
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2023

Finishing Well

Are you a contender or a conformer?

God's Purpose Through Generations

- Every generation has an assigned purpose in fulfilling the plan of God for human history. That plan was initiated before the creation of the world with the predetermined death of the Son of God as the "Lamb who would take away the sins of the world."

- The implementation of that plan is the basis for the eternal destiny of every person who has ever lived.

“There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4.12

- At the conclusion of human history, the “Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb”¹ will be examined. Only those whose names are listed will escape eternal judgment.

And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20.15

¹ Revelation 13.8

- Each Christian is accountable for ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to have his or her name entered into the Book of Life and will be judged on how effectively he or she has fulfilled this assignment.

*Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord,
we work hard to persuade others.*

2 Corinthians 5.11

“If I warn the wicked, saying, ‘You are under the penalty of death,’ but you fail to deliver the warning, they will die in their sins. And I will hold you responsible for their deaths. If you warn them and they refuse to repent and keep on sinning, they will die in their sins. But you will have saved yourself because you obeyed me.”

Ezekiel 3.18-19

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 to set in motion His plans for the coming Messiah and Savior.
- 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

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.

God's Purpose for Us

- Like Israel of the old covenant, the Church of the new covenant is the sole and singular representative of God to the nations— “you are My witness.”

- We are God's ambassadors of reconciliation, commissioned and sent to reconcile the world to God through Jesus Christ.

- We are called to be a distinct and set apart people who reflect God's heart of sacrificial love and His holy character.

- We have been empowered and commissioned to destroy the works of the enemy and lead people out of darkness into the light of the knowledge of Christ and the assurance of eternal life.

- We are commanded to go to every person in every nation, tribe, and language and form them into obedient followers of Christ.

- We are called to warn the world of the coming Day of the Lord, the end of human history, and the final judgment of all humanity.

- We are called to finish the work of God as faithful servants, aware that human history is running out of time, and that we will be judged on our faithfulness to God's purposes for us.

Taking Possession of the Land

- Israel, like the majority of Christians, began well but soon slacked off from their primary mission.

Then Joshua asked them, “How long are you going to wait before taking possession of the remaining land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given to you?”

Joshua 18.3

But they failed to drive out the people living in the plains, who had iron chariots.

The tribe of Benjamin, however, failed to drive out the Jebusites . . .

The tribe of Manasseh failed to drive out the people living in Beth-shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, and all their surrounding settlements, because the Canaanites were determined to stay in that region.

Likewise, the tribe of Naphtali failed to drive out the residents of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath. Instead, they moved in among the Canaanites, who controlled the land.

Judges 1.19, 21, 27, 33

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.”

But the people answered Joshua, “No, we will serve the LORD!”

“You are a witness to your own decision,” Joshua said, “that you have chosen to serve the LORD.”

“Yes,” they replied, “we are witnesses to what we have said.”

“All right then,” Joshua said, “destroy the idols among you, and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God. We will obey him alone.”

Joshua 24.21-24

- Israel was called to occupy the land, not share it. If we are not contending with the gods of other nations and tearing down their false altars by invading those nations with the gospel, we are failing.

“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

- Spiritual warfare is hard work, evangelism and disciple-making is time consuming; thus, many Christians find it easier to just let the other nations remain as they are, sharing the same land with us.

- The problem with that approach: spiritual failure and defeat. When we stop contending for the purposes of God (i.e. the salvation of the nations around us), we have lost our purpose for being the people of God. We are either contending or conforming.

Finishing Well

- What is the measure by which you evaluate the worth of your life? your children? For the true follower of Christ, there will be only one measure of worth.

“But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus — the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.”

Acts 20.24

- 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

Starting Well

- Spend time studying God's Word—everyday, no exceptions.
- Raise your children to understand that there is one measure for success: fulfilling the purpose of God to be His witnesses.
- Obey Christ's command to pray for workers for the harvest, especially among unreached people groups.
- Engage with other believers once a week in prayer or ministry that invades the nations for Christ.