How To Finish Well

Joshua 14:10-13 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to our scripture text in JOSHUA chapter 14. And let's read verses 10-13.

Joshua 14:10-13 (NKJV)

10 And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old.

11 As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in.

12 Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said.”

13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance.
Introduction

When the great evangelist, CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON died in 1892..........condolences poured in from all over the world.

Here was a man who had won thousands of people to Jesus Christ during his lifetime..........and in his death, those thousands expressed their gratitude. Telegraph wires were jammed with messages to his family, expressing sympathy and tribute to this towering man of God, who has been acclaimed as the greatest evangelist in the last 500 years.

Known as a man of meekness, tenderness and great kindness, Spurgeon was loved by the HIGH and LOWLY alike. Some of the first messages of sympathy came from the PRINCE and PRINCESS OF WALES.

But perhaps the greatest tribute to the LIFE HE LIVED, was seen in the words that were engraved on Spurgeon’s olive casket...........the words of the Apostle Paul from II Timothy 4:7.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon “finished well!”

Over the course of the last thirty six years I have seen lots of people walk down the aisle in obedience to the gospel and surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. I have seen many of those people grow and mature in Christ, and they are still going strong today.

But sadly I have seen a great number of people lose the spiritual fervor they had when they first accepted Christ, who eventually “dropped out of the race” and went back to their worldly ways. They didn’t “FINISH WELL.”
The BIBLE PAGES are filled with PEOPLE who did not FINISH WELL.

They were like “falling stars” whose spiritual light shone brilliantly for a time only to burn out before their life was over.

(A) In the BOOK OF I SAMUEL we read about the life of KING SAUL.

SAUL was a man who had so much GOD-GIVEN potential. He was a handsome man who stood head and shoulders above every other man in Israel. He had GOD'S blessings on his life. He was an anointed leader who became Israel's first king.

But SAUL'S “spiritual fire” was quenched by an all-consuming jealousy towards DAVID. Saul rebelled against GOD and even got political advice from the Witch of Endor.

In I Samuel 26:21 Saul gives this sad testimony to his life not long before he committed suicide. He said......

“I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly.”

SAUL didn't finish life's race well.

(B) Another man in the OLD TESTAMENT who didn't finish well was SAMSON.

In the Book of Judges we read Samson's whole life story, from his miraculous birth to a sterile mother to his tragic death.

Like KING SAUL, Samson was anointed by GOD. GOD had blessed Samson with “super human strength.” This is a man who tore apart a lion with his bare hands, and single-handedly beat up thirty men and took their clothes ..............this is a man who defeated 1,000 Philistine soldiers with the jawbone of a donkey.

Can you imagine what GOD could have accomplished through Samson if he had "stayed on course?" He had incredible potential. But He also had an incredible weakness and that was his lust for women. It was that weakness that in the end reduced Samson to a weak, powerless man who had his eyes gouged out by the enemy and was forced to turn a giant millstone like some "side-show" attraction in a circus. Although GOD empowered Samson one last time to destroy all the Philistines in the Temple of Dagon, in the end Samson's life story is best described as “what might have been.” He didn't FINISH WELL.
In the New Testament we read about another man who didn't “FINISH WELL.” His name was DEMAS.

Paul refers to Demas on several occasions as one of his co-laborers in the Gospel, which tells us, that at least for a time, Demas lived an exemplary Christian life and rendered noble service to the LORD. But in the end, Demas forsook Paul and walked away from Christianity because of he fell in love with the world all over again. (II Timothy 4:16)

Demas didn't “FINISH WELL.”

But in tonight's message we are looking at the life of a man WHO DID FINISH WELL. His name was Caleb.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF CALEB

The life of Caleb serves as a wonderful model of a man who never lost his spiritual fervor!

I want to read our text again from Joshua 14, only this time I want to read it from the New Living Translation to give you a clearer understanding of the spiritual fervor of this man. Listen carefully......

10 “Now, as you can see, the LORD has kept me alive and well as he promised for all these forty-five years since Moses made this promise—even while Israel wandered in the wilderness. Today I am eighty-five years old.

11 I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on that journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then.

12 So give me the hill country that the L ORD promised me.

Can you imagine the chuckles of all the “young buck” Israelites who heard this feisty, spirited old man volunteering to go out and fight in battle like he was still in his forties?

But they would soon realize this wasn't the delusional rantings of an old man who had lost touch with reality. This was a man of GOD who at the age of 85 still had the same firey, confident faith in GOD that he had forty five years earlier when he and Joshua boldly declared they could take the Promised Land.
If you will turn with me over to the fourteenth chapter of NUMBERS, we will learn three keys on “How To Finish Well” from Caleb’s life.

Numbers 14:20-24 (NKJV)

20 Then the LORD said: “I have pardoned, according to your word;

21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD—

22 because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,

23 they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

I especially want to focus your attention on that 24th verse. It is in this verse we find our three keys to “Finishing Well.”

The first key to FINISHING WELL is we must..........

