cannot! (1 Cor 2:9; Eph 3:20-21)
 2. This is why the love of God is so powerful.
- D. We will also experience a great reunion.
 1. We will continue to be who we are after our death.
 2. There was recognition of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration. (Mt 17:3-4)
 3. We do not go out of existence! We continue to live joyfully as a child of God.
 4. This makes death a blessed finish line to eternal fellowship with God.

IV. Let the death of the righteous be a great motivation to us.

- A. We need to see others finish the race successfully. (2 Cor 4:16-18)
 1. The life of a sacrificing faith is needed to be seen by others.
 2. Do you hear voices in your head of those who have gone before?
- B. What a blessing for a child to see a parent die in faith!

Conclusion: Are you ready to start your race?