

2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)

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

One of the things all Christians question at some point is the will of God for their life

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 problem is not God
- The problem is we sometimes lack understanding or make mistakes in following His plan
- Throughout the Bible we see men and women of God experienced bumps along the way
- Sometimes a result of incomplete obedience
- Sometimes a misunderstanding of what God was asking of them
- Sometimes a struggle in embracing what God had asked them to do
- The good news is God is willing to work with anyone who has a heart to keep trying

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

Paul the apostle, originally named Saul was born into a very strict, religious Hebrew environment

- He called himself a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee
– **Philippians 3:5**
- He would have been taught to disdain the beliefs and behaviors of the Gentile world
- The pagan way of life was considered to be “*low life*” compared to his world of orthodox Judaism

Saul was so full of religious zeal that when Hebrews began to accept Jesus as the Messiah, he was full of fury against them

Acts 8:3 (NKJV)

³ As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.

- Saul was mean spirited and filled with intolerance toward anyone who didn't agree with his religious views
- His intolerance drove him to attack and abuse anyone who had a different view from his own
- *Made Havoc* – to destroy, maim, or kill; like an uncontrollable beast
- He violently pursued, attacked, and abused people he believed had abandoned their Jewish faith
- Yet God called him to reach the very people that appalled him – the converted Jew as well as the Gentiles

1 Timothy 1:12–13 (NKJV)

¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

- No one painted a better picture of Paul’s grievous lifestyle before coming to Christ than the apostle did himself
- Just as a hunter strategically follows after an animal, Saul mercilessly pursued believers, before he came to Christ
- He raided homes, and meeting places of the early church
- He was focused on apprehending Christians to imprison them or even deliver them to be murdered
- He was present at the stoning of Stephen – [Acts 7:58-60](#)
- He called himself “*the chief of sinners*” – [1 Timothy 1:15](#)

Yet amazingly God initiated reconciliation with Saul and made known to him the divine call He had placed on his life before the foundation of the world

Ephesians 1:4, 11 (NKJV)

⁴ 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,

¹¹ 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

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

- The grace of God completely transformed Saul from the inside out

That divine grace instantly released Saul from the guilt of the injustices he had carried out against believers

- God redirected his life to fulfill His will
- And God will do the same for you and me

Acts 9:3–6 (NKJV)

³ As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. ⁴ Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” ⁵ And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” ⁶ So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord *said* to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

- On his way to Damascus with murderous hatred in his heart, Saul called on the Name of the Lord
- Jesus’ power reached out and lay hold of him
- In a split second he was saved, delivered, and changed
- And his life drastically changed direction

Eventually this transformed man launched the first missionary activity in the history of the Church

- He wrote epistles to various churches
- These letters were so full of the Holy Spirit they are still transforming lives today

The instant Saul was saved the Holy Spirit entered his heart, as He does with all new believers

- In that same instant God's plan was deposited in his born-again spirit
- The same thing happened to you when you gave your heart to Christ
- God deposited His divine plan for your life
- You may not have comprehended it, but it is there
- Deep inside of you it is clear and concrete
- Even though your mind has not realized it, it is waiting to be tapped into

When you finally realize it, embrace it,, and begin to pursue it, that divine plan will unleash supernatural power to carry you forward toward its fulfillment

After his conversion Saul found himself temporarily held captive by blindness

- Stationary quiet, and unable to eat for three days
- He pondered what he had just experienced and heard
- Jesus had a profound effect on the life of this soon to be apostle

Acts 26:16–17 (NKJV) Recounting his encounter with Jesus to King Agrippa

¹⁶ But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you

- This explains why there was so much to digest over those first three days of silence and blindness
- It must have been shocking beyond belief that Jesus was sending Saul to the very people he despised and was disgusted by
- Have you ever faced a forced change in the direction of your life that was so extreme you were unable to eat?

Share story about Coffee Roaster

- Full of pride thinking I was following the Lord
- He was going to teach us about following His will and trusting His provision
- I could have kept going in my own strength
- Surrender brought us God's results and provision

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

Acts 9:8–12 (NKJV)

⁸ Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” ¹¹ So the Lord *said* to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”

- The call on Saul’s life created such a radical change he needed confirmation to know he was headed in the right direction
- I am so glad that God loves us so much that He provides confirmation along the way
- He knows when we need it

If you are determined to follow God’s will for you life, you will also face your own “*crossroads moments*” when Jesus gives you an assignment that requires more of you than you have to give in the natural

- It is vital to keep your spiritual eyes and ears open to hear the Lord’s confirmations when He provides them
- As Saul was pondering what had happened to him he had another vision that gave Him more direction
- Obedience will lead to more instruction

