

Running the race and completing the task (Graziano Crepaldi)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2)

These verses speak about the need to choose the right heroes. The "witnesses" are the heroes of the faith listed in chapter 11 the men and women who kept running their race with endurance, despite great obstacles. By their own examples they encourage us not to give up! Therefore we need to make sure our heroes are godly men and women who are running their own races with endurance. Then we also need to leave anything behind that hinders our spiritual run. Successful runners take off anything that is slowing them down. Finally we recognize that Jesus is our best role model in the race we run. Let's keep our eyes on Him!

In the Old Testament we read that **"God made men at his image" (Gen. 1:27)** and this means that in our lives we have an inner drive that reflects the character of our Creator. Our Father in Heaven loves to complete his work! Could you imagine Him at the creation day making Adam without the head? No !!!! He made everything perfect and nothing was left uncompleted. He then stood back and was pleased about the finished work! **"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Gen. 1:31)**

In the last years through discipleship and church planting work, we met people coming from different background and nationalities that had a deep need of finding fulfillment in God and therefore finishing well what they have started. We all know how we feel when we are not able to finish something that we have started, specially after we have invested most of our energy, time and resources.

Some years ago in one of our outreach in Russia we met two old brothers that shared with us about their lives and experiences with God. After their conversion and first years with Jesus they have been arrested and put into a prison camp in Siberia because of their faith. Over 20 years they lived in very difficult conditions and survived persecution and terrible sicknesses. In spite of hardship their jail became a place where they led many people to the Lord and trained hundreds of believers in the ways of God. That prison became a church and the best Bible school! When they were set free they were too old to get married, too poor to buy new clothes and too weak to work. When we started to talk to them we saw a deep sense of fulfillment coming from their hearts and it was clear that they were soon finishing well the task given to them from the Father. We were surprised! We have never met people in our life so at peace with God, with themselves and with others.

These great men came to the end of their days aware that God moved through them powerfully, but there was no pride in their eyes. They followed Jesus on a hard narrow road of obedience leading to eternal life without organizing their future.

Many of us in our christian groups have been trained in focusing on our vision and setting our clear goals. Often we are so busy with our fears and concern of losing the right vision and not finishing well what we have started, that we end up creating our own self made ministries. We keep comparing ourselves with others and this is making us feel inferior and tense. We want to have tasks that we can do ourself and complete with our own capacity. Others have given up their vision given from the Father or they have stopped after facing the first opposition.

Jesus one day looked at his disciples and said: **"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27)**. In other words God's given jobs are going to finished well because He will be the one helping us to complete what He has give us to do. Our prayer is that we can hear and see the perfect work that the Father is doing in Heaven and take here on earth his perfect will. Our Russian brothers on that very cold evening taught us an important lesson that we will never forget. We are instruments in the hands of God and part of his wonderful plan, He knows our gifts and our future and He will guide us to the end. The wonderful promise and encouragement that will bring us to finishing well what we have started is that He said: **"I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Mt. 28:20)**. Our Father ist the God of the beginnings and the God of the ends!