

Deep Dive: Finishing Well

Are you a contender or a conformer?

The Man Who Finished Well

- Caleb, son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, was an unlikely success story: a gentile Canaanite who embraced the LORD God of Israel before the exodus from Egypt. The defining characteristic of Caleb: he “wholeheartedly” followed God.

- Caleb wholeheartedly followed God, that is, he was determined to go where God was going—and God was going to the Promised Land.
- Even at 85 years old, Caleb was still pursuing the purposes of God, evicting the ancestors of Goliath and taking possession of the land.

*“Who is this
pagan Philistine
anyway, that he
is allowed to
defy the armies
of the living
God?”*

David, when confronting Goliath
1 Samuel 17

- At the end of his life, the Apostle Paul was able to determine that he had completed everything that the Lord Jesus had assigned to him to do.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return.”

2 Timothy 4.7

Another Cycle of Failure

- Notice the progression of failure: Judah failed to drive out the people with iron chariots; Manasseh failed because the Canaanites were determined to stay; Naphtali failed to drive out the Canaanites, so they “moved in with them.”

- The Israelites did not live as those “in the world but not of the world”—

The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

Judges 3.5-6

God's Purpose for Israel

- The mission and desire of God's heart was to raise up one nation whose testimony would have an impact on all the other nations on the earth – one nation that would reveal the truth of the one and only God to every other nation.

- Before entering the Promised Land, Moses gave clear directives to Israel regarding the nations whose land they were entering.

- These directives weren't based on hatred or intolerance, but were meant to insure and preserve the exclusiveness and viability of their calling.

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Deuteronomy 7.6

- Israel was specifically warned that “proximity to” and “association with” these nations would lead to the compromising of their calling.

Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods . . .

Deuteronomy 7.2b-4a

- To fulfill their calling as representatives of YHWH and to preserve their covenant fidelity, Israel was commanded to destroy the altars of these nations.

This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire.

Deuteronomy 7.5

- This was not an incidental command (*Can there be such a thing?*) but one that was “spiritually pivotal” and non-negotiable.
- Altars are points of interaction between the physical and spiritual realms; they represent spiritual entities; they invoke desire, dependence, and allegiance.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

2 Corinthians 6.14-16

Confrontation at Bokim

- After having settled in their tribal lands, the angel of the LORD confronted the people of Israel with an accusation of unfaithfulness.

“For your part, you were not to make any covenants with the people living in this land; instead, you were to destroy their altars. But you disobeyed my command. Why did you do this?” (JUDGES 2.2)

- Israel's negligence and accommodation was, in the eyes of YHWH, a breach of covenant. In failing to tear down the altars of the other gods, they had left intact a conflicting revelation and an opposing testimony. They had, in terms of spiritual reality, affirmed and validated the beliefs and practices of the Canaanites and their gods.

The New Covenant Equivalent

- In the New Covenant, the methods are different, but the mission is the same.

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10.4-5

- The Apostle Paul described this “altar destroying” mission by quoting the declaration of Christ—

“I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Acts 26.17b-18

- If we are not endeavoring to tear down the altars with the gospel of Christ, we are, in fact, validating the belief of others that there is an alternative to the One who declared that He alone is the “no other way”—in other words, we are *invalidating* the revelation of Christ himself.

- To leave in place, in the lives of people and nations, near or far, the altars of other gods, is to testify that there is no future Day of the Lord, no final judgment, no Book of Life belonging to the Lamb; we are, in fact, declaring by our lack of action that there was no need for Christ to die.

“*The Word of God is explicitly clear that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1.15). If Christ’s mission is not our mission, simply put, we are **not** following Christ.*