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FINISH YOUR COURSE WELL

Over the years, I have seen many strong Christians, including pastors, who in their last years lost their zeal for the Word of God. Their ideals and beliefs became diluted or even compromised. That happens, but it should not. We should be just as ***“strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might (strength),”*** (Ephesians 6:10) as we were in our earlier days, if not stronger. We just lately have seen ministers loved by many people who have had moral failings in their older age.

The apostle Paul addressed this in his personal life that by his example we should ***“keep the faith”*** to the very end of life.

When Paul penned 2 Timothy, he was imprisoned in Rome and was about to be executed. He testified in 2 Timothy 4:7, ***“I have fought the good fight (of life); I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.”*** Despite facing over thirty years of all kinds of opposition, danger, and torture, Paul remained true in obedience to God to his very last day.

Just because a person has been godly all their life does not make them immune to weakness or to some type of failure in the end. Let us look at the failures of three of Israel’s godliest kings.

King Asa (2 Chronicles 14-16) during the first 35-38 years of his 41-year reign, ***“did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD his God.”*** (2 Chron. 14:2.) However, sometime during years 35-38 of his reign he disobeyed God by making a league with Syria for protection instead of seeking God. When the prophet Hanani gave him a rebuke from God, he cast the prophet into prison. Consequently, he got a severe disease in his feet in his 39th year of reign and sought healing from physicians instead of God. Asa died in his 41st year of reign from that disease. He no longer was seeking God.

King Josiah also was a godly king joined in a battle contrary to the prophet’s word. He was killed, even though he was acclaimed as the godliest king since David. (2 Kings 23:25, 29.)

Godly King Hezekiah reigned 14 years when the prophet Isaiah told him to get his affairs in order because he was going to die. Hezekiah pleaded with God Who granted him an additional 15 years. His son Manasseh was born in the third year of that extended fifteen years. Hezekiah failed as a father to raise his son in a godly way. Upon Hezekiah’s death, 12-year-old Manasseh became king and reigned 55 years as one of the vilest kings of Israel’s entire history.

If such godly kings can fail, certainly we can also. Instead, we must be like Paul and choose to follow God all the way to our last breath.

Jesus will give us the strength to do it. (Philippians 4:13.)