

## 34. The Book of Galatians 5:7 (Topical)

### *Liberty For Life-Part 5*

### *Finishing Well-Part 1*

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier  
(10-6-24)

Find this weeks' sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

We have been studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings. This morning we find ourselves in Chapter 5 where I want to draw your attention to verse 7:

#### **Galatians 5:7 (NKJV)**

**<sup>7</sup> You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?**

This goes back to something Paul said to start Chapter 3:

#### **Galatians 3:1–3 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? <sup>2</sup> This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—<sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**

➤ ***“You started so well—who tripped you up and took you out of the race?” (verse 7)***

Warren Wiersbe—

*“Paul was fond of athletic illustrations and used them often in his letters. His readers were familiar with the Olympic games as well as other Greek athletic contests that always included foot races. It is important to note that Paul never uses the image of the race to tell people how to be saved. He is always talking to Christians about how to live the Christian life. A contestant in the Greek games had to be a citizen before he could compete. We become citizens of heaven through faith in Christ; then the Lord puts us on our course and we run to win the prize (see Phil. 3:12–21). We do not run to be saved; we run because we are already saved and want to fulfill God’s will in our lives (Acts 20:24).”*

In Acts 20 we have recorded for us, in essence—Paul’s farewell address. In his farewell address, as recorded in Acts 20—the main theme revolves around the idea of **“finishing well”** in our *race* for the Lord (our walk and ministry).

It’s always troubled me to read the stories in the Bible of people who started well for God—but who didn’t wind up finishing well in their ministry for Him. I think of many of the kings of Judah who started out well in their walk and ministry for the Lord, but then later on in life blew it somehow and brought reproach on the name of God—but also on *their* own life and ministry as well.

The nature of their transgressions varied—sexual immorality, materialism, pride, rebellion (thinking they knew better than God how to live their lives and conduct their ministry for Him—King Saul). But regardless of the

reason the result was the same—they wound up being removed from leadership as king and dying in a backslidden state.

Even some of the greatest champions of the faith—men like Moses and David, made some serious mistakes (sins) toward the end of their lives that brought some severe consequences upon themselves that diminished their personal legacy.

The road to heaven is littered with the sad testimonies of men and women who started off good for God—but didn't wind up finishing well. And because of it, I have really come to appreciate men like Joseph, Daniel, and Joshua who maintained a close, committed, and consistent walk with God their whole lives.

There is something deeply moving and powerful to me about a man (or woman) who has faithfully walked with God—someone who has been sure and steady and consistent in his relationship with God over the course of their life. Someone whose faith never suffered shipwreck and whose ministry for God was never tarnished by scandal or weakened through compromise or corrupted by greed.

There's something powerful about a man or a woman like that—someone you can focus on and say, *"It's not impossible to live for God—he did it or she did it and if they can do it then by God's grace, I can do it too!"*

- What was it about their lives that was different?
- What separates a person who runs the race with endurance and finishes well from one who maybe starts strong but doesn't finish so well?

A big part of finishing well is *counting the cost before you start!*

**Luke 14:28–30 (NKJV)**

<sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough to finish it*—<sup>29</sup> lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

Jesus said, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."* And then as He hung on the cross, He cried, *"It is finished!"* Of course, Jesus was the ultimate example of one who finished well. But it seems clear to me from the Scriptures that it's not nearly as important to God how well you *start*—as it is how well you *finish*.

**Jesus wants to be able to say to us someday,  
"Well done..." Not, "Well begun...."**

When I think of someone in the pages of the New Testament that finished well in their ministry for the Lord (apart from Jesus)—I think of Paul the Apostle. Paul was a man, who came to the end of his life and was able to say, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* (2 Timothy 4:7)

What was it about Paul that allowed him to run his race for Jesus so faithfully and finish well? Well, let's look at the testimony of Paul himself and see what he said he did to finish well—allowing Jesus to say to him some day, *"Well done good and faithful servant."*

As we read Paul's testimony in Acts 20—let's look briefly at verses 22-27:

**Acts 20:22-27 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. <sup>24</sup> But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup> And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. <sup>27</sup> For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

If we had to pick a single verse from the New Testament that best sets forth the principles for finishing well in our race (ministry) for the Lord, it would be verse 24—

**Acts 20:24 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

**1. “None of these things move me...”—verse 24a**

One of the first qualities of those who finish well, is that—they are absolutely committed to God and the call of God for their lives.

**Philippians 3:13–14 (NLT)**

<sup>13</sup> ...I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

The reason Paul could reach his destination and finish so strong for God was because—first of all, he knew *where* he was going. Secondly, because *nothing* was more important to him than getting there!

Where was Paul going? Well, from an earthly standpoint, he was going where the Lord Jesus had sent him—to the Gentiles to preach the gospel to them.

**Acts 26:17–18 (NLT)**

<sup>17</sup> ...I am sending you to the Gentiles <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.’

Of course, ultimately, he was on his way to heaven to receive his rewards for faithfully serving the Lord Jesus on the earth (Philippians 3:13-14)—and nothing was going to get in his way of reaching his final destination of faithfully serving Jesus his entire life!

The reason so many Christians allow so many things in life to distract them and move them from their course is because—they really aren’t sure *of their course*. Or in other words—they really don’t know what the Lord is calling them to do for Him, and they’re too afraid to seek Him about it.

Why are they afraid to seek God? Because they aren’t sure they want to go where He might want to take them (Africa with all those bugs!). Because they aren’t sure, they want to go where God is leading them—they aren’t totally committed to getting there (wherever ‘there’ might be)—and as such, they find themselves in the wilderness of trying to serve two masters—*faith* and *fear* (or God and self).

