

## CCC FINISHING WHAT YOU START Part 1

I have heard that life here on earth is often compared to a race. But of course we know it's not a fifty-yard dash. It's not even a hundred-yard dash. It's a marathon. If you've ever watched a marathon you know that at the beginning of the marathon there's quite a large crowd starting.

Everybody's all bunched up. But as the race progresses, what happens? The crowd thins out. There are fewer that finish than start. God's word, the bible tells us, it's better to finish something than it is to start something. There are a lot of people who start good but finishing is what counts. God says that finishing what you start is a mark of both emotional and spiritual maturity. That you develop the God like character to keep your promises... that you make good on your commitment. On the other hand, a mark of

immaturity is to leave things unfinished all the time – they start something and leave it unfinished ... then they start something else and leave it unfinished. God has this to say to us about that. *“Finish what you begin to do. Then your willingness will be matched by what you accomplish.”* 2 Cor. 8:11 And why God's word says that to us because the reality is, it's far easier to yes and start something than it is to finish. It's very difficult to keep the commitments that we make.

Today and next week, what I want us to look at is why do we sometimes fail to finish what we start and how can I learn to be more consistent in finishing what I do start and that's what I want us to look at the next two weeks. There's a good example for us to study in the Bible, it found in the book of Nehemiah, in the Old Testament, Nehemiah was commissioned by a king to build a wall

around Jerusalem. He took a group of people who were already discouraged and had been under slavery for many years and they began to build a wall around Jerusalem. The Bible says in Nehemiah 4 that halfway through the project, they got discouraged. They lost heart and they wanted to just give up and quit.

Believe it or not that's pretty typical of humans. We usually get discouraged at the halfway point. For example like you're painting your living room and halfway through you stop and say, "Why did I begin to do this today? I don't have time to finish this thing!" Or have you ever started to climb a mountain, get halfway up and all of a sudden you look at how much further you have to go and then turn around and look at how much further you have to go back once you get up there and you start going, "Maybe I don't want to climb it. This is a nice view right here."

Why is that, why do we fail to finish what we start?

In Nehemiah's story we're going to see that they didn't finish for four reasons and I believe these are the same four reasons that keep you from finishing the projects in your life.

First is **fatigue**. The Bible says in Nehemiah 4:10

*"The strength of the laborers is giving out."* They worked hard and they were physically exhausted. They were tired, weary, worn out. Vince Lombardi said, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us." When we get tired we tend to say, "Maybe I won't finish what I started."

But more than fatigue, they were **frustrated**. It says

*"... and there is so much trash and rubble to be removed..."* Any building project has its own share of rubble. Rubble is the trash and debris that build up. If you've ever remodeled your home you have plaster falling

all over, wallpaper, boards... In this case they're building a wall around an entire city and there are some real problems with this. There's probably broken bricks, dried mortar and all this begins to build up. The same is true for our lives. It begins to build up and when there's a lot of rubble in your life, you start to get frustrated. And that makes you want to quit.

So let me ask you this, "**What's the rubble in your life?**" The rubble in your life are all those little piles... and they just seem to multiply and then there is all those little piles that build up at home. Unfinished business and the higher those piles get, the more your frustration level rises and soon you just throw up your hands and say, "I give up!" We don't finish what we start because of fatigue and because of frustration.

Then there's a third reason. **Failure**. Failure causes us to not finish what we start. In Nehemiah's case the people said, "*We ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall.*" In other words they were saying they were unable to finish as quickly as they'd planned so they lost heart.

There's an interesting thing that I have found out about life. And that is, You will fail. You're going to fail in life. Everybody fails. You're going to have more failures in your life than successes. So the real issue is not will you fail, because you will, but the real issue is: How do you handle them? What do you do when the inevitable failures in life come your way? You have choices in this life when you fail, you can have a pity party, you can just always complain to other people about what happened? Make excuses to try and justify your failures? Gripe about it? Give up and say, "I just can't do it!"? Those are some of

the choices. But remember what God says, **You're never a failure until you quit. You're never a failure until you give up.** And it's always too soon to quit, where at your job, at your marriage, at your family, at relationships, at your commitment to Christ. When you're starting to be tempted to give up, that's when you need to redouble your efforts and say, "I'm going to make this thing work!" Because when you're feeling this... it's usually at the half point, when we're fatigued and frustrated and feel like we've failed that we want to quit what we started... instead of finishing what we've started.

