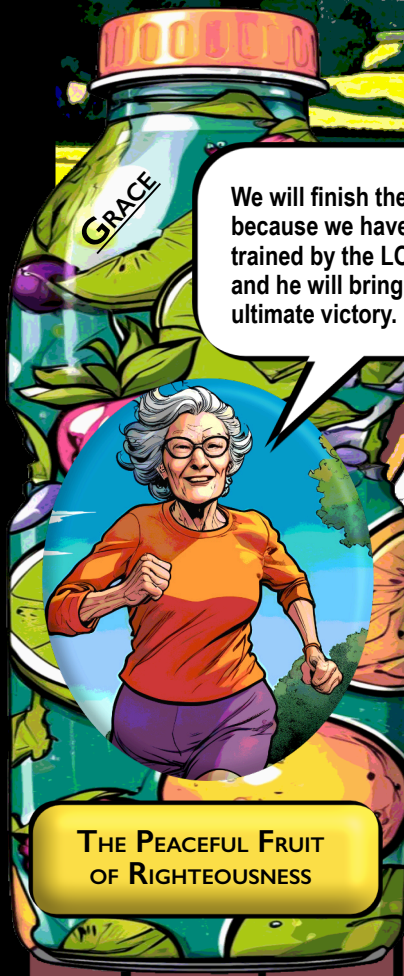


# WE WILL FINISH THE RACE

... BECAUSE NOT FINISHING THE RACE IS NOT AN OPTION

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We will finish the race because we have been trained by the LORD himself and he will bring us to ultimate victory.



Our LORD is with us every step of the way and he will provide all the strength and nourishment we need for the entire length of the journey.

**1. Not finishing the race is not an option for those who have entered the race, Hebrews 10:39.**

- (Hebrews 10:39 *PARAPHRASE*) We are not of those who quit running and fall out of the race to our damnation, but we are of those who keep running and prove our faith to be genuine to the saving of our soul.

A. Not finishing the race reveals that your faith is fake.

B. Not finishing the race reveals that you never entered the race—i.e. God's rest.

- (Hebrews 4:1–3a LSB) **Therefore, let us fear, lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have fallen short of it.** <sup>2</sup> For indeed we have had good news proclaimed to us, just as they also; **but the word that was heard did not profit those who were not united with faith among those who heard.**
- (Hebrews 4:3 ESV) **For we who have believed enter that rest,** as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, **‘They shall not enter my rest.’**”

C. Jesus directs us to the only true starting gate by which we may enter the race.

- (Matthew 7:13 LSB) **Enter through the narrow gate;** for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, **and there are many who enter through it.**

D. Those who choose the wrong gate may run beside us for a time but they will at some point fall out of the race revealing their counterfeit faith.

**2. It is the will of the Father that those who enter the race will finish the race—we will be brought to glory by God the Father and God the Son.**

- (Hebrews 2:10 NIV) **In bringing many sons and daughters to glory,** it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, **should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.**
- (John 6:39–40 LSB) **Now this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing,** but raise it up on the last day. **40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life,** and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.

**3. God trains those he loves and nourishes us on the peaceful fruit of righteousness so that we may finish the race, 12:10-11.**

- (Hebrews 12:6 ESV) **For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,** and chastises every son whom he receives.

A. Because of his loving discipline we are able to keep running because we share life with him and are **nourished on the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**

- (Hebrews 12:10b–11 LSB) ... **He disciplines us for our benefit,** so that we may share His holiness. <sup>11</sup> **And all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful, but to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**

B. Those who are **nourished on the peaceful fruit of righteousness** hear God speak peace to his people, his holy ones.

- (Psalm 85:8–9 LSB) Let me hear what the God, Yahweh, will speak; **For He will speak peace to His people,** to His holy ones; But let them not turn back to folly. <sup>9</sup> **Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,** That glory may dwell in our land.

C. Those who are **nourished on the peaceful fruit of righteousness** come to love God's word and live in hope before the LORD.

- (Psalm 119:165–167 ESV) **Great peace have those who love your law;** nothing can make them stumble. <sup>166</sup> **I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments.** <sup>167</sup> **My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly.**

D. Being **nourished by the peaceful fruit of righteousness** results in further sustenance in preparation for what lies ahead in the race.

- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And **the effect of righteousness** will be peace, and **the result of righteousness,** quietness and trust forever.

E. Those who refuse to pay attention to God's words **never come to taste the peaceful fruit of righteousness** and drift off the track into the darkness

- (Hebrews 2:1 ESV) **Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard,** lest we drift away from it.
- (Isaiah 48:17–18 LSB) Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, **“I am Yahweh your God, who teaches you to profit, Who leads you in the way you should go.** <sup>18</sup> **If only you had paid attention to My commandments! *Then* your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”**

4. Since not finishing the race is not an option we have a responsibility to all those running with us to exhort and strengthen them to keep running, 12:12.

- (Hebrews 12:12 LSB) Therefore, **STRENGTHEN THE HANDS THAT ARE WEAK AND THE KNEES THAT ARE FEEBLE.**

A. We have a God-given, sacred stewardship to strengthen and exhort the weak, feeble and fallen.

- (Isaiah 35:3–4 ESV) **Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.** 4 **Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not!** Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”
- (1 Thessalonians 5:14–15 ESV) And we urge you, brothers, **admonish** the idle, **encourage** the fainthearted, **help** the weak, **be patient with them all.** 15 **See that no one repays anyone evil for evil,** but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
- (Galatians 6:1 ESV) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, **you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.** Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

5. Our stewardship involves making straight paths for the lame so they may be healed, 12:13.

- (Hebrews 12:13 LSB) **And make straight paths for your feet,** so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

A. We make straight paths for our group of runners by consistent, biblical exposition of the Scriptures which provides hope and encouragement.

