

## **Running in the Faith**

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

-Philippians 3:14 (NIV)

### **Ready:**

Last Saturday night, the Tennessee men's basketball team, ranked #2 in the country, topped #1 Memphis 66-62 in a tremendous game before a packed crowd. The match was ESPN's marquee match, a perfect contest featuring the top two teams in the nation. During pre-game, Vols' Coach Bruce Pearl challenged his players to play with passion, poise and purpose. Through the see-saw match, his team displayed all three, playing passionately, remaining poised when Memphis made their first seven three-pointers, and playing with one purpose: to win.

As Christians, many times we stumble in the midst of adversity, losing heart due to persecution. We lose sight of the Scriptural fact in Ephesians 2:10 that we are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Paul's life demonstrates the passion, poise, and purpose Pearl mentioned.

### **PASSION**

-Paul's passion was evident when he told the Philippian believers, "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things" (Phil. 3:8).

-Paul gives us a great example of living with passion. His passion for Christ and passion for others to know Him permeates every one of the epistles he penned. He constantly challenges us to "run in such a way as to receive the prize."

### **POISE**

His poise is evident if we consider where he was when he wrote many of his epistles: in a Roman jail, in chains.

-In Philippians 1:3, Paul proclaims, "As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ."

-Although chained for his proclamation of the gospel, Paul did not lose heart or shy from the task set before him. He proclaimed to the church at Corinth, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (I Corinthians 4:8-10).

## PURPOSE

-Paul endured the adversity, persecution and imprisonment because he was determined to complete the race Christ set before him. His sole purpose was to proclaim the gospel, and to “pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”

We know that we can play a game with the passion, poise and purpose that Coach Pearl talked about, but are we willing to devote our lives fully to running “the race” with that same passion for Christ, poise under fire, and single-mindedness of purpose? Let’s take the challenge and complete our races so that we can echo Paul when our task is complete, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

## Go

1. For further study, pick one of Paul’s epistles and read with the three keys above in mind. Pray for God to show you how you can strengthen your faith to live with that same passion, poise and purpose.

### Bible Reference:

2 Timothy 4



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