

## 2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, (*my course*) *KJV*, I have kept the faith.

Whether you are just starting to realize the will of God for your life or have been living on the path He has for you; this series will help you **Stay the Course**

Often, even if a person fully understands the will of God for their lives, it takes time mentally to adjust to what is revealed

The apostle Paul was one of the most unlikely candidates you could ever imagine to be called into the ministry

- If God could use him, He can use you and I

## Ephesians 1:4, 11 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> just as **He** chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

<sup>11</sup> **In Him** also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the **purpose of Him** who works all things according to the counsel of **His will**

## Ephesians 2:10

<sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God will always confirm what He tells you to do and give you further direction for the course of your life when you surrender to His call

The first step in the process of getting aligned with God's will for your life is learning how to hear His voice

- But the next step is crucial
- You must determine to fully obey Him without wavering
- Many times, even if God's will is clear it may not make sense to your natural mind

### Romans 8:6 AMPC

<sup>6</sup>Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that <sup>[a]</sup>comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever].

- God gives us a mind to use

But when we lean on our own understanding instead of trusting God's word and leading of His Spirit, we begin to operate in the mind of the flesh

- We have all done this

But when we are surrendered to the Will of God and His purpose all things work together for our good

### (Romans 8:28, NKJV)

*“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”*

When you fully align yourself with God’s will, things in your life will get better

- That doesn’t mean you won’t face opposition – You will
- But the power and favor of God will go with you wherever you go

*“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.” (Psalm 84:11, NKJV)*

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.” (Proverbs 3:5–8, NKJV)*

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.” (Psalm 32:8, NKJV)*

Remember:

- Partial obedience is disobedience
- Have I added my own interpretation of what God has asked me to do?
- Am I in the right place but connected to the wrong people?
- What has God spoken to your heart that you are still struggling to make sense of?

Has God put a dream in your heart?

- Has He told you to do something that seems so huge your tempted to dismiss it as nonsense?
- Don't dismiss your dream too quickly
- That dream is a vision of your future that God has dropped into your spirit
- Hesitation is fine for a while, especially if you're taking time to confirm you are on track
- Don't wait too long or God will find someone else

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

**(Matthew 22:14, NKJV)**

- There have been many called to do something big for God
- Because they didn't follow the Lord they were not *“chosen”*
- Don't let that be you

So many times, we get caught up in excuses and focus on our insecurities and weaknesses

*“And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

**(2 Corinthians 12:9–10, NKJV)**

So many believers present God with a host of reasons why He should chose someone else

- I can't speak well enough
- I see other people that are more talented
- I don't think I'm ready yet
- I'm afraid
- I don't know how I'll be able to pay for it
- I'm too fat
- I'm too skinny
- I'm not handsome enough
- I don't have enough time to do it
- I'm not the best choice

Some people don't even come up with an excuse they just tell the Lord

- Its not in my heart to do it
- I don't feel led
- I just don't want to do it
- NO! I won't do it

Until you quit fighting and simply surrender your will to obey God, you will never lay hold of your divine purpose in God

*“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12, NKJV)*

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*

**(2 Corinthians 5:10, NKJV)**

- How tragic to live an entire life only to find out you missed the destiny God had planned for you
- Turn your faith loose!
- Jump out into the vast river of God

*“To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven.”* **(Ecclesiastes 3:1, NKJV)**

- Every plant and animal has a purpose
- Every lake, sea, river, and creek have a purpose
- The clouds have a purpose – they store moisture and filter UV rays
- Everything God has created has a specific design and function

When you don't look into your God-given purpose you will only wander aimlessly in life from one thing to another

- Trying to fill that space with every empty thing this world has to offer
- Money, drugs, alcohol, or relationships cannot fill that hole
- Get God's vision for your life and run with it!  
– **Proverbs 29:18**

You may feel hindered from time to time as you attempt to fulfill the will of God for your life

- This was true for the early church, as well for you and me
- Do not despair
- Those hinderances wont last long
- We are more than conquerors – **Romans 8:37**
- We overcome the world – **1 John 5:4**

The only way the Devil can steal your dream is if you surrender to his attacks

- If you hold on your faith will win out in the end

Satan tried to hinder the apostle Paul

*“Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.”* (**1 Thessalonians 2:18, NKJV**)

- Hindered – a word used to describe a road that had been broken up and was impassible
- It would delay, postpone, or temporarily put off
- The traveler could still take another route to get to their destination
- Paul is telling us that demonic attacks can hinder us, but they cannot keep us from reaching our destination
- No impasse or roadblock would stop Paul and it will not stop you and I

*“Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—”*  
**(2 Corinthians 11:23–27, NKJV)**

## **In Labors More Abundant**

*Labor* – a word that would have been used to describe a farmer who labors in the hottest part of the day

- He strains, he struggles, and toils to push the plow
- His effort requires his total concentration and devotion
- The farmer must travail if he wants the job done

*More* – I worked abundantly more than most men

- He is clearly setting himself apart from others that would have been considered lazy in their fulfillment of the ministry
- He is saying that when it comes to hard work no one works harder than I do