Acts 9:13–16 (NKJV)

¹³ Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

- Saul wasn’t the only one who needed confirmation
- Put yourself in Ananias’s shoes
- Remember Saul was a killer of Christians
- Ananias was fully aware of his reputation

If Ananias hadn’t known before hand, he discovered as he traveled to obey the Lord’s directive that there was in fact a street called Straight

- This would have served as a confirmation in his heart

When he inquired if there was a house of a man named Judas on that street and found it to be true, it would have been another confirmation

Acts 9:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Both men needed confirmation to know they weren't hallucinating or imagining what they had seen and heard

- Every step along the way God provides confirmation
- Encouraging them to keep moving forward
- When Ananias prayed for Saul, he delivered a prophetic word that God had given him for Saul
- This was a confirmation of what Paul had already heard from the Lord – **Acts 26:16-17**
- A prophetic word will always re-affirm something the Lord has shown or is showing you

Through his initial encounter with Jesus and confirmation along the way we see that God was clearly and specifically giving Paul direction for his calling

- To take the Gospel to the Gentiles
- To represent Jesus to governmental authorities and kings
- To bear witness that Jesus was the Messiah to the children of Israel

When the Holy Spirit comes into the human heart upon salvation, he brings the plan for that individual with Him

- It may take time for our mind to catch up with the hearts knowledge of that divine plan
- Lay hold of it and begin to walk it out

Acts 26:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’

In this verse Jesus outlines five specific things for Paul

- Open their eyes to the truth
- Turn them from darkness to light
- Turn them from the power of Satan to God’s power
- Teach them to receive forgiveness of sin
- Show them how to activate their inheritance through faith in Jesus

Although the call on Paul’s life was three-pronged in its reach, it was first and foremost to the Gentiles

- See – **Romans 1:5,13,14; Galatians 1:16; 2:7-8**

When Saul received the prophetic word from Ananias it was exactly what he needed to hear to keep moving forward

- Remember true prophecy confirms what you have already heard
- When “*words from the Lord*” don’t fit in
- Always be respectful and prayerfully consider what was spoken
- If it doesn’t fit don’t take it seriously
- If it affirms something listen very carefully
- Remember you hear His voice – **John 10:27**

“A genuine prophetic word regarding God’s will for your life will confirm what He has already told you, and it will empower you to face the future with confidence” – Rick Renner

- If God is going to speak something significant to you about your life, He will likely tell you first
- He may speak during prayer or reveal something while you’re reading the Bible
- Perhaps you and your spouse are praying together and you both sense an upcoming change
- You may receive a word of direction while sitting in a church service
- That’s what happened to both Paul and Ananias
- God spoke to them each in a vision
- He gave them both confirmation along the way

The key to following and fulfilling the call of God on your life is to be a part of a life giving, Bible preaching, vibrant church of believers

- One in which there is a blend of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and age groups
- The church in Jerusalem had become narrow minded and religious by the time Saul was converted
- They thought the Gospel was only for the Jew
- God moved Paul to Antioch and an environment in which he could grow

Being in the right place at the right time is vital to your preparation

1 Corinthians 12:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

- God knows what you need and is working a plan to fully develop the gifts He has placed in you
- The local church is the training ground for you to learn how to submit to authority and serve others
- This may not be easy on your flesh
- Be still and know that He is God

Psalm 46:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Be still, and know that I *am* God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

- The environment we live in can sometimes have some mental noise and clutter

You might think the negative influence of people around you, *or what you perceive as negative*, is hindering you from developing your gifts

- You may think you can't possibly hear what God is saying
- Rest assured – the Holy spirit wants to talk to you more than you want to hear from Him

We all need to learn the art of getting quiet on the inside, even in the midst of chaotic circumstances and external noise

Sometimes we allow ourselves to get too comfortable where we are in a particular phase of life

- This may hinder you from having to stretch and totally lean on God
- You may feel a “*divine discomfort*”
- The Lord may be calling you to “*step out of the boat*”
- God wants us in a place of challenge and purpose

Maybe you need to spend time before the Lord renewing your commitment to depend on Him for all things

- Not your paycheck, friends, or familiar surroundings

2 Timothy 1:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

- Open up your heart to the Lord
- Ask Him to reveal and remove any wrong attitudes
- Don't be afraid to obey Him
- He's not going to hurt or mislead you
- He's working on equipping you for success
- All He needs is a willing obedient heart

Just as Paul was in Antioch for a season God will use your experiences to prepare you for the next step of your life

Philippians 3:12 (NKJV) ¹²Not 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.