

## 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 being 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

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 as for you and me
- Do not despair
- Those hindrances won't 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 me

Determination is one key factor in staying the course and finishing your race of faith

- God's power works in people who have resolve
- It works proficiently through people who have decided to never turn back until the assignment is finished
- God delights in using people who are steadfast and unmoving in their conviction
- He takes pleasure in those who have stamina
- Tenacious and diehard in their commitment

You are the only one who can make you quit!

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

- God's Spirit will give you the power and the equipment you need to accomplish the job
- But the requirement for this power is to never draw back
- This is what qualifies us for a supernatural flow of God's power
- Make a lesser choice and you will never fulfill your God-given purpose

Satan can't make us quit. That choice lies in our hands alone!

God expects you to do something with the gifts and talents He has given you

## Parable of the Talents

*“And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.” (Matthew 25:15, NKJV)*

- A talent referred to a specific measurement of money
- A talent was 6,000 denari
- Equivalent to about 16 years of salary
- He actually gave one servant 82 years of salary
- To another 33 years of salary
- And the third 16 years of salary

There is no need to feel sorry for the third servant, even he was given a gigantic gift

- No one was shortchanged
- They were each extremely blessed

*“Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.” (Matthew 25:16, NKJV)*

- This servant doubled his investment
- He turned his investment into the equivalent of 164 years of salary

It takes hard work to double one's money

*“He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.” (Proverbs 10:4, NKJV)*

- There is no mention that this man magically made this wealth
- He had to work hard just like everyone else
- The reason his fortune increased was that he put forth the effort to make it happen

*“And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.” (Matthew 25:17, NKJV)*

- The second servant also doubled his investment
- Like the first servant he was a hardworking man
- By doubling his investment, he now had 24,000 denari, or the equivalent of 66 years of salary

*“But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.” (Matthew 25:18, NKJV)*

- While the other servants were working hard this servant did NOTHING!
- Is it possible that his master had previous experience with this servant's work?
- Had his master found him unfaithful on other job assignments?
- Is this why he received the smallest amount?
- Could it be that his master didn't trust him with more than just one talent?

Regardless of the reason for the third servant receiving an initial lesser amount, there are some things we do know...

- He didn't work
- He didn't increase his potential
- He simply rested in the fact that the money was safe and secure in a hole he had dug in the earth

He may have speculated...

*“Why should I work? I have 16 years of salary saved away. I'll be able to live on this for a long time. There's no urgency to get a job or push myself too hard. Maybe I'll do it later when the money finally runs out”*

- The other two servants doubled their money
- This servant could have done the same
- He could have turned his 6000 denari into 12000

Rather than make something of himself, he squandered his time and life away doing nothing valuable with himself or his resources

The Lord will settle with us when He returns

*“After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.” (Matthew 25:19, NKJV)*

- Settle or Reckon – *an accounting term – to compare accounts*
- It would depict an accountant who is putting together a P&L statement

In this parable the master returns from a long trip and wants to know how his servants fared with his money

- With the language used we can see that he wasn't satisfied with taking a shallow look at the books
- He intended to search and dig until he obtained a full picture of the real situation
- This was going to be a thorough investigation

There is coming a day in our future when we will all stand before Jesus not only as Savior but as Judge

- On that day He will measure what we actually did and compare it to what we were supposed to do
- He will look over the profit and loss statement of our lives

*“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)**

- The servants in our parable weren't ignorant of the master's expectations
- They knew he expected them to do something significant with what had been entrusted to them
- The master would accept no excuses for their lack of increase – **Matthew 25:26-27**

*“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”*

**(Matthew 25:21,23 NKJV)**

- Both the first and second servants received a positive response from their master
- But why did the master call their success a “*few things*”?
- Their accomplishment wasn’t small
- As a matter of fact, it was huge!

On one hand the master commended them

On the other hand, his words, “*over a few things*” seem to indicate that what they had done wasn’t really a big deal

- I’m sure they were dumbfounded
- What did their master mean?
- Was he belittling what they had accomplished?

What the first two servants achieved was fantastic, but it was just the beginning

- They had proven to be hard working and capable
- They had demonstrated responsibility
- Their master knew now that they could be trusted with true riches
- He saw a bright future for them
- With God faithfulness always results in promotion



## The Master's Response to the Third Servant

*““But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.’” (Matthew 25:26, NKJV)*

*“wicked and lazy or slothful”* – a person who has a do-nothing, lethargic, lackadaisical, apathetic, indifferent, lukewarm attitude toward life

*“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.” (Revelation 3:16, NKJV)*

*Vomit* – this is the strongest word that Jesus could have used to describe how He feels toward those who are apathetic or lethargic about their spiritual lives and life assignments

- Jesus loves them but simply has no taste for lackadaisical people
- People who are lukewarm about their God-given abilities or assignments leave a bad taste in His mouth
- He is not pleased!

