

# Finishing the Race

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman's sermon encourages believers to fight for the truth, keep their faith, and persevere in their spiritual race towards God.*

**Duration:** 17:00

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 11:28, John 8:32, Romans 3:23, Philippians 3:14, 2 Timothy 4:7, Hebrews 4:12, James 4:10

**Topics:** "Perseverance", "Absolute Truth"

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## Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of perseverance in faith, drawing from Paul's declaration in 2 Timothy 4:7 about fighting the good fight, keeping the faith, and finishing the race. He stresses that truth is absolute and must be upheld, warning against the dangers of relativism and the need for a strong foundation in God's Word. Idleman shares personal stories and analogies, including the tale of a battleship and a lighthouse, to illustrate the unwavering nature of God's truth. He encourages listeners to rise after falling, reminding them that true victory lies in persistence and faithfulness to God. Ultimately, he calls for humility and a return to God, urging believers to seek Him earnestly for healing and restoration.

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## Transcript

Get up and win the race. Get up and win the race based on 2 Timothy. In the Bible, 2 Timothy 4.7. Paul, the apostle Paul is nearing the end of his life.

He's about ready to be killed for his faith. And he said, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course.

I have kept the faith. I have kept the faith. And so I think she would want me just to talk briefly about those three areas.

Number one, fought the good fight. Fought the good fight. And she reminded of me this often.

And this is where I got the saying of, truth is a heel on which to die. Fight the good fight. What is the good fight? Well, fighting for the faith.

Fighting for the truth. The truth, let's be clear on this. The truth of God's word.

Absolute truth given to us by God. The authority of God's word. That is a heel on which to die.

And I will submit to you that the majority of our problems today in America is because we have drifted from God. We have rejected His truth. We have removed Him from the schools.

We have removed Him from the courthouses and we are paying that penalty. And if you don't like what I'm saying today, take it up with her when you see her. Because I believe she would, every time I preach, she'd say, Shane, you're saying exactly what I want to say.

I was the voice. I was the bold voice that God gave us. And she was the writing hand, the pen and the encourager.

And what I mean by truth is there's a story. A lot of you have heard it from the church, but she loved this story. I think it was her who shared this story with me.

And many of you have not heard it, but it's the story of this enormous battleship out in the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean. And this battleship is doing deep water exercises and it sees a vessel coming towards it. And this light is getting closer.

And so the battleship sends a signal, turn starboard 25 degrees or whatever they say. Some of you might know the language, I don't. And this message came back.

It said, no, sir, you change your course. And the battleship responded back. He said, I'm the highest ranking officer in the United States Navy, change your course immediately.

And the signal came back. Captain, with all due respect, change your course. And by now the captain's infuriated.

Can you imagine the highest ranking officer on a battleship? So he responds back, we change your course immediately. I am a battleship and I will have to blow you out of the water if you do not change your course immediately. The signal came back.

Captain, with all due respect, change your course. I'm a lighthouse and that will sink in as you're driving home. So you can't, the same way you can't move the lighthouse, you can't move absolute truth.

God's word is the standard by which we live our lives. It's a hill on which to die. And we need to get back to that, especially in America.

Jesus said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. He delivered his word and his word healed them and delivered them from his destruction. Folks, we have to have some type of plumb line.

We have to have some type of standard. I'm always amazed at why no one has an issue with oxygen or math or gravity. No one says, I don't like two plus two equals four.

I don't like this concept of gravity. I don't like H<sub>2</sub>O, Y<sub>2</sub> hydrogen molecules. We have, we see, we don't have a problem with that type of truth.

We have a problem with absolute truth because people say, I don't want there to be a God. I want to be the God of my own life. I want to rule my own life.

I want to be the captain of my own ship. And we reject God and we embrace something. What's being embraced now is called relativism.

Do you know what that is? Well, what might be right for you is not right for me. And what might be right for me is not right for you. And it's called relativism.

And we have to get back to the absolute truth. And I'm reminded that it's like building a house without a set of plans. We have a lot of contractors out here, I'm sure.

Is anybody just going to show up and start digging footings and putting the plumbing wherever you want? Put the, where does the electrical go? I don't know. Just put it wherever you want. What about the plumbing? I don't care.

