

## **Finish What You Started - Diligence**

Friday, October 26th, 2007

**READY:** "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if I only finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." -Acts 20:22-24 (NIV)

**SET:** As we stood at the starting line for this year's Chicago Marathon, every runner knew that the day would be vastly different than other autumn days. Not only did we need to run the 26.2 miles ahead of us, but we would need to do so while the temperature was expected to be in the 80's with high humidity. It would truly be a test of endurance.

As you may know by now, the race was called off due to the heat, lack of fluids on the course and the lack of emergency help due to the vast number of runners who needed medical attention. So, when I saw the difference in the numbers of runners who signed up for the marathon and those who finished the race, it made me think of perseverance. Not just physical perseverance, but the Biblical principle of perseverance.

Paul modeled the quality of perseverance in Acts, and as we see in Acts 20:22-24, he did it even in the face of physical harm and uncertainty. Paul also had incredible endurance for spreading the Gospel. At one point he lectured for two years to spread the Word (Acts 19:10).

In any sport, you work hard to meet a goal. You sign up for the race, compete and hopefully cross the finish line to receive your medal. Sometimes, the training or racing conditions are less than ideal. It may rain or be extremely hot, or you may even be sick. You may pull a muscle or get kicked during a swim. You may have to walk or even crawl to the finish line.

The Chicago Marathon experience emphasizes our walk with Jesus and the trait of perseverance. Do we have what it takes to get through the hot and humid times in our walk? Should we just not show up for the race even though we paid and did the training? Sometimes we need to walk a while to get through a rough spot. We may even need to help out another athlete on this race course of life. But the important thing is that we finish. For the Chicago Marathon that day, it didn't matter where you finished. You still got the medal once you crossed the finish line. Hours and minutes didn't matter that day. The only thing that mattered was that you finished the race.

Jesus is waiting on the other side of the finish line of life, and He doesn't care about our times during the race. He does care about our character and our perseverance when the race gets tough. Do you have what it takes to start and finish the race with Jesus?

### **GO:**

1. How do you share in Paul's qualities of endurance and perseverance to finish the race and complete the task that Jesus has given you?
2. In what ways can you strengthen your spiritual endurance and perseverance when the race gets tough?