The fourth cause that keeps you from finishing is **Fear**. In the book of Nehemiah there were some enemy nations that did not want this wall to be rebuilt and they did everything they could to stop the progress of this project. It says that first they criticized them, then they ridiculed

them, they made fun of them, they laughed at them and that didn't stop the project. Then they threatened them. They tried to bring fear into their lives to make them quit. They said, If you don't stop building that wall, we're going to kill you. The verse in Nehemiah says, "*Meanwhile, our enemies are planning to swoop down upon us and kill us, thus ending our work.*" Don't you think those last four words are redundant? "... *thus ending our work*

I don't think any of us here are going to be killed or you're worried that some enemies might harm you. But there are other fears that can keep you from finishing what you start. There is the fear of success. What do I do if it is successful then I will really have to give it my time and energy. On the other hand, there's the fear of failure. We start things and then don't finish because we might fail at it. I'd rather just bail out now than face the failure. So we quit too soon.

We give up too quickly. Those are the reason why we don't finish what we started.

But what I really want to spend time on is, How to finish what you start. How do you keep on keeping on?

How do you get back on track, when frustration, fatigue, failure and fear has come into the picture? How is it that maybe you're a Christian and you've accepted Christ you were really on fire for God at one time, you felt His love and you felt His presence, you were kind of cruising down the highway spiritually, but somehow you got detoured or you got distracted? You lost some of that zing in your Christian life. You lost some of that enthusiasm that you originally had. How do you get back on track? How do you finish what you started? That what I want to talk to you about.

The Bible says we need to do four things.

**1. STOP MAKING EXCUSES** Proverbs 22:13 *“The lazy person is full of excuses.”* Ben Franklin once said, “People who are good at making excuses are rarely good at anything else.” I think that's true! There are so many excuses out there today, and to be just honest with you I have heard and given some real lame excuses for not finishing what is started. But here the problem when we're good at making excuses, as Franklin said, we're rarely good at anything else. You've got to stop making excuses of why you haven't finished what you started.

A verse I read in my quiet time this week I want to share; I stopped everyday this week and got quiet and connected with God it was wonderful. Here's one of the scriptures I read. Jeremiah 6:14 (Living Bible) *“You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!”* Talking about making

excuses, some of you need to finish the counseling you started but never finished. You started the counseling to get help for that hurt or hang-up but you stopped it before you finished. Some of you need to finish the recovery program. Some of you need to finish the 12 steps you started; some of you need to do the 12 steps. Some of you need to finish the serious business of restoring the marriage that was severed and you've stayed together but it's never been the same since. You've got some unfinished business in your relationship with your children that you need to work on. You never get over a hurt by pretending it's not there. You stop making excuses and you finish what you start. Sure it's difficult to deal with problems, particularly if they're my problems and I've caused them. When I have to face up to weaknesses and things in my life I don't like that's tough. But unless I've finished what I've started to

do, that tough work of changing in repentance and getting some help and some counsel, I'm going to be stuck in a rut and I'll never finish what I've started. Stop making excuses.

## **2. START IMMEDIATELY**

Once you know you've got off track, once you know you've been distracted, once you know you've gotten detoured from something that's important in your life, you start back on it immediately – not next month, next week, next year, tomorrow. You do it now! Romans 12:8 *“If your gift is to encourage others, do it. If you have money, share it generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility. If you have the gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.”* He's saying whatever you're going to do with your life, get on with it. Get on with it now. Don't keep saying, “One of these

days.... Someday I will... I'm going to get around to it eventually." Do it now! Get on with your life. Start immediately. If you're going to finish what you've started, you've got to do it now.

There are two very important traps that will keep you from doing what you need to do immediately.

**1. Perfectionism.** Perfectionism keeps us from finishing what we've started. Ecclesiastes 11:4 *"If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done."* We set such high standards for ourselves that we think we'll never be able to do that so we just give up before we even try. Perfectionism paralyzes potential. Be aware of perfectionism. That will cause you to not finish what you start.