*“And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*  
*(Matthew 25:30, NKJV)*

- *Unprofitable* – useless, good for nothing, pointless
- He is an aimless, purposeless person who contributes nothing to life
- He just takes up space on the face of the planet

Significance is not achieved by simply existing

*“True significance is achieved when you know that you used what God gave you and that you did what God asked you to do”*  
– Rick Renner

*“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11, NKJV)*

- Even if you think your gifts are small in comparison to others, you can still use them
- If you use them they will increase

The more proficient you become at using your gifts the more valuable you are to your family, church, business, and friends

- Do not ignore the gifts God has given you and minimize your life assignment
- Don't allow your life to become pointless, contributing nothing to the world

God chose you and appointed you before you were in your mother's womb

*“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,”*  
**(Ephesians 1:4, NKJV)**

Before the earth was created, God was already looking into your future, anticipating your life

*“My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.” (Psalm 139:15–16, NKJV)*

When your flesh tells you that you aren't worthy enough to be used you need to take authority over it and tell it to shut its mouth!

- God planned a great future for me!
- He wants to use me!
- I'm not listening to anymore negative garbage and unrenewed emotions!
- I have an awesome destiny!
- I'm a significant part of God's plan!

You are exactly the person God wants to use!

Excuse making will shackle you for the rest of your life

- Our flesh likes to lock onto bad experiences or past deficiencies as a reason why we can't change
- These reasons become excuses
- We need to refuse to embrace those excuses
- If we don't we will never be free from that prison

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Romans 12:1–3, NKJV)*

The first step in becoming free of the invisible prison of excuses is to renew our minds to the truth

- These lies will hold us captive our entire lives if we let them
- It is not merely an emotional choice to change
- Emotions rise and fall like the waves of the ocean

We must choose to see ourselves the way God does, walk away from our excuses and failures and never pick them up again!

Pride: You can fall into self-exaltation (*takes credit* for success) and self-promotion (put those successes in other people’s faces so they will *give us credit* for them)

- But pride can shift into the shape of self-degradation and self-demotion when we beat ourselves up for our failures
- We are still obsessed with ourselves
- In the first form, we are obsessed with our successes
- In the second, we are obsessed with our failures

True humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking about yourself less

- *Sober* – of sound mind – the way God sees you

Some of the things that keep us in an invisible prison:

*“At a very young age, I felt unloved, rejected, and unwanted”*

*“I was abused when I was younger. I’ve never gotten over it. In fact, I’m so wounded that I can’t carry on a normal relationship”*

*“No one ever told me ‘I love you’ when I was young”*

*“Kids at school called me names. It has affected my self-image because it hurt me so deeply”*

*“My husband has never treated me right”*

*“I’ve worked hard my entire life and given my best to my job, but I’ve never been treated right or promoted by my employers”*

*“My sports coach showed unfair preference to others and discriminated against me”*

*“I’m so fat and ugly. No one wants to hang out with someone who looks like me. I’ve tried to lose weight but its hopeless”*

*“I’m so skinny I look like a sack of bones”*

And on and on.....

If you’ve been stuck in a pattern of wrong thinking then today is the day to break free!

God is calling you to a higher place

- God is speaking to you
- He is beckoning you to move out of your comfort zone

No sin, no flaw, no problem is so big that God cannot overcome it and lay His hand on your life in a big way!

- Change and transition are a part of life
- God is constantly calling us upward to a higher level of commitment and professionalism
- Go to the cross, deal with your flesh, and start your ascent to greatness!

Gideon thought God had the wrong man

*“Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.””*

*“So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”” (Judges 6:15, 15 NKJV)*

- Is there an area in life that you are using as an excuse to not be used for something great?
- What if Jesus came right now and asked you to give an account of what you did with your life?

*“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;” (Romans 12:4–11, NKJV)*

In what areas of your life would Jesus find fruit and increase for His Kingdom?

- Am I afraid to let go of what’s comfortable?
- Am I clinging on to what’s safe, secure, risk-free, and predictable?
- What have you done with that divine call, that dream God has placed in your heart?

*“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”*

**(Matthew 25:23, NKJV)**