

Finishing the Work God Gave Us to Do

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). These words of resolution were spoken by Jesus sometime after the Lord’s Supper and before the Garden of Gethsemane. The cross was fast approaching, the end was near. Now He prays the true Lord’s Prayer. Oh, to live a life that ends with our own personal commentary that simply says, “Father, I lived for your glory and finished the work you gave me to do!” I remember my late Uncle Wyatt always closed his prayer with reference to this verse: “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psalms 73:24). When we live for God’s glory, we leave this world and enter the greater glory of God: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Corinthians 3:18). Is there any unfinished business in your life? Are there things that you need to do before God calls you home? Consider:

1. The Finished Work of Salvation

Jesus said on the cross, “...It is finished...” (John 19:30). Man has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Our only hope is the finished work of Christ. Our Savior lived the life we could have never lived, died a death He did not deserve and rose from the grave to secure our forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Salvation for us is now full and free but it cost the Father His only begotten Son. Now through His shed blood, we can rejoice in the finished work of salvation. When a person repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he or she becomes a recipient of the finished work of Calvary. Nothing can be added or taken away - it’s done.

Year’s ago D. L. Moody was traveling between cities on a train. When the engineer heard that the famed American evangelist was on board, he requested to have an audience with him. He said to Mr. Moody, “You would make such a fine evangelist in our religion; would you consider changing?” Moody quickly responded, “I could never be part of your religion, although there are only two letters separating what you and I believe.” The engineer asked him to please explain. Moody answered, “What you believe is spelled ‘d-o.’ If you do, do, do enough, you may do enough to get into heaven. What I believe is spelled ‘d-o-n-e;’ it was all done on Calvary!

Romans 3:20: “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight...” Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Romans 5:1: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Galatians 3:24: “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

2. The Finished Work of Service

To God be the glory, I have had the opportunity to pastor some of the greatest Christians on the world. In that category were three very dedicated

ladies Doris Barnett, Linda Pool and Martha Richbourg. They are all now with the Lord. The week before Doris died, these three ladies made a visit to BEAMS (Bible, Education and Missionary Service) headquarters and they packed almost 4,000 Bibles and 5,500 Gospel Tracts. On their last day to pack Bibles there were 200 Bibles remaining and Dr. Freret encouraged the ladies to stop, go back to their rooms and get some rest, assuring them that his assistants would pack the rest later. He told me Doris insisted, "No, we will not leave until we finish our work." And our ladies stayed on to finish. Doris came back home, worked in our church tirelessly and just hours before she passed into glory, she picked up Mrs. Diehl and attended Philip Sison's birthday party. She called her mother, checking on her one more time, went home and retired for the night. I received the phone call Sunday morning that Doris had passed in the night. I went quickly to her house where she lay with the most contented look on her face, having slipped quietly into the presence of our Lord. It was as though God said, "Doris, come home. You're finished now." Doris was the kind of person that did not leave undone what needed to be done. Life is full of starters, but few finishers. God has a work for all of us to do. May we be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7).

3. The Finished Work of Reconciliation

Matthew 5:23, 24: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

I meet some outstanding Christians in my travels. Recently while preaching back in the southeast, I was talking to Pastor Casey Bradford. I had just preached about forgiveness in Raleigh, North Carolina and he told me a beautiful story of personal reconciliation. Casey had fallen away from God's will and backslid pretty far. He realized that much of his problem rooted down in his anger directed at his father. He resented his father, became bitter and recoiled at most any interaction with him. Finally, he came to the end of his wayward trek and decided to become proactive in resolving matters with his estranged father. He and his wife drove over to his mom and dad's house. His dad was watching television when he arrived. He took the remote control, turned off the TV, fell to one knee and said, "Dad, Mom, I've done you wrong." After going into detail with all the things he specifically had done, he tearfully went on to say, "I've hurt you and I am asking you to forgive me." His mother responded emotionally and positively, forgiving him all. His father did not change his sullen expression. The dad paused, took the remote control and clicked it back on, totally ignoring his penitent son. Casey's wife, who had known the anger problem her husband had been living with, just knew this was the end of her husband's journey back to God. But happily to her surprise, Casey got off the floor, wiped his tears, thanked them for hearing him out and left...a changed man.

Casey told me all his life there were three things he always wanted his daddy to do. They were 1) Tell me you love me. 2) Tell me you are proud of me. and 3)

Pray with me at the altar. For two years following the traumatic encounter, Casey gave his all to Christ and stayed resolute in his attitude of reconciliation with his dad. After two years, Casey had surrendered to preach and now the time came for him to be ordained. The charge and challenge were given and it was time for the "laying on of hands." There were approximately twenty-two ordained preachers and deacons prepared to lay on hands. A familiar pair of hands touched his neck and back; he immediately recognized the calloused hands as those of his own father. His father many years ago had been ordained as a deacon and now he came to fulfill the greatest requirement of his earlier office. In repentance and remorse for his behavior of two years earlier, Casey's dad said, "Son, I love you; I'm proud of you," and then he knelt by his son and prayed with him. It was an epiphany moment for both of them!

The beauty of this story is when Casey finished his work of attempted reconciliation, he rested in the Lord that he had done his part. How easy it is to give up when we are rebuffed. This is the time to wait on the Lord until He has worked on the hearts of our loved ones and friends. Don't give up on reconciliation. It is a great ministry. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:19). "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

-Pastor Pope-