**2. Procrastination.** Having been here at Calvary from the beginning and knowing you, some of you are professional procrastinators. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:1 *"Never boast about tomorrow because you don't know what will happen between now and then."* Don't say, "I'll do it tomorrow," because none of us are guaranteed of anything more than right now. None of us know when our number is going to be called. You don't have any guarantee of next week, much less next year. Don't presume on the future by saying, "One of these days I'm going too." Our time could be up at any time. Just Do it! Have you ever heard someone say or said it yourself, "When things settle down." Let me encourage you today, guess what: Things are never going to settle down! It's not going to happen! If you're saying, "When things settle down, then I'm going to start reading my Bible every

day... When things settle down, then I'm going to start spending more time with my husband/wife/kids/good friends... When things settle down, then I'm going to get involved in a ministry... and help out with the church" No, you're not. Life must be lived in less than perfect circumstances. If you have to have everything perfect before you start serving God, or living your life for God. If you have to have everything perfect before you, tithe your money to God, living for Him, being in a small group, doing things that will help develop your life spiritually. If you have to have everything perfect before... Let me tell you, it's never going to happen. Why, because things are not going to settle down. It's called life and you have to learn to live it in less than perfect conditions. People will say, "I'm aiming to do this..." and I want to say, "When are you going to pull the trigger? Shoot it!" Shoot that

bullet. Don't keep saying I'm aiming to do it.

The fact is, the longer you wait to do the right things in your life, the harder it gets to do.

Procrastination and perfectionism can slow you down.

Three life changing words: Do It Now!

Can I get real personal with you today? Let's get real personal. What do you know God wants you to do, He's called you to do it, to start it, but you still haven't done it yet? You've been delaying, putting it off, waiting. What is it? Here's a verse for you. James 4:17 *"When a person knows the right thing to do and doesn't do it, it's sin."*

This maybe something new to some of you but yes there are sins of omission? Yes. I can sin by not doing things? Yes. Most people think sin is a bunch of don'ts – don't drink, smoke, cuss, don't chew tobacco and run around

with girls that do. Many people think that's the Christian – don't do this and don't do that.

But God says when you know what's right and you don't do it, that's wrong, that's sin. When God impress on you to do something and you don't, that's sin.

One of the ways to kind of kick start, jump start yourself back into gear when you've gotten detoured in any area of life and things start piling up and you need to get back on track. One of the ways to jump-start yourself into finishing what you've started is to make a public commitment to do so. That's why every week we use the communication and prayer cards. There's something real about sharing your decision with somebody else. There is something real about sharing your prayer request with others. When you share it with me, as your pastor, then I can pray specifically for you and there's something real about making a that

commitment. And when you get real; You get more grace from God, more power from God, you open yourself up for God's blessing in your life.

That's why Jesus insists that everybody be baptized. Why would Jesus say, "If you really want to follow Me, the first thing I want you to do is be baptized." What's the logic to that? It's a public commitment. Jesus said, "To prove that you're really selling out to Me, that I am number one in my life," Jesus said if you're ashamed of Me in front of other people, I'll be ashamed of you in front of the Father in heaven. That's how serious this is.

Here at Calvary we have baptized over 200 Christians. Some of you have never seen a Biblical baptism the way Jesus was baptized, on September 13<sup>th</sup> we will be have a Baptism and I want to encourage you now to mark it

on your calendars and let's do it! Stop making excuses, make a public commitment.

Finishing what you started... Let me ask you... See your not hear by accident today. God is not surprised you and I are here today. He knew it... it's not by accident you're here, and see He use Sunday morning this time we all have as a church body come together. He uses this time to speak to you in a way that He does no other way. What is He saying to you this morning? What is God showing you today? What has He been tapping you on the shoulder saying to you today or maybe it was last week or last month or even maybe last year God saying to you, just do it... Don't put it off... act upon it now... Maybe it is taking that step and inviting Him into your life to become your Lord, the manager of your life, maybe He has been telling you get involved in a small group a bible study, Celebrate

Recovery. Maybe He has just simply said to you call Pastor bill and get with him and talk things over... where your life is and where you think God wants you to be... If you fatigue, if your frustrated, maybe you've tried before and failed... maybe your afraid of what will come of you...

Just do it!

Prayer:

Father, in this kind of messages You've told us what to do. The issue is whether we're going to do it or not. The issue is whether we're going to trust You more than our feelings. The issue is whether we're going to do what's right or what's convenient. Help us to not look at short-term issues but long term benefits and eternal rewards. In Jesus' name. Amen.