I. Refuse To Compromise Under Any Circumstance (v.24a)

1. You notice in the first part of verse 24 the LORD says of Caleb, “he has a different spirit in him.”

2. Obviously the LORD is comparing the spirit of Caleb with that of the ten faithless spies.

3. Remember on the day Joshua and Caleb and the other ten spies gave their report to Moses on what they had seen in the Promised Land? Those ten faithless spies were supposedly men of faith who trusted in GOD. But in that critical moment when they needed to be the voice of faith, they turned into a bunch of spineless, jelly fish cowards, who exhibited a spirit of cowardice rather than courage.
4. But CALEB and JOSHUA exhibited “a different spirit.” God had promised the land to the Israelites. He had promised them victory over their enemies who lived in the land. And Caleb and Joshua were not about to let a few giants in the land or ten faithless spies stand in their way of claiming what GOD had promised! They refused to COMPROMISE their faith regardless of criticism and hostility shown towards them by their fellow Israelites.

5. If you will think back to all those people I mentioned earlier who didn't “FINISH WELL,” one thing they all had in common is they COMPROMISED their faith in GOD.

   *KING SAUL compromised by trusting the word of a witch rather than the word of GOD.

   *SAMSON compromised his faith by foolishly believing he could engage in immoral relationships with prostitutes without suffering any consequences.

   *DEMAS compromised his faith by not guarding his heart from worldliness.

6. Brothers and sisters if you and I are to “FINISH WELL” we must REFUSE TO COMPROMISE OUR FAITH FOR ANYONE FOR ANY REASON UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE!

7. Now more than ever before in our lifetime, our American society is trying to force you and me to compromise our Christian beliefs in the name of tolerance.

   In the name of unity and equality we are supposed to tolerate behaviors GOD has clearly said are “an abomination,” like homosexuality, and lesbianism, and the killing of innocent, unborn babies.
8. The truth is, you and I are going to see more and more challenges to our FAITH and our CHRISTIAN BELIEFS in the coming days. And like Caleb, we must have an un-compromising spirit. We must stand firm on the belief that “IF GOD SAID IT......WE BELIEVE IT......AND THAT SETTLES IT!

The second key if we are to “FINISH WELL” is we must........

II. Relentlessly Take God At His Word (v. 24b)

1. You notice in that 24th verse, the LORD said of CALEB, “He has followed Me fully.” In other words, Caleb has relied completely on My word.

2. Giants or no giants.......CALEB relentlessly took GOD at His word. If GOD promised that He would give the land to His people, Caleb believed with all of his heart GOD would keep His promise.

3. CALEB never stopped believing GOD'S WORD even though he had to endure the 40 YEARS of wilderness wandering because of the faithlessness and disbelief of his fellow Jews.

4. During those years in the wilderness, CALEB had to listen to the whining and complaing of the Israelites about not having any food. Then when GOD gave them “manna” to eat, Caleb had to listen to the people grumble about not having any meat to eat. Then when GOD provided them with quail, Caleb had to listen to the people gripe about Moses' leadership.

5. But through all those tough days in the wilderness, CALEB never once stopped believing that GOD would eventually bring them into the Promised Land.
6. GOD PROMISES that “You can do all things through Christ who gives you the strength. That means through Christ you can overcome sinful habits, you can overcome past failures, you can overcome any enemy, any obstacle, any weakness, or any difficulty.

DO YOU RELENTLESSLY TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD?

GOD PROMISES us in His word, “He will supply all our needs through His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” That means He will supply ALL your financial needs......ALL your physical needs.......ALL your emotional needs......and ALL your spiritual needs. DO YOU RELENTLESSLY TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD?

7. GOD’S WORD is filled with those kinds of promises that are there for you and me to claim BY FAITH.

If you and I are to “FINISH WELL” we must REFUSE TO COMPROMISE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE..............RELENTLESSLY TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD.

And the third key if we are to “FINISH WELL” is we must........

III. Resolve To Run The Race Until It Is Over (v.24c)

1. Notice the promise the LORD makes to Caleb in the latter part of verse 24. “I will bring him into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.”

2. CALEB never lost sight of the “finish line.” He knew in his heart that GOD wasn't going to abandon him out there in the wilderness. He knew GOD was going to bring him into land He had promised to him 45 years earlier.

3. Sadly, our Church roll books are filled with names of people who lost sight of the “finish line.” They didn’t resolve to run the race until it was over. Like Demas that I mentioned earlier, “they have fallen in love with this world again.”
4. Brothers and sisters, if you are to “finish well” in life's race, you must resolve to run the race until it is over! There will be times of difficulty and discouragement and defeat and you will be tempted to drop out of the race. But don't do it! You keep your eyes fixed on JESUS CHRIST and run the race until you meet Him face to face.

CONCLUSION

I don't know whether or not you have noticed it, but this time of year there's always a bunch of little turtles on the road. On my way to the Church the other day I saw a little turtle about the size of a quarter trying to make it from one side of the road to the other. I would imagine from that poor little fellow's perspective that journey to the other side of the road seemed almost impossible. I can't imagine what was going through that little turtle's mind when he looked up and saw my TOYOTA PICKUP straddling him as I went by or what he thought when that big semi coming from the other direction blew past him. I don't know if that little turtle made it to his final destination. Somehow I would like to believe he did.

You know, just like that little turtle our journey from this life to life eternal in heaven may seem like an impossible journey; one that is filled with many dangers and perils. But you know, if we faithfully endure, we will make it.

How do we do that? **BY REFUSING TO COMPROMISE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE........ BY RELENTLESSLY RELYING ON GOD’S WORD........AND BY RESOLVING TO RUN THE RACE UNTIL IT IS OVER.**

Forget about your past failures and disappointments .......forget about those times you have stumbled and fallen along the way......and **FINISH WELL MY FRIENDS, FINISH WELL!**