

**Theme: *Finish the Race! Keep the Faith!***  
**April 1, 2009      Chapel at NBC**

**Sermon Title:**      **“Guaranteed To Finish The Race”**

**Text:** 2 Corinthians 4:7 - 9 NIV

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup> We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed **2 Cor 4:7-9 (NIV)**

**Sermon Theme:** Victory is ours... God has made it possible!

**Introduction:** The idea of life and ministry being like a race, does not necessarily appeal to all of us. Of all the things I did in PE and all the sports I played... I never liked track!! Running was simply something I never excelled in. I knew I would never come in first, and I wasn't even sure that I would finish!

**Illus:** I read the book... got up to 3 miles... hated every step! Finally gave up on it.

**B U T .....**

- What difference would it make to you if you were to enter a race with a guarantee that you would win?
- What difference would it make if you knew that God was going to do everything in His power to see to it that you made it to the finish line?

This is the encouragement we get from our text this evening. In his earlier letter Paul had compared himself and his fellow apostles to “men condemned to die in the arena” (1 Cor. 4:9). The metaphors employed here evoked the same imagery to describe the demands of the ministry, contrasting human helplessness on one hand with divine enablement on the other.

OK... so Paul is admitting the race is hard. The Bible never hides that from us. But, the good news is the harder the trial the greater the provision from God.

**I. The Content is Awesome... the Container is Weak! Vs. 7**

- A. Our message is the awesome message – Jesus saves!
- B. God uses us, we are the container that proves the work is from God, not from us.  
(Eph.3:7-9)

**2. The Challenges Are Great.... God's Provision is Greater**

- A. Pressure: (thlibō – anguishing trouble) We will face the pressures of life:  
<sup>8</sup> We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; (stenochōreō – hemmed in, despair)  
2 Cor 4:8 (NIV)
- B. Perplexity: (aporeō – deep doubt) We will have times when we do not fully understand perplexed, but not in despair; (exaporeō – compounded doubt) 2 Cor 4:8 (NIV)
- C. Persecution: (diōkō – a pursuing, want to run, persecute) We may get more blame than praise or credit, treated unjustly, want to run and hide or give in  
persecuted, but not abandoned; (enkataleipō – not deserted, no man left behind) 2 Cor 4:9 (NIV)
- D. Physically Afflicted: (2 Cor. 11) beaten, stoned, flogged, whipped, shipwrecked

struck down, (kataballō – thrown down, smite) but not destroyed. (apollymi – demolish, completely destroy) 2 Cor 4:9 (NIV)

For us: disease, medical bills, ill health, children/spouse ill, etc.

**Illus: Billy DeWicks – I refused to quit**

**Will we quit?**

### **3. CONQUERORS DON'T QUIT... THEY OVERCOME!**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Cor 4:16-18 (NIV)

Did you catch that... the man who was beaten, flogged, whipped, jailed, shipwrecked, starved, left for dead, alone in prison.... Says "Light and momentary affliction" "Just temporary stuff"

You see, Paul knew he was guaranteed to finish the race!

Daily renewal... never left to his own resources

Eternal View ... looks beyond himself to see things from God's perspective

Therefore he writes to us:

More Than Conquerors

<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

<sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:28-39 (NIV)

## **CONCLUSION:**

Have you read the fine print of our guarantee?

- You can withstand the pressures of life! (pressed but not crushed!)
- You won't always understand, but you will not be left in despair (perplexed but not in despair)
- You may be persecuted, but you will never be left to face it alone or in your own strength (persecuted but not abandoned)
- You may get knocked down... but not knocked out (struck down but not destroyed)

**Illus: Billy DeWicks – the rest of the story – From persecutor to protector!**

**So what are you facing today?**

**Pressure** – Feel like, “I just cannot take anymore”? Let Jesus take it.

**Perplexity** – Does it seem like you just don't understand why?  
Well look beyond what you can see to WHO you need to see...  
Look in the face of Jesus today

**Persecution**—You want to cry out.. it's not fair! Maybe not.. but you are not alone! Don't fall for the devil's lie that you have been abandoned.

**Physical affliction**—Tired? Sick? Medical bills piling up?  
Come to the one who heals and give rest and supplies every need.

**Stand where you are today and say... No... I will not give up... ever! I will finish the race!**

**I have one who will protect me until the very end!**