

- 17:1 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.
- 2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.
- 3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
- 4 **I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.**
- 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.
- 6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.
- 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.
- 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.
- 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.
- 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.
- 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one.
- 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.
- 13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Introduction

This morning I want to look at the important issue of seeing our dedication through to the end. As you know, it is all too easy to intend to do something and to renege on the intention before we should. To quote Mark Twain “New Year's Day... now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual.”

The problem is that it has almost become acceptable to break commitments we make, in business, in marriage, in financial and other contexts. This is not what we learn from God’s Word and so I want to address the issue of finishing the work God has entrusted to us. Let us pray.

O LORD God (The Prayer attributed to Sir Francis Drake, 1587)

When thou givest to thy servants

to endeavour any great matter

Grant us also to know that it is not the beginning

but the continuing of the same

until it be thoroughly finished

which yields the true glory."

through Him that for the finishing of Thy work

laid down His life, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I first heard this prayer which is attributed to Sir Francis Drake who was the first Englishman to circumnavigate the earth, when I was a theological student. We were not about to sail anywhere – it was before a communion service in Bloemfontein Cathedral - which makes me wonder now whether the Dean knew something about the impending service that didn't!

The prayer has always resonated with me because it expresses a fundamental spiritual truth that we need to constantly reaffirm for ourselves.

The God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob is a “finisher”. He brings to completion the things He begins. When He promises He will see it through to completion. This is a theme that repeats itself over and over in the Scriptures. *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. Deut 7:9* This quality is essential to His being, without it He would not be God.

Lets look at a few examples.

The Promise to Abraham. Gen 15:13-16

God promised Abraham that his offspring would spend 400 years in Egypt before returning to the Promised Land. God was true to His promise *Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the Lord's divisions left Egypt.*

Exodus 12:40-41

The Promise of a miraculous Birth

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

Six centuries past before the promise was fulfilled Matt 1:22-23

We are to be imitators of God

When Nehemiah took on the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem opposition was never far away. *They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed."*

But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands." Neh 6:9

So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.

When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God. Neh 6:15-16

Nehemiah knew how important it was to complete the work, to finish what God had called him to do. What the inhabitants of Jerusalem had lived with for eleven years Nehemiah dealt with in just 52 days. This was because he understood the importance of finishing. It was the completion of the wall that made the surrounding nations acknowledge God's hand in the work.

Jesus, like Nehemiah, knew the importance of finishing the work the Father had given Him to do. Jesus describes His *modus operandi* as *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*

For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

So at the final part of His earthly ministry Jesus recommits Himself to the completion of the task. *I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.* John 17:4. Our salvation hung in the balance until the Lord was able to say, “It is finished” This is what is so significant about this statement. This is where the glory is. This is the moment of our salvation. Not the intention but the finished work. This then, is the measure of faithfulness – the completion of the task.

Our faithfulness brings glory to God

The preacher to the Hebrews encouraged his audience by reminding them, *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is Faithful.* **Heb 10:23**

As we dedicate ourselves to God today for the year ahead – and all the responsibilities that this year holds in terms of our giving, our ministry, the building project and our growth in discipleship we remind ourselves that it is the completion – not just the intention that produces the glory for God.

A Prayer for Steadfastness.(adapted)

O LORD God, when You give your servants
a participation in any great matter,
help us to know that it is not the beginning
but the continuing of the task
until it is thoroughly finished,
which produces the true glory;
through Him that for the sake finishing of Your work
laid down His life, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

(The Prayer attributed to Sir Francis Drake, 1587).