

## FINISHING STRONG

Life with God is an interesting, serious and exciting journey. It is expected that every believer should finish strong. Finishing strong is finishing successfully. Finishing strong is accomplishing all that God has set for you as an assignment. Finishing strong is completing your assignment. Finishing strong is continuing until the end and accomplishing your God-giving assignment. Finishing strong is going against all oppositions and pushing ahead until one finishes his assignment successfully.

God's desire when He called us is that we will finish our relationship journey with Him successfully. He never planned that we will stop half way. That's why Jesus Christ advised the believer who puts his hand to the plough not to look back. Finishing strong implies that there will be troubles on the way. It implies that there will be challenges. It implies that the devil will do everything within his power to try to stop us half way so we don't complete our assignment and get to heaven. We all know that the devil is not happy that we escaped from him and got born again, and enlisted in the service of the Lord, so he will try every means to see if he can stop us. Finishing strong speaks of you continuing until you finish the assignment and end at the feet of Jesus.

Finishing strong is going against all odds and overcoming them. As the challenges come, you stand against them in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit. Apostle Paul, said, "...having done all to stand" (Eph. 6:13). That is to say that at the end of the opposition, you are still standing. Peradventure you fall, you will get back up again and continue, just as in boxing, when a man is knocked down, and gets up before the count of ten and end up knocking out his opponent. You will stand against the enemy and refuse to give in to the challenges he brings your way or give up your faith, holding on till the very end of your life when you breathe your last. Finishing strong means when you are knocked down by the enemy, you refuse to be counted out or knocked out. You get back up and knock the devil out. So, there might be knocked downs along the way, but as long as you refuse to remain on the floor you are going to finish strong. But if you allow a setback to come in and you refuse to get up, then you are knocked out of the race. But, that is not the plan of God for you, hence this teaching.

Many of us have experienced some shakings and trials in our personal life and in the course of our assignment for God. People have said and done things you didn't like that hurt you and almost stopped you from your work for the Lord. People have misinterpreted your actions, labeled you who you are not, refused to appreciate your efforts and contributions in their lives and in the church. Some may have gossiped and lied against you. You may have experienced all of these or much more. But, you must not allow them to stop you. You must look beyond them and move on to finish your assignment with joy and great zeal. Finish strong means, "in spite of the oppositions, I will continue and I will finish the race."

In a long distance race, sometimes the fastest runner, can be so fast that he will finish twenty to thirty minutes earlier than the last person, yet the last person will not give up, but continue (though he or she knows he is not going to win prize) till the distance is completed. The reason is that the runner wants his or her name to be included among those who finished the race. This is what I call finishing strong. It is never giving up, not allowing evil happenings in and around you to stop you until you breast the tape in physical death. Finishing strong is going against all odds, against all that challenge you or try to demoralize or stop you, and making sure that you finish the race. It is making sure that you end the journey of life at the feet of Jesus and hear Him say to you, "welcome home, thou good and faithful servant". This is my desire for all of us who believe and are involved in the service of the Lord, that He will say, "Welcome home, good and faithful son, you have done very well".

The book of Hebrews gives us a list of people who have run the race of life with God successfully. The "Heavenly Man" as he was called fasted for hundred days to get a Bible, and when God provided it, he had the whole New Testament memorized because the communist government in China will arrest him if they found him with a Bible. So, he became a walking Bible. He was imprisoned many times and suffered forceful separation from his wife and children for many years, tortured terribly in prison, yet his zeal and commitment for the Lord Jesus Christ never diminished, rather, grew stronger.

Apostle Paul is a very good example of a faithful follower of Jesus who suffered many things for the kingdom but did not allow what he suffered to stop him from his service for his Saviour and master Jesus Christ. He waxed stronger by each negative experience planned by the devil to stop him. Reading his own account of his encounters and experience is very challenging knowing that we are all heading to the same heaven. I am greatly challenged by his total commitment to His Saviour to the extent that none of the things he suffered slowed him down or stopped him. He was not afraid of suffering. Despite all he suffered he is still praying that he may experience more suffering for his Saviour if that is what spreading the gospel will cost him.

*Phil 3*

*3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.*

*2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh- 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.*

*If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*

*7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

*12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

*15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

*17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their*

*glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

NIV

Paul explains that he does not allow his past experiences to stop him from his pursuit. He puts his success and failure behind him. He keeps reaching for the finishing line to win the prize of the high call of God upon his life. This is the way to run this race and finish strong. Keep looking ahead. Maintain your focus. Do not allow temporary setbacks or challenges to discourage or stop you. You must keep pressing on to finish and win the prize.

Paul's hunger for God is amazing. He has received great insights about God and the new life in Christ, he has seen Miracles and great manifestations of God and great persecution also, yet he is still crying that he may know Him more and see more of His power and even suffer for Him. We must not be satisfied with our present spiritual level. We must all aspire for more. We must keep on thirsting for the Lord and a deeper walk with Him. There is a depth of God that we have not attained yet. There are revelations that we don't have yet. There is still so much to know and do for God. It is the intensity of the desire for God that causes you to move higher with God. I urge you to keep your heart thirsty for God, this will energize you to keep going and never give up no matter the opposition from the enemy.

