

Remnant Life Church
December 27, 2015

Finishing Well
Phil 3:12-14

Is it a compliment to be called a good starter?
Or is it better to be an okay starter but a strong finisher?

Marathon – 26.2 miles (originally 24.85 changed in 1908 to finish in front of the royal family viewing area)

- Run from here (Park Inn) to Dillsburg and then back
- The marathon commemorates the run of the Greek soldier Pheidippides who in 490 B.C. ran from the battle site town of Marathon, Greece to Athens
- Arrived in Athens with the report of victory over the Persians; yelled NIKI (victory) then collapsed and died
- Two of the most famous – NYC; Boston
 - Boston – first running 1897
 - The first race had 15 runners
 - Today over 20,000 entrants compete in multiple categories
 - In the last 25 years only 6 times has a runner from a country other than Kenya won
 - Every great runner has competed in the Boston and NYC marathons but few with more success than Greta Wietz
 - Norwegian runner who died in April of 2011 – cancer
 - After winning her first NYC marathon stated emphatically – “I’ll never do that again”
 - She went on to win 9 times in 11 years

Many people start well -

- Good intentions with a vision or goal
- Well meaning
- Well prepared
 - **BUT** what happens between the start and the finish?
 - Can our path be altered so we are not condemned forever to a strong start but a weak finish?

Look at 2 men of the Old Testament then at what Paul writes

1. Samson – **Judges 13**
 - a. Birth announced by an angel (Jesus and John the Baptist the other 2)
 - b. He was to be dedicated as a Nazirite – set apart for Godly life
 - i. No fermented drink
 - ii. Never cut the hair
 - iii. Have nothing to do with a dead body of any kind

- iv. **Samson was to begin** the deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines. (40 years in captivity)
 - 1. Phils. arrived in the area of Canaan in approx. 1200 BC
 - 2. Were the principle advisory for Israel for 200 years – (some of the first people with the ability to forge iron for weapons)
 - 3. Was in a battle with them that David defeats Goliath as a boy when Saul was king
 - 4. David finished with Samson started and finally drove them out once and for all
 - 5. NOTE: God called Samson to begin the process
- v. Samson is set aside by God as a judge over Israel
- vi. Great purpose and a mighty call on his life but his lusts and his failure to keep his Nazirite vows (**chap 14** eating the honey from the lion carcass) doom him to finish poorly

2. Daniel

- a. Time period: approximately 600 years later
- b. Daniel as a teenager is taken captive to Babylon (**Dan. 1:3-6**)
- c. Comes to a place of prominence (**2:48**)
- d. Several times he could have quit the race
 - i. Continually had the other men in Nebuchadnezzar's court coming against him (**6:4, 13**)
 - ii. Lion's den (**6:16-23**)
 - iii. Time of the king's insanity (**4:31-33**)
- e. Daniel serves 3 kings
- f. Daniel never wavered and as a result God used him as a vehicle to record some of the most vivid images of the last days

3. What were the differences in these 2 men?

- a. Samson allowed his flesh and his own desires to rule his actions
- b. Daniel never lost focus on who God was and his fear of God
- c. Samson went his way alone and did what was right for him – (the same was said about the people at that time “did right by their own eyes”)
- d. Daniel stayed in fellowship and kept right relationship with the people around him

4. Paul in **Philippians 3** gives us the formula to succeed in finishing strong

- a. **v 13** – begin with **humility**
- b. **v 13** – **forget what is behind** (runners says that you cannot think about any part of the race; only the next step you take)
- c. **v 14** – press on **toward the goal** to win the prize
 - i. know the goal
 - ii. press on means to continue even when it is not easy
 - iii. recognize the why or result (prize)
- d. **v 14** – for which **God has called you**
 - i. only have goals given by God
 - ii. set your mind on the things of God

- Starting well is good – finishing well is absolutely necessary
- **I Cor 9:24-27**
 - Marathon runner goes into strict training for the race
 - The body does not dictate the training the athlete does
 - The crown we run for is one that is eternal
 - Make a difference to those around you so that they will see in you how to train, how to live and how to run the race well through to the end