

How Simeon Teaches Us to Finish Our Race Well

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's by the Spirit, he came into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he received Him in his arms and blessed God and said:

"Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation (Luke 2:25-30).

The name "Simeon" refers to hearing. Over two decades ago, the Holy Spirit highlighted Simeon to me, a man who ran his race with determination and in faith until the very end. I recognized that, although most everyone else in Jerusalem was clueless that the Messiah and sovereign King of the universe had been born, Simeon was in tune and heard the Lord.

Three years before this, back in 1993, Holy Spirit showed my husband, Randy, that we were going to have another son, and that we were to name him Simeon. Just as God promised Simeon that he would not die until he saw the birth of the Messiah, our son Simeon and his generation would live to see the second coming of Christ. The Lord told my husband not to tell me the name—that He would reveal it to me in His perfect timing, which happened to be approximately three years later. Our son Simeon John was born in 1996; he is now almost 22 years old.

Based on this personal revelation, I believe that we, or at least our children and grandchildren, are living in the generation that will witness the return of Christ. Therefore,

it is imperative that we are tuned in and sensitive to the Holy Spirit and stay active in faith all the way to the end of our lives, pouring into the next generation, like Simeon in Luke 2.

Finishing the race well will look different for everyone—for one, it is serving as a watchman on the wall in the global prayer movement; to another, it might entail discipling the younger generation; and to others, it might be more of an evangelistic focus.

The way we end our race is more important than how it began. Like Simeon, we want to be in sync with God's perfect will, at the right place at the right time, pleasing God. Otherwise, we'll have a misdirected focus, and we will miss out on the fullness of God's intended destiny for our lives.

It's sad to see older saints slip into patterns of fear, self-pity, depression and bitterness. But the common theme in the Bible is running the race of faith to win, and fixing our eyes on Jesus—He is the prize! The longer I live, the more I realize just how sovereign God is and how intimately involved He wants to be in our lives (see Ps. 46:1–5, 97:9, 145:18; Dan. 4:17).

I recently heard the Holy Spirit say, "Let love set the pace of your day." Love never fails. Whenever we are yielded to the Spirit and motivated by His ways of love, we will enter His rest and glorify God (see Heb. 4:9–10). Those who are challenging to be around are gifts from God to teach us to love and are usually the ones who need to be loved the most. End your race loving others well (Matt. 5:43–48; 1 John 2:3–11).

In Acts 20:24b, Paul states, "that I may joyfully finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus." For Paul, there was a high cost to following Jesus faithfully to the end. The same is true for many other heroes

of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 and referred to as the “great cloud of witnesses” in Hebrews 12:1–2.

Joshua is an excellent example of someone who faithfully completed his journey. Here are some insights on his life from a devotional by T. Covey entitled “Joshua—A Man Full of Commitment”:

There are many great things said of the man named Joshua in the Old Testament. Joshua was a man full of humility, full of faith, full of the Spirit, and full of courage.

Joshua’s life was also full of adventure. He witnessed the plagues, the giving of the Law, and the people always complaining. He saw a river parting, not once, but twice. He watched the mighty walls of Jericho crash as the people shouted. He saw Achan and his family die from their stoning. Most of all, he had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus. Few human beings have ever experienced more than Joshua.

If Joshua had lived in modern times, he could have written a best-seller. Just think of the possible titles!

“Don’t Go Camping With a Bunch of Bellyachers”

“The Day the Sun Stood Still”

“Harlots Who Escape by a Thread”

Joshua’s book would not have been complete if he had not been able to write the final chapter. Someone has said, “It matters little how you begin the race. It’s how you finish that counts!” Joshua was a man full of commitment, and he finished well.

At the end of the book of Joshua, Joshua knows that his earthly life is almost over. He gathers all the leaders of Israel together and reminds them of what God has done for them since the time of Abraham. He recounts explicitly all that happened after they crossed the Jordan River and entered

the Promised Land. He tells how they conquered their foes with God's help. He also points out how God let them be defeated when sin had entered their midst. Joshua finishes by urging the people to fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully.

Near the end of his life, Joshua stood before the people and said:

"Therefore, fear the Lord and worship Him in sincerity and truth. Get rid of the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and worship the Lord. But if it doesn't please you to worship the Lord, choose for yourselves today: Which will you worship—the gods your fathers worshiped beyond the Euphrates River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living? As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord" (Josh. 24:14–15, CSB).

For 110 years, Joshua had faithfully served the Lord. He had fought battles, crossed raging rivers, defeated enemies and stood firm when others didn't. Therefore, at the end of his life, he could boldly say, "As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord."

What a testimony! What a life! What a man of God!

God is calling you to walk by faith just like Joshua did. The first key is to hear from God. Next, you must believe God. Lastly, you must act on what God is telling you to do. It is time for you to take your stand for the Lord just like Joshua, Simeon and all the faithful men and women of God have done over the many centuries of human history.

Beloved, don't settle for mediocrity in the remaining years of your life. This quote is very fitting: "Don't give in to short-term thinking! Stay focused on the end game. You don't get the trophy until the race is over, so be determined to finish strong!"

Here are some other essential keys to finishing one's race in victory:

Self-condemnation is a snare of the enemy because it keeps our focus on ourselves—don't go there (Rom. 8:1).

Don't allow your flesh with its passions and desires to rule your life—yield to the fruits of the Holy Spirit instead (Gal.5:22–25).

Shake off regret and focus on the positive—regret only chains you to the past. It's not about doing everything perfectly; it's about moving forward. God's not limited to our mistakes or dependent on our successes. Our identity is secure in Christ and not based on performance (Phil. 3:3–14).

Believe that God is good and incapable of anything less than goodness (Rom. 8:28).

Doubt and unbelief are walls of self-preservation we hold up around our hearts, which tie up God's hands from moving on our behalf. Steps of faith in God remove the barriers and release His divine intervention (Matt. 13:58, Heb. 11:30).

When negative thoughts come knocking on the door of your heart, don't invite them in and entertain them—they are not your friends. Send them away in the name of Jesus (2 Cor. 10:3–5).

The goal of our race is to set our minds on things above, and to please the Lord—not people (Col. 3:1–2, 23–24).

Only God is qualified to sit in the judgment seat. Whenever we attempt to sit there, we end up in the accuser's place with Satan, instead of sitting with Jesus as an advocate on behalf of others (Heb. 4:12–13, James 4:11–12, 1 John 2:1, Rev. 12:10).

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how Jesus is interceding for people who hurt or oppose you, and for those who are in

difficult circumstances (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25).

God is sovereign—we are not. Surrender control, because you never had it anyway. You suffer even when you get what you want in the here and now because you eventually have to give it up. Nothing ever stays the same, because change is inevitable. Whatever we do with a motive of love for God will last for eternity (Eccl. 2:3–11; Luke 9:23–25, 17:33).

Before losing his life for Christ on the mission field, evangelist Jim Elliot once said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Let’s run our race, like Mr. Elliot, faithful to the end!

What can you do *today* to finish your race well? {eo}

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