

Sometimes You Must Be Willing to Fail

Recently, I heard a sermon being shared and the speaker quoted a very familiar verse from Paul's first letter to Timothy:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

As I thought about Paul's words to Timothy at the end of his life, my thoughts went back to when I was in Navy boot camp. I was taking my final PT test, and as part of the test, I had to run miles within a certain time frame without stopping.

Back then, a mile run was not a problem. However, while in boot camp, I contracted pneumonia. I had the choice to take the PT test with pneumonia or get set back several weeks, become part of a different company of recruits and take the test once I was better. I chose to take the test knowing that the worst thing that could happen was being set back if I didn't pass.

Because my boot camp was in Orlando and because regulations would not allow running outside once the temperature rose above a certain level, we ran our miles inside a gymnasium. As I began to run, my breathing became more labored, but I kept going. By the time they announced we had reached the 2-mile mark, my breathing was troubled. I was coughing badly and I had lost vision and would run until I hit a wall and turn left, and then run until I hit the next wall and turn left.

It was then that something happened. My shipmates realized what was happening, but knowing they could not physically help me continue, two of them slowed a little to run in step with me and shouted to me when it was time to make a turn so I would not hit the wall. Within moments, other members of my company joined the two who initially began to run pace with

me. They began to shout encouragement to me as I ran while the original two kept providing directions for when I should turn.

As moments went on, the entire company slowed down to my speed and ran along with me shouting encouragement to me with each step. Together, we all completed the run within the time to pass the PT test, and once I finished, I fell to the ground coughing and nearly passed out.

Under normal circumstances, a mile run was easy for me to run, but on that day, I didn't have the breath or vision to complete the run. If my friends had not noticed that I had become without breath and without sight, I would have failed and fallen that day. Instead of seeing my weakness and letting me fail, they became for me what I could not be for myself.

If they had not done so, I would have failed that test, but so would they. It is easier to see someone falling behind and simply make the decision to continue on without them.

Every member of my company decided one by one to risk passing their test by slowing down to my speed, rather than leave me behind, blind and struggling. This is something a bunch of Navy men instinctively knew was the right thing to do.

I pray the body of Messiah will learn this lesson. When one of the members of the body loses their breath (Ruach) and becomes blind to where they are going, let's slow down a little and provide encouragement and direction, instead of simply watching them fall behind until they fail completely.

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