

## Fully Engaged

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*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*  
– 2 Timothy 4:7 –

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In the early years of my conversion I read a particular author's biography of the apostle Paul (based on the biblical texts). It had many good insights and interesting takes, but one phrase of his work struck a resonating chord and has remained with me for years. He aptly noted that the Apostle to the Gentiles "moved wholly when he moved at all". When we study Paul's life, it becomes apparent that this is a poignant epithet for the Apostle.

Paul's post-conversion life serves as what ought to be the model of normative Christian experience – a fully engaged, passionate endeavor that has Christ's glory as its fuel and the advancement of His Kingdom as its prize. As his life sunsets in Rome and the certainty of his martyrdom by Caesar's hand becomes apparent, Paul cogently captures this truth in his last letter to Timothy. He draws upon two strikingly all-consuming similitudes to summarize the level to which his heart, mind, and body had been occupied during his Christian pilgrimage. "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course."

A warrior cannot be half-hearted. His victory upon the battlefield – indeed, his very survival thereon – does not come by chance. He spends long hours and years in training. He must meticulously apply himself to learning as well as maintaining a multitude of tactics, techniques, and weaponry in mastering warcraft. Then, when on the field of battle or in the ring, there is no room for error. He must ensure that his will to win is greater than that of his enemy and rely upon both that will and his training to decimate his opponent.

For the runner, lung capacity, muscle endurance, and mental stamina are required to cross the finish line. Men do not leave their couches to run marathons. Incremental and continuous training, proper diet, and love for the sport is required to make the body race-ready. Runners do not enter the contest until they have counted the cost and disciplined both their minds and their bodies to the point that they are confident that if they do not win the race, they will at least finish it.

And is not the Christian life even more worthy of our full engagement? Does our commitment to the cause of Christ consume us? Can we possibly live a life pleasing and useful to our Savior with half-hearted attendance to the study of Scripture, lethargy in prayer, or reluctance in evangelism? Do we assiduously keep our bodies as vessels unto honor and maintain them as the temple of His Holy Ghost? Do we jealously keep our hearts exclusively occupied with Him, guarding against sin and the weight that doth so easily best us? Do we discipline our minds to think on the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report?

This is a race that reaches heaven. This is a war with Hell itself. We can afford to be neither fractionally trained nor partially committed. We must be fully engaged. Let us re-dedicate ourselves to Him who alone is worthy of all that we are, that we too, like Paul, may keep the faith.