

What Will Your End Be?

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes that it's not the beginning of life that matters, but how we end it, and that we can ensure a good ending by committing everything to God's care and holding fast to sound teaching and faith.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 34:7, Joshua 14:11, Matthew 10:22, Matthew 21:28, Mark 10:31, Philippians 1:6, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 3:14, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 1:8

Topics: "Faithful Endurance", "Spiritual Vitality"

Description

Anton Bosch preaches on the importance of how we end our lives rather than how we begin, using examples from the Bible such as Solomon, Samuel, and Saul who started well but ended tragically. He emphasizes the need to maintain spiritual vitality and zeal for God until the end, drawing inspiration from figures like Moses and Caleb who remained strong and faithful in their old age. Bosch highlights the significance of enduring to the end, holding fast to sound teaching, faith, and love, and entrusting everything to God to ensure a secure future.

Transcript

What is more important? To have a good start to life or a good ending? Obviously the end is more important than the beginning. Jesus told a parable about two young men. One had a bad attitude at the beginning but he changed. The other began with a good attitude but turned bad in the end (Matthew 21:28ff). The point of the parable is that many sinners end being more righteous than the religious people and that it does not matter what our start is, but rather what our ending will be.

That all seems so obvious to most people. Why is it then that so many who have every potential for success fail? Even the Bible is filled with stories of men who began well and messed up in the end. The most tragic of all is Solomon who had everything going for him but ended making a total mess of his life.

Even a great man like Samuel seemed to lose his good judgment near the end of his life when he appointed his unrighteous sons as judges over Israel. (1Samuel 8:1-3). Saul, the first king of Israel, started so well but his end was tragic. He wrote his own epitaph: "I have played the fool and erred exceedingly" (1Samuel 26:21). Several other kings of Israel and Judah followed Saul's example and departed from the Lord's ways later in life.

One of the great tragedies in my own experience has been to see how men of God, who at one time I admired have turned aside. Some have been lifted up with pride, others have fallen for heresy, some have

fallen into sin and not repented while others have just gone cold and become indifferent to the things of God. Then there are those who missed the mark and have been sidetracked to chase rabbits. All of them seem to be blind to their failure. It is one thing to be physically and mentally frail in old age but there is nothing more pathetic than a man (or woman) who has lost their zeal, vision and hope in the Lord.

This disturbs me deeply. It disturbs me because of the admiration and hopes I had for these men, but because of the very real potential that I could end up like them.

But it does not have to be that way!

I'm reminded of Moses who "was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished" (Deuteronomy 34:7). This did not only speak of his natural faculties, but also of his spiritual vitality. Just read the final message he preached in Deuteronomy 33. He was still filled with awe at the majestic God he served. Zeal for God's people, for truth and justice still drove him. He had not compromised turned neither to the left nor the right. He loved the Lord and the Lord's people as intensely as when He first was called.

One of my heroes is Caleb. This man was 40 years old when he spied out the land with the other 11 spies. (Remember, he and Joshua were the only ones who brought back a good report.) He then spent the next 40 years wondering about in the wilderness, waiting for his compatriots to die. When he was 80, they crossed the Jordan and he spent the next five years fighting the Lord's battles as they took possession of the land. By then he was 85 (same as our 85), and one would think he was ready for retirement. He had had a long and very hard life. But this is what he said: "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" (Joshua 14:11).

When Israel conquered the land, they left certain parts of the land untouched. These were the most difficult areas to fight in - the mountains. The mountains contained the strongest cities and in the cities were the strongholds of the giants. When everyone else had given up and was ready to retire, this 85-year old veteran tackled the hardest battle of his life and came out victorious!

What an example. Instead of quietly fading away, he grew stronger and more valiant as he grew older. It is incorrectly assumed that as we get older we exchange zeal for wisdom. Caleb, Moses and others sacrificed none of their fervor while adding the wisdom of years to their prowess. May that be true of us.

We assume that those who have a good start in life, have the advantage over those who have less auspicious origins. But Jesus said "many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:31). It really does not matter how we begin, but it is how we end that matters. Hebrews 3:14 says: "...we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end".

Sometimes the problem is not the beginning, but what happens in the middle that results in a disappointing end. But no matter how fierce the persecution or opposition, Jesus said "he that endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

Another man who ended gloriously was Paul. In writing to Timothy he explains the secret to a secure future. First he said: "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2Timothy 1:12). Note that the Lord is able to keep what we have committed to Him. The Lord cannot

keep what is not committed to Him. Sometimes we are over-confident and think we can do it ourselves and thus we do not commit everything into His care.

But that is not the full story. In the next verse he tells Timothy "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2Timothy 1:13). The Lord will keep what is committed to Him, but we must hold fast to sound teaching, faith and love. In the next verse he says: "That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." (2Timothy 1:14). The Lord will keep us, but we must keep that which He has entrusted to us. As we keep the things He has given to us, He keeps us. We cannot keep ourselves - that is His job, but we must hold onto His Word.

Hebrews reveals Jesus as "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). And four times the Final Book reminds us that Jesus is the "Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." (Revelation 1:8, 1:11, 21:6, 22:13). Praise God, He is not just the beginning but He is also the end. We are confident "that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:5).

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:10)

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