**Commitment is essential to finishing well—  
whether you're talking about ministry or marriage.**

Let me focus on finishing well in *marriage* (your primary ministry for the Lord!) for a few minutes. Marriage is built on love and in the Bible God defines true love as a commitment not a *feeling*. Feelings come and go; they ebb and flow according to various outside influences and pressures.

Sometimes the passion is flowing and your relationship with your spouse feels like your still on your honeymoon; and other times your relationship feels cold and formal—like partners in a business arrangement instead of two people in love.

When your passion for one another cools, that is not the time to go looking for another relationship—it's time to fall back on the commitment you made to each other on your wedding day.

The day when you stood before God, family and friends and pledged to love each other (to remain committed to each other) for better or worse, in sickness and in health for the rest of your lives—even when you don't *feel* like it.

Marriage is like a ship that a man and a woman enter into as they embark on a journey together for the rest of their lives—a journey that will include sunshine and storms, smooth sailing and rough seas.

The key to finishing well in your marriage is commitment—which starts with the way you think.

It's your commitment to each other (ultimately to God), not feelings, that will bind you together and allow you to weather the storms in life that will inevitably come your way.

Allow me to use this to segue into Acts 27—which technically has *nothing* to do with marriage, and yet the lessons gleaned from this chapter have *everything* to do with marriage.

After being falsely accused by the Jews of being a “rabble-rouser” and jumping through legal hoops in Caesarea—Paul was finally sailing toward Rome to plead his case before Caesar. On the way, a storm arose that threatened the lives of the two hundred seventy-six soldiers, sailors, and prisoners on board with Paul.

One night, after the ship had been tempest-tossed for 14 days in a powerful nor'easter known as ‘*Euroclydon*’—an angel appeared to Paul and told him that the ship would be lost but God would spare the lives of everyone on board.

However, not long after Paul shared this with the captain and Roman Centurion—several of the ship's crew tried to jump ship. We read:

**Acts 27:30-32 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow,<sup>31</sup> Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.”<sup>32</sup> Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.

I believe Paul's words, even though not directed at marriage, express the heart of God for us today with regard to our marriages. Just as these men found themselves in a situation where they had to stay committed to each other and work together in order to survive the storm—the same is true in marriage.

There are times in marriage (maybe you're in one right now) where the wind is howling, the storm is raging, and you find yourself saying, *"I'm out of here. I'm jumping ship. I cannot take this marriage one more day."*

But if you jump ship know this—you will miss the blessing of seeing God work a miracle in taking, what seems to be a hopeless situation, and turning it into such a blessing that you will realize that this *is* the one that God truly chose to be your spouse for life!

Someone has written a book on marriage with the award-winning title, *"Good marriages take time—bad marriages take more time."*

Look, I'm not saying it won't take hard work, sacrifice and a lot of prayer for your marriage to weather the storm you're going through but *"with God all things are possible."* That's not to say that divorce isn't sometimes necessary in cases of continued infidelity and or physical abuse—I'm just saying that too many Christian couples follow the example of the world and rush into divorce when storms hit, and things get rough.

I know there are some who are saying, *"I haven't jumped ship. I've only lowered a lifeboat over the side. I'm going to give it two more weeks, or three more months, or one more year..."* Listen, if you keep an escape option open in your mind I guarantee you will end up using it—if you keep entertaining the idea of divorce—you will end up divorced.

No marriage can survive a strong marital storm as long as you've got one foot in the *"lifeboat"* contemplating jumping ship. **Get rid of the lifeboat. Cut the ropes.** Stop planning your escape and fully commit yourself to your marriage!

Tell yourself—*"Divorce is not an option!"*

God can work a miracle if you will trust Him, obey His Word and commit yourself totally to His will for your life.

Remember, God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) which means that all the power of God is at your disposal for saving your marriage—so don't jump ship!

**Alright, back to Paul** and his testimony of how he finished well in his 'race' for the Lord.

As we said, commitment is essential to finishing well—and it was his commitment to Jesus that allowed Paul to proclaim in Acts 20:24a—***"But none of these things move me..."***

Notice the context of that statement by Paul—

**Acts 20:22–23 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

One characteristic common of those who finish well for the Lord is that—no matter how people try to *discourage* them from going on, or *frighten* them, or *persecute* them—they will not be moved from their course. Why? Because they believe that God has called them.

They have determined (purposed in their heart) that their commitment and service to God are going to be the priority in their life.

**1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV)**

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

One Christian historian applies this to the life and ministry of John G. Paton—

*“John Paton, pioneer missionary to the New Hebrides, a group of islands out in the Pacific Ocean. Newly married, his wife and newborn child died down there. He had to bury them with his own hands and then sit on their graves for several days to keep the cannibals from digging up their bodies and eating them.*

*It was his commitment to God and the conviction that God had called him to be a missionary to the New Hebrides that enabled him to endure such difficult afflictions.”*

Daniel, purposed in his heart that he was going to live for God even if everyone else around him was not.

He couldn't help living in Babylon—but he didn't have to let Babylon live in him!

One thing about living for God, it won't happen by accident—**you have to live for God on purpose!**

So, the first principle for finishing well that Paul shares with us from his own personal testimony of walking with and serving the Lord is—

**1. “None of these things move me...”—verse 24a**

We'll pick it up next time, as we finish looking at the principles of finishing well in our race for Jesus.

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If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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