## Stripes Above Measure

*Stripes* – to smite, to hit, to wound, or to violently strike

- Same word used by Jesus in **Luke 10:30**  
**The Good Samaritan**
- When the thieves departed they thought the traveler was dead
- A mortal wound had been inflicted
- Paul is using the same word to describe the types of beatings he received

Paul and Silas in a Philippian Jail

*“And he (the jailor) took them (Paul and Silas) the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.” (Acts 16:33, NKJV)*

- This is just one example

*Above Measure* – beyond what is normal

- A word used to describe an archer way overshooting his target
- Paul used this word to describe the frequency as well as the intensity of his beatings
- They were cruel, severe, merciless acts of brutality
- What Paul’s enemies did to his body was way over the top

## In Prisons More Frequent

*Prison* – A place of custody that was heavily guarded by keepers and watchmen

- Usually a small, dark, chamber reserved for the most hardened, dangerous prisoners
- They would be guarded 24/7
- He was confirmed this way many times during his ministry – **Acts 12:4; 28:16**
- No one wants to go to jail but if it meant fulfilling his call, Paul was willing to do all that was required

Paul and Agabus at the house of Philip the Evangelist (Caesarea)

*“When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’ ” Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.””*

**(Acts 21:11–14, NKJV)**

- What’s keeping me back?

## **In Deaths Often**

Paul frequently wrote about dying

– **1 Corinthians 15:31; 55, Romans 14:8**

- These are not allegorical verses about death
- They are the thoughts of a man who faced the prospect of death almost on a daily basis
- Rather than run and hide he faced it bravely

He never sought to live under constant threat of murder or execution

- It was just part of his journey to get to where he needed to go

## **Five Times I Received Forty Stripes Minus One**

This was a Jewish method of punishment – **Deuteronomy 25:2,3**

- One of the most vicious treatments of the ancient world
- The tortured person's clothes would be completely removed to appear before his prosecutors naked
- His arms would be tied
- The torturer would use a whip of three cords – one from a calf hide and two from a donkey hide
- Often they would attach pieces of glass, bone, or metal
- This would dig into the prisoners skin, ripping out significant amounts of flesh
- Leaving permanent, horrid scars

## **117 (39 X 3) lashes for each beating (X 5) = 585**

- The first third would be given across the upper chest and face
- The remaining two thirds were applied to the back, buttocks, and legs
- The victim was forced to bend over to make it easier for the torturer to hit his body
- Blood flew everywhere

There probably wasn't a place on Paul's body that hadn't been beaten where pieces of flesh would have been ripped out!

- After the beating he would put his cloths on and keep preaching Jesus
- He would not stop until his mission was complete

## **Three Times I was Beaten with Rods**

- This was a horrible, ugly form of torture
- The rods where usually made of birch wood
- They would beat the prisoner mercilessly all over their body
- Quite often they would bind the victim, lift them upside down and beat the bottom of their feet
- Breaking every bone in the feet

*“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”*

**(Romans 8:11, NKJV)**

## Once I Was Stoned

*“Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.” (Acts 14:19, NKJV)*

- It may be that Paul was dead
- The stoners would aim their sharp rocks at the victims head
- The intention was to deal a fatal blow
- The stoning usually wouldn't stop until the head was crushed
- After the victim was dead they would drag their body out of the city for the dogs and wild beasts to eat

*“However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.” (Acts 14:20, NKJV)*

- Could this have been when he visited heaven?  
– 2 Corinthians 12:1-4

No wonder he wrote...

*“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38–39, NKJV)*

*Three times I was shipwrecked*

*A night and a day in the deep*

*In journeys often*

*In perils of waters, robbers, countrymen, gentiles,*

*In the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren*

*In weariness and toil*

*In sleeplessness (watchings) often – (watching the camp at night)*

*In hunger and thirst*

*In fasting's often – (no time to eat)*

*In cold and nakedness*

Ministry wasn't a job that Paul worked from 8-5, Monday through Friday

- The language used in this passage infers that Paul worked himself until he was physically depleted of strength
- Dog tired and nearly used up
- Yet, he wasn't complaining
- He was rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer for Christ

*“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,” (Colossians 1:24, NKJV)*

*“Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:18, NKJV)*

- Hindered – could also be used to describe a runner who is running with all of his might and energy
- As he approaches the finish line another runner comes along side, elbowing him tries to put him out of the race

Paul was warning that Satan doesn't play fairly

He will do everything and anything to get us off track or even stop us from starting all together

- Satan was terrified of the call of God that was on Paul's life
- He is afraid of you becoming all that God wants you to become as well
- When you pursue the call of God you will get the Devil's attention
- Don't let that stop you

*Share the first move to Traverse City*

*Barely sold the house (brought our last \$5000 to closing)*

*Salina in the bumpy truck – Accident*

*“To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:29, NKJV)*

When you determine to start to fulfill the call of God and never stop you will be endowed with a supernatural flow of God's power to accomplish all God has given you to do