*2 Cor 11:16-33*

*16 I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. 17 In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. 18 Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. 19 You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! 20 In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. 21 To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!*

*What anyone else dares to boast about-I am speaking as a fool-I also dare to boast about. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?*

*30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. 33 But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.*

NIV

There is a crown waiting for you. Go get it. Do not allow the devil deny you that. You may have seen God work wonders in your life. Miracles, healings supernatural provisions, answered prayers, do not allow that to stop you. You may have seen pain and frustration in many areas of your life, keep moving and don't stop. Keep pressing on until you finish. I want you to be able to say like Paul, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*(2 Tim 4:7-8 NIV)

### **CHALLENGES IN FINISHING STRONG**

I have broken the challenges we face from the enemy in the race of life into five categories:

#### **1. Attack on our faith**

- Discouragement – weakening of our zeal in an attempt to slow us down or stop us completely. Any time you discover you are losing steam, fast and pray that it will return because you are under attack by the enemy.
- Spiritual weariness in praying, fasting, studying and meditating on the word of God, attending services and working for God. Sometimes we are so much on fire that we enjoy reading many chapters of the Bible, and going to church and praying is so enjoyable, and at other times, it is very difficult and with great effort we are able to read a chapter of the Bible, pray and go to church. This is a sign of satanic attack. If you ever find yourself in such a circumstance, fast and pray to regain your spiritual strength and fire.

#### **2. Personal troubles**

- Finance - business failure; unpaid salaries; money tied down in people's hands and refusing to pay services rendered to them or purchases made from you; difficulty in meeting financial obligations and paying bills; difficulty in paying children's school fees and meeting up with financial obligations at home. All these can be discouraging seeing that you are fervently following and serving the Lord. This is one of the challenges we have to deal with as Christians. Never the less, we must not stop following and working for the Lord. We must keep our faith, continue to practice covenant laws for prosperity and abundance without fail, and God will give victory. Paul suffered the same thing, making many rich and yet hungry for lack of food. Yet, the work never stopped. You can't stop.
- Marriage – marital challenges come in various forms. Prolonged single life, crisis in marriage, childlessness in marriage, unfaithfulness from spouse and conflicts from spouse's family. These also must not stop you.
- Family – troubles in the life of members of your family sent to demoralize or distract you. Family members standing in your way persecuting you for your faith.
- Academics – problem with a particular course, failure of exams, conflict with a lecturer and financing of your education.
- Career – problem with your job, promotion, conflict with superior or colleagues.

#### **3. External opposition**

- Persecution from family members, in-laws, colleagues at the office, boss, employers, neighbours, friends and associates because of your righteous stand on issues or your witness for Jesus Christ.

- Envy from those who are not happy that God is favouring you more than them, so they come up with some stories about you that are not correct to run you down and create problems for you.
- False accusations on things you never said or did because of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and commitment to Him.

All these are intended to stop you but you must not allow yourself to be stopped by the enemy no matter how hard he tries.

#### 4. Ignorance

- Lack of knowledge of relevant truth that we need to make it in life and in ministry. Pray for the ability to discern the truth as you read and study what others have written or taught. You need to invest time to study to gain knowledge and wisdom. Many have made mistakes because they lack relevant knowledge. There is no substitute to information. Work hard to get relevant knowledge.

#### 5. Distraction

- What others are doing or experiencing. Refuse to be distracted from your calling, assignment and church. Identify what you are called to do and stay focused. Don't allow the enemy to make you lose focus for that is the reason why many fail.

### REQUIREMENTS

#### 1 Strong faith in God

- Confidence in the caller and your calling. Know your calling and believe in it. Stay on your calling.

#### 2 Determination to finish strong and win the prize. Make up your mind to succeed. Success starts with a firm decision. If you decide, then run like one who wants to win the race.

*Phil 3:14*

*14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*  
NIV

#### 3 Intimate relationship with God

- **Deep study of God's word.** Give time to study the word daily. Have a study plan of the Bible. Be familiar with the whole Bible. Don't just be familiar with certain portions of the Bible, but the whole Bible. Make notes of what you learn. Memorize scriptures as you study.
- **Fellowship with the Holy Spirit.** Praise, prayer and meditation helps in deepening our intimacy with the Holy Spirit. Give attention to building your relationship with the Holy Spirit.

#### 4 Vibrant prayer life. Pray regularly in Spirit to edify yourself. Pray not only for yourself but for others. Fast and pray regularly to remain strong, vibrant, and full of the Holy Spirit. When you notice you are becoming weak, fast and pray about it for personal revival. To go against, you must be prayerful.

## **CONCLUSION**

God wants us to complete our journey. He has reward for us. He called us with the mind that we will finish our journey. God wants you to finish strong. Finish in faith. Do not allow the devil to stop you. Keep going against until you close your eyes in physical death. You are born in Christ a winner. Jesus is preparing a place for us because He wants us to finish and be with Him forever.

*John 14:1-4*

*14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."*

*NIV*

*Rev 3:11-13*

*11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

*NIV*

You must finish strong in Jesus name.