

Second-Half Strong

Ready:

“Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

-John 2: 9b-11 (NIV)

Set

One of the worst feelings in sports is losing after having a big lead. Most of us have been a part of a game in which we got ahead early and then watched a victory slip away. We never see it coming because we become so comfortable with the position we've gained that we assume we're not vulnerable and we slack off. Maybe we play around with the ball in the backfield, or we slow our pace. We might even quit completely or forget some of the fundamentals of the game because of how blind we've become.

Many of us know about the first of Jesus' miracles: turning water into wine. Not only was it the custom in the day to have wine at a wedding, it was a social obligation. So when the wine ran out, it was much more than a minor social embarrassment. Jesus saved the occasion by turning the water into wine. The master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine and made the comment in the verses above. He noted how the best wine was brought out in the latter half of the party.

After hearing of Jesus' many miracles during his life, this one can often be viewed as simple and insignificant. However, I think it's worth noting that Jesus saved the best for last. All too often we can treat our faith like the wine at parties. We've done a lot in our youth, and we don't wind up finishing strong. We convince ourselves that because we have already brought our finest out before, we can “rest” and “do less.” We become first-half Christians.

Most teams don't consider themselves a "second-half team" until they are losing at halftime. But if we enter the locker rooms of our lives and are winning, how do we maintain the lead? How do we keep the mindset of a second-half player while we're already ahead? Paul tells the Thessalonians to never tire of "doing what is right." We need to continue to work on our fundamentals, no matter what we've already accomplished whether that means spending more time in the Word (Romans 15:4), praying continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17) or telling others the Good News (Matthew 28:19-20). We can't let the world deceive us into complacency. After all, how often do we let our fans call the plays? In the same fashion, we can't let the world tell us to "take it easy" or "slow down." As Paul says in Philippians, we cannot consider ourselves to have taken hold of the prize that Christ has given us. We need to forget what is behind, and strain towards what is ahead (Philippians 3:12).

Be challenged today to bring out your best self for the second half. Don't give up and don't let down, but be encouraged by the strength and endurance received through Christ. Press on and finish strong!

Go

1. Are there any areas of your life where you might have "taken it easy"?
2. What can you do in order to pick up the pace in the second half?
3. How can you help someone else who may be slacking off?
4. How can you apply God's Word to the second-half of your game?

Workout

Philippians 3:11-14

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15



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