Just put it wherever you want. What's right for you might not be right for me. No one does that.

Nobody would live in, there wouldn't even be a house. It would look like a disaster. There has to be a set of plans, blueprints to go off of.

And then number two, keep the faith. Or actually Paul said, I kept the faith. And this is springboarding off of the truth.

Listen guys, this is so important. Kept the faith. There is not many ways to God.

There is just one way to God. And we have to be careful because religion is not a relationship. So many people have religion.

And what is religion? It's man trying to reach up to God. Where God has a relationship by God reaching down to man. And that's why I get concerned.

I know my mom did as well. When many people say, I was baptized. Shane, I'm good.

I was baptized. Or I belong to this church. Or I'm a pretty good person.

Or my favorite, God knows my heart. Or I think God is this, a cosmic ball of love. And He's just gonna just look at all the good I've done.

And we have this false idea of God. But we have to remember that the Scriptures can be validated. Jesus Christ Himself spoke the Scriptures.

He actually quoted the Old Testament many, many times. Giving that to be the authority of God's Word. And when they went to arrest Jesus, they could not arrest Him.

And they came back and they said, why didn't you arrest Him? They said, because no man ever spoke like this man with great authority. See, what you have with the Word of God that you have with no other book out there is you have the consistency written over 1,500 years by 40 different authors saying the same thing. It can be proved scientifically, prophetically, archeologically.

That's why there is so much upheaval. Why does nobody get upset if you pray in the name of Mickey Mouse? But you begin to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. You shake the spiritual realm.

And people say, we've gotta get Christ out of the schools. We've gotta get Christ out of the government. And Christ says, I will not be removed.

I am the only way to God the Father. Muhammad said, I don't know the purpose of life. Buddha said, seek the truth.

Confucius said, I am not the way, but Jesus Christ comes on the scene. And he said, I am the way, the truth, the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through the Son.

Yeah, Shane, that seems very narrow. Yeah, it does. All different beliefs in this stadium can be wrong, but they cannot all be right.

And I think one of the biggest confirmations of the validity, the authority, the inerrancy of God's Word is a changed life. How the Word of God will actually change your life because it's living, it's powerful, it's sharper than any double-edged sword. It pierces, it convicts, and that's why they want to remove God from schools.

That's why they want to remove God from government and all these different things because there's power in the Word of God. A changed life. I want to read a brief story.

On November 21st, 1873, a French ocean liner collided with another vessel. Suddenly, all of those on board were in grave danger. And Anna, this mom, hurried, and she brought her four daughters to the deck.

She knelt there with Annie, Margaret, Lee, Bessie, and Tanetta, and prayed that God would spare them if He could, or that He would make them willing to endure whatever awaited them. Within approximately 12 minutes, the entire ship was beneath the ocean. Carrying with it 226 of the passengers and the four Spadford children all perished.

Mr. Spadford booked a passage on the next available ship and left to join his grieving wife. With the ship about four days out, the captain called to Spadford, and he said, Mr. Spadford, come here. This is the place in the ocean where your children went down.

But because the Gospel changed his life, many of you are familiar with the hymn he wrote on that ship in 1873. When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrow like sea billows roll, whatever my lot thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul. And God's word reminds us, oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Come to me all your week and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And that famous song we love to sing in memorials. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I was what? I was blind, but now I see. Physically blind? No, spiritually blind. I was dead, but now I've come alive because the power of God's word via repentance and that new life in Jesus Christ sets the captives free.

And something I like to remind people is if you don't like what I'm saying, it's probably because you need to hear what I'm saying. Jesus said He's the only way, the only truth, the only life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Him.

The Bible reminds us that He is Almighty One. He is the Alpha, the Omega. He is the beginning and the end.

He is the Advocate. He is the final authority. Not the Supreme Court, by the way.

He is the bread of life. He is the beloved Son of God. He is the chief cornerstone.

He is the Comforter, the Conqueror, the Commander in Chief. He is the Deliverer. He is faithful and true.

He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Great High Priest. He is the Head of the Church.

He is Emmanuel, God with us. He is the Ultimate Judge. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. He is the Lamb of God. He is the Light of the world.

He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Victorious One, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. And I guarantee if Diane was here today, you'd think I'm being bold. You haven't seen nothing yet.