- (Romans 15:1–4 ESV) **We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.** 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, **to build him up.** 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” 4 For whatever was written in former days **was written for our instruction,** that through **endurance** and through the **encouragement** of the Scriptures we might have hope.

B. We make straight paths by keeping our hearts with all vigilance and putting away sinful speech.

- (Proverbs 4:23–27 ESV) **Keep your heart with all vigilance,** for from it flow the springs of life. 24 **Put away from you crooked speech,** and

**put devious talk far from you.** 25 Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. 26 **Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.** 27 **Do not swerve to the right or to the left;** turn your foot away from evil.

C. We make straight paths by looking ahead and pondering the direction of the race set before us.

6. God disciplines/trains us and commissions us be part of the discipline/training of others—seeing to it, that as much as is possible, no one falls short of the grace of God, 12:14-15.

- (Hebrews 12:14–15 LSB) **Pursue peace** with all men, and the **sanctification** without which no one will see the Lord, 15 **seeing to it that no one falls short of the grace of God; that no ROOT OF BITTERNESS SPRINGING UP CAUSES TROUBLE, and by it many be defiled.**

A. First, we must acknowledge that it is only by grace alone are we able to keep running.

B. As we run by grace alone we develop a desire to help others taste the goodness of God in this way.

C. Our stewardship as fellow runners includes helping people understand and accept the blessing of the training of the LORD so that they might share in his holiness and be nourished by the peaceful fruit of righteousness as they run.

D. We have a responsibility to be aware—*because of the nature of those running*—that multiple tensions may develop within a church fellowship.

**Tensions may develop because ...** our lives are changing as we are under the LORD's discipline ... some haven't obeyed and are carrying extra weight and are entangled with sin ... there are people running alongside us but they are not of us ... some do not like the narrow aspect of the course ... some are upset because they do not get what they want and make sinful demands from wrong motives ... jealousy, spiritual immaturity and worldliness.

- (1 Corinthians 3:3 NIV) You are still worldly. **For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?** Are you not acting like mere humans?

E. We must determine to relate to people and their struggles by building and promoting an environment built on the grace of God.

F. One way we do this is by actively pursuing peace with all those involved.



Romans 12 gives us excellent guidelines to living peaceably with the people around us.

- (Romans 12:14–19, 21 ESV) **Bless those who persecute you**; bless and do not curse them. 15 **Rejoice with those who rejoice**, weep with those who weep. 16 **Live in harmony** with one another. **Do not be haughty**, but associate with the lowly. **Never be wise in your own sight**. 17 **Repay no one evil for evil**, but **give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all**. 18 **If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all**. 19 Beloved, **never avenge yourselves**, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ... 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good**.

If we are overwhelmed with contentions in the body, then we will not be as concerned as we should be for the eternal destiny of those around us and those who are contending are going to find it nearly impossible to hear God speak necessary words to them. So sometimes we need to bring God's grace into their lives through church discipline.

## 7. There is a difference between falling from and falling short or falling away from the grace of God.

- (Hebrews 12:15–17 LSB) **Seeing to it that no one falls short of the grace of God**; that no ROOT OF BITTERNESS SPRINGING UP CAUSES TROUBLE, **and by it many be defiled**; 16 that also there be no sexually immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.
- A. The person who falls short of or away from the grace of God has never come to know the grace of God.
  - B. So we need to “see to it” (as much as depends on us) that they learn and experience what God teaches in his Bible concerning the doctrine of grace.
  - C. A person who holds to a wrong concept of grace may run alongside us for a while but will ultimately fall away because only by grace will we finish the race.
  - D. A person who cannot let go of his good works will never experience the grace of God.

- (Romans 11:6 LSB) **But if it is by grace, it is no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace**.

E. Esau fell short of the grace of God—he never came to understand the value of what he had been offered.

## 8. A tragic consequence of falling short of the grace of God is falling further into rebellion and becoming a root of bitterness that defiles many.

- (Deuteronomy 29:18–19a ESV) **Beware** lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe **whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God** to go and serve the gods of those nations. **Beware** lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, 19 one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, **blesses himself in his heart**, saying, “I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.”
- A. Every human religion, false gospel, philosophy, etc. falls short of the grace of God.
  - B. This text in Deuteronomy establishes a link between a person turning his heart away to the gods of the land and a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit.
  - C. Our Hebrews text calls it a root of bitterness that springs up and causes trouble defiling many.
  - D. This spirit of rebellion springs up from the absence of grace in the person's life.

## 9. As we run our race, we will face an ongoing decision as to our source of nourishment.

- A. We choose to stay on the path of life and continue to be nourished by the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
- B. Or we choose to swerve off the path and be nourished on the root of bitterness which leads to further rebellion and defiles many.

## 10. **CONCLUSION**: Church discipline is the logical, biblical progression of the LORD's discipline toward those whom he loves.

Grace is the only rescue for those who have taken the wrong turn into bitterness and rebellion. So grace the Church must bring ... grace in the form of church discipline ... discipline according to the word of God and as directed by the Holy Spirit of God ...