

FINISH STRONG!

Philippians 1:6

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;

When God starts something, He finishes it, and we see this right from the beginning of time.

Look at Genesis 2:1-2

Thus, the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

God is a finisher. It's encouraging to know that the Lord will complete the work that He has started in my life and in your life.

We all have different goals that we would like to achieve in life, but when it comes to our spiritual life there is one specific goal that all followers of Jesus must achieve, something we need to finish, and that is to **finish our race**.

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Jesus Himself set the example for all His followers. Jesus also had to finish and complete His work.

John 17:4 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do'.

John 19:28,30

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!"

30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

If we want to finish our race, we need to focus on our Saviour, and follow His example.

Hebrews 12:2

looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In speaking about this spiritual race, the Apostle Paul said:

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.

2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

You are the only one who determines if you will finish the race or not.

It's in your power to finish it and to finish strong.

Many start their race well, and they get all excited with their journey with Jesus, but the issue is not about starting the race, or how many years you have run the race, the issue is about finishing the race!

Matthew 24:12-13

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

If we want to finish our race and finish strong, we need to:

1. **STAND FIRM IN THE TRUTH.**

If your mind and heart is not firm on what is true, you will be in trouble in the times ahead.

Jesus said: I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)

John 17:3

3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

John 16:13

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;

1 John 5:20

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Truth is at the centre of everything. Jesus is the Truth, and God's Word is true.

The Apostle Paul said:

Ephesians 6:14 (NLT)

Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armour of God's righteousness.

For the Christian, truth is to be securely connected to us. Truth "binds together" everything we believe.

2. **DON'T FOLLOW THE VOICE OF STRANGERS.**

John 10:2-5

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

There are different voices that we can identify as the voice of strangers.

- a) **The voice of the world.**

The ideologies and systems of this world which are contrary to God's will.

Colossians 2:8

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

- b) **The voice of the Devil**

John 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, (...)

c) **The voice of the flesh**

Romans 13:14

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Galatians 5:24

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

d) **The voice of false teachers**

Right from the start of the early Church, the apostles and leaders had to deal with all sorts of wrong doctrines and beliefs, and the dangers of false prophets and false teachers, infiltrating the Christian community. This has not changed; it's still happening today.

The book of Jude addresses this issue very well. Jude was concerned with the problem of false teachers, so he writes this letter to:

1. **Expose false teachers**
2. **To encourage believers to contend for the faith.**

Jude verse 3

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude is saying that these false teachers were bringing confusion and deception to God's people. These were not people of a different faith, they were not pagans, they came from within the Christian community. **Jude writes in verse 4, 'for certain men have crept in unnoticed.'**

You need to know your Bible, read it for yourself. Don't just take whatever some person on YouTube is saying, or some book that you've read.

In speaking about false teachers, Jude gives his audience a few examples from the Old Testament of people who had the wrong motivation and were influenced by evil and were deceived. Jude compares these false teachers to these people.

He writes in verse 11:

Jude 1:11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

a) **They have gone in the way of Cain.**

Jude compares false teachers to the actions of Cain.

Cain did not follow God's way to commune with Him, he did not follow God's instructions. Cain thought that he could do things his own way. This is one of the things false teachers are compared to.

Cain exhibited self-righteousness; Maybe God's instructions are up for interpretation.

b) **have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit,**

Jude also compares false teachers to the error of Balaam.

We find this story in Numbers Chapter 22.

Balam was a false/wacky prophet who came because of the money. Jude is saying that these false teachers don't have the right motivation in their hearts.

c) They perished in the rebellion of Korah

Numbers chapter 16. Basically, this is a story about rebellion.

Jude is saying here that these false teachers are self-righteous, they are greedy, and they are rebellious, they are not accountable to anyone.

And Jude continues describing these false teachers in the following manner:

Jude 16-19

These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.

18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

I need to look at my own walk with God and pay attention to what Jude is saying, and to the many other Bible passages that gives us instruction on this subject.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

2 Peter 2:1

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

The greater danger is when believers no longer desire to listen to sound doctrine.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

How do we finish our race strong?

Point number 1 - Stand firm in the truth,

Point number 2 - Don't follow the voice of strangers and thirdly:

3. CONTEND FOR YOUR FAITH.

No matter what is happening around you or how many voices are trying to deceive you or pull you this way or the other, stick with God and His Word!

The book of Jude ends in verse 24 and 25 with these very encouraging words:

Jude 24-25

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 To God our Saviour, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

God is able to keep us all from stumbling. The Holy Spirit will help us get to the finish line. He will help us to finish our race strong!

