

Acts: *The Spirit, the Church and the Spread of God's Word*

Faithful to the End

Acts 28:16, 30-31; 2 Timothy 4:6-13, 21-22

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, Aug. 30, 2020

It's not how you start, but how you finish that matters most.

[Read Acts 28:16, 30-31; 2 Timothy 4:6-13, 21-22]

I. You'll Have to Change What You Think and Feel About Our Greatest Fear – Death

2 Timothy 4:6 "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come."

God never designed us to live holding onto our lives, afraid of being spent or used up for His glory! We were created to be spent for His glory and the good of others.

God wants us as Christians to understand that death is not the end, it's not a tragic loss, and it's not even a life cut short. It's a life set free sooner to be all that it was created to be.

"All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."

~ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*

[Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58]

1 Corinthians 15:55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

II. You'll Have to Embrace the Struggle and Fight of the "Normal" Christian Life

2 Timothy 4:7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race..."

The Greek word for "fight" in v. 7 is "agon" from which we get our English word "agony." There is no secret to the Christian life that will put you in the struggle-free zone of soaring with Jesus and doing all the right things.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control..."

Paul is using an athletic training metaphor because athletes who want to finish well have to say "no" to their own natural impulses!

"Our nature, by the corruption of the first sin is so deeply curved in on itself that it not only bends the best gifts of God towards itself and enjoys them...it even uses God Himself in order to attain these gifts. It also fails to realize that it so wickedly, curvedly, and viciously seeks all things, even God, for its own sake."

~ Martin Luther, quoted in *Saving God* by Mark Johnston

“After the fall, or sin, the mind of man shrank from its original greatness. Before man’s soul was under the noble principle of divine love. Whereby, it was, as it were, enlarged to the comprehension of all its fellow creatures. But as soon as we sinned all this excellent enlargedness of soul was gone, and he shrank into a little point circumscribed and closely shut up within itself to the exclusion of others and now wholly governed by narrow and selfish principles.”

~ Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*

You have to keep putting self to death in order to live for Jesus and other people. If we aren’t fighting our own egotistical and natural impulses, we will not finish well.

God created us in His image to be aware of others and to love others...but sin shrinks us down to the tiny world of our own narrow, selfish desires.

You’re either born again and by God’s Spirit are fighting this natural, egotistical impulse to only do what’s good for you...Or your very soul and world is twisting and curving inward, getting smaller and smaller, with less capacity to consider or comprehend any viewpoint other than your own.

“As we pursue everything for our own sakes, our perception of reality grows ever more at odds with what actually exists. We imagine ourselves to be free and beautiful, but in actuality we grow more hunched, pinched and sickly each passing day. Try as we might to ignore the effects of sin in our lives, reality has a way of knocking on the back door when we refuse to meet it in the front. Sin reaches its full measure in blame. When we see sin as something others do to us, when we judge ourselves by our good intentions and impute bad motives to others, when we treat as evil that which prevents us from getting our way, we are witnessing the metastasizing of sin in our lives.”

~ Dr. Jeff Meyers, “The Corrupting Power of Sin”

III. You’ll Have to Remember that We Are Dispensable But the Gospel Is Unstoppable

Acts 28:30-31 “He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”

Since Acts 22, Paul has been shuffled from one civil authority to another working his way to Rome so that he could stand on trial before Caesar. Yet, Luke ends his letter abruptly and tells us nothing about the trial...because the book of Acts is not about Paul, but about the Gospel and the proclamation of the Gospel all over the world.

Acts 1:8 “But...you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Luke leaves us focused on the Gospel and the unfinished work that Jesus has called us to do, in taking this Good News to the ends of the earth.

Whatever God’s Spirit is pressing on you today...respond before it’s too late!