Because she would say, turn and live, prodigal son. Come home, wayward daughter, come home. Come to God and know Him.

You can have a relationship. All who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will, not might, will be saved. It is a truth that sets you free.

Romans is very clear that there are none that do good, no, not one. And that is a slap in the face to our pride and to our arrogance. And we alluded to their prayer meeting 24, 25 years ago.

I was literally on a highway to hell and I believe it was prayer that brought me home. And I've experienced the power of God. How's somebody supposed to act when they experience the power of God? And it lines up with Scripture and Scripture is confirmed, archeologically, scientifically, prophetically, historically.

The Word of God has stood the test of time. And then finally, Paul says, I have finished the course. The older I get, the more I realize how hard this is.

There is an enemy of our soul that's trying to kill, steal, and to destroy. And finishing that course is so important. And if my mom taught us anything, and you know this, it is perseverance, amen? The power of perseverance.

Well, Shane, what does that mean? Do something despite the difficulties. Get back up and fight again to persevere, to move forward, to pick yourself up, and to throw another right punch and get back into the battle. Life is not a bed of roses.

It is a battleground, and we've got to learn to persevere in this culture. I think a poem she might have introduced me to many years ago, it's so important in this area. It's called The Race.

I won't read it all, but just a portion. He says, whenever I start to hang my head in front of failure's face, my downward fall is broken by the memory of this race. A child's race, young boys, young men, how I remember well.

Excitement, sure, but also fear. It wasn't hard to tell. They all lined up so full of hope, each thought to win that race, or tie for first, or if not that, at least take second place.

Their parents watched off the side, each cheering for their son, and each boy hoped that his folks would see him be the one. And I won't read a lot of it, but what happened is this boy kept falling in the race, and

kept falling in the race. Three times he kept falling, and he realizes he's not gonna finish, and the poem ends with this.

Get up, get up, an echo sounded low. You haven't lost at all, for all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall. Get up, the echo urged him on.

Get up and take your place. You were not meant for failure here. Get up and win that race.

So up he rose to run once more, refusing to forfeit. And he resolved that win or lose, at least he wouldn't quit. So far behind the others now, the most he'd ever been.

Still he gave it his all, and ran like he could win. Three times he'd fallen, stumbling, three times he rose again. Too far behind to hope to win.

He still ran to the end. They cheered another boy who crossed the line and won first place. His head was high and proud and happy.

No failing, no falling, no disgrace. But when the fallen youngster crossed the line in last place, the crowd gave him a greater cheer for finishing the race. And even though he came in last with head bowed low and proud, you would have thought he won the race to listen to the crowd.

And to his dad, he sadly said, I didn't do so well. To me, you won, his father said. You rose each time you fell.

And now when things seem dark and bleak and difficult to face, the memory of that little boy helps me in my own race. For all of life is like a race with ups and downs and all. And all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.

And I know her message to many of you today would be I don't know what you're going through, but God has a plan, God has a purpose, but you got to get up and fight. You got to get back up on the right track. The Bible says if you seek Him with all of your heart, you will find Him.

I even had another message in mind. Because a favorite verse of hers, and we love this verse, and I think it's behind us there. If my people... If my people who are called behind... You know what? I'm not going to get political even though I think she would say it's okay.

I'm not going to go there. But this is what our hope is for our nation. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, humility, humble yourself from your pride and your arrogance.

Humble yourself and seek God with all of your heart, with all of your strength. Look at His face, who He is, and pray, really pray. Pull down heaven and turn from your sin.

God says, I will hear from heaven, I will forgive your sins, and I will heal your land. The context of this verse is amazing. It's when God says, when I bring pestilence, hello, COVID-19, or when He allows it.

When I bring pestilence, when I bring famine, when I bring drought because of your disobedience. If my people... I'm not concerned with Hollywood and Washington. The call is to God's people to get on their faces before Almighty God and humble themselves in prayer and fasting and turn from their wicked ways.

And God says, I hear the cries of my children. I hear those prayers and I will answer them. You can take God at His Word.

He says, my Word is authoritative. And if you call on Me, you will be saved. The damning effect of pride.

I will be bold enough to say, if many of you came in lost today because you don't know God, you will leave here lost because of pride. Humble yourself this afternoon. Humble yourself before God.

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