

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXVIII

January 14, 2018

No. 02

What Course Are You On?

(Jerry Fite)

As Paul faces certain martyrdom, he writes, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Paul was not just facing the end of his life, but his life was finishing the course or race set before him. The course he was running was demanding, for it necessitated finishing, fighting and keeping if he were to receive the crown. The course Paul was racing upon was a spiritual course. It was the good fight of engaging in the spiritual battle between good and evil. It was the race which meanders through obstacles designed by Satan to discourage the runner from faithful continuance, making keeping the faith significant in the end.

The course Paul was finishing, is the same course every believer enters when he or she becomes a disciple, or follower of Christ. The course Christ paved for us is a way of obedience, even when it demands difficulty and

subsequent suffering. Does not Jesus warn all His potential followers “to count the cost?”

The wise builder does so when he desires to build a tower, or else, if not able to complete the project, he opens himself to the mockery of beholders of his unfinished work (Luke 14:28-30). Following Jesus demands considering the cost of discipleship. The disciple must love the Lord more than close family members, or else he or she cannot be a disciple of Jesus (Luke 14:26). If one does not deny self, even to renouncing all that one has, he or she cannot be Jesus’ disciple (Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:33). And, if one does not take up his or her own cross, which symbolizes persecution and suffering for the cause of Christ, then such a one cannot be a follower of the Lord (Luke 14:27). His course was the way of the cross to the crown, so is the race of Christ’s followers. There is no “time out” for avoiding the burden of the cross. It is a “daily” weight borne along the way paved by Jesus (Luke 9:23).

Many, after counting the cost, might not want to even start on such a course. They would rather live out their days on earth, doing what they want to do, and

avoiding suffering at all costs. We have only one life to live, so why should one allow another to control it? Why would one not abandon a course that is constantly cascaded with persecution and suffering? Many might therefore say, after complying to counting the cost, “I will live my life in another way.”

That other way does not mean that one is not on a spiritual course. It is the “course of this world” (Ephesians 2:2). Living in the lusts of one’s flesh, doing one’s own desires characterizes this course (Ephesians 2:3). The Devil deceives the “my-way-seeker” in not seeing that he or she is on a course inspired by the prince of the powers of the air, manifested in a spirit of disobedience to God (Ephesians 2:2).

Sadly, the course of this world does not end inconsequently. The many, deceived in following their own way, are following the “broad way” that leads to “destruction” (Matthew 7:13). Not one, but many enter into the eternal punishment of the second death from the presence of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9, Matthew 25:46). Which of the two courses are you on?