

Necessary Pillars To Finishing Well

by Ralph Okafor

This sermon emphasizes the importance of finishing well in ministry, highlighting the challenges faced in personal, family, and diocesan aspects, and the need to rededicate oneself to finishing well. It stresses the significance of starting well, being aware of spiritual battles, and the impact of present actions on future outcomes. The sermon also discusses the need to know and fulfill the ministry received from the Lord, maintain a clear conscience, persevere through hardships, and engage in a comprehensive ministry that includes proclaiming the whole counsel of God.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:24, Acts 20:24, Colossians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:5, Acts 24:16, Acts 20:27

Topics: "Finishing Well in Ministry", "Perseverance in Spiritual Battles"

Description

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Transcript

When I was there, the Lord was speaking to me very clearly on this issue of finishing well. I mean personally. You have been in that conference, you have been over there, you have been there, looking back, you know, you finished at this and X dot and X dot and what have you, and the challenges that I see personally coming to me in the ministry, coming to me in the family, coming to me in the diocese, coming to me all over, and how do you finish? And so, that January when I came back from that retreat, we had what we call a rededication service for all the clergy.

The message was still very, very strong in my heart and I started to pray and think of what to share with them. And that rededication service, the topic was, you must finish well. Some of them here will remember.

That's what I spoke January this year to the clergy of the Hiala Diocese. You must finish well. You can imagine how surprised and amazed when later I discovered that that is what we are coming to Boko to look at.

And I said, yes. You know, the best stage is for me, myself, before any other person because I think that God loves me. And He's saying, Mr. Man, you dare not make a mess of your life, especially at this stage, when you are about to retire.

We talk about retired people. Praise the Lord. So, you see, the Holy Spirit is wonderful.

That's just what I want to say. It's wonderful. And let me just tell you another intriguing thing there.

When I spoke in January, I took that 1 Corinthians 9.24-27 exactly and I dwelt on that passage primarily, just outlined it. But definitely you can be sure that it's not as Dr. Shea did it. But is it not amazing how the Spirit of God does His work? That was the passage.

So, one brother gave me a text, I think on Sunday, that I may be sharing something here. And then listening to all that had been happening, I said to myself, I don't know what else to say. But I would just have to mention a few other things because I think that the team talked this morning.

So, it is important to start well in order to end well. Although some may start well and still not end well, because we are still in the world and the devil is at work. And that is why we must be aware of the fact that we are in a battlefield.

And it has been pointed out here that we are not waiting till the very end to talk of finishing well. What you do today matters for tomorrow. How we finish one thing now matters how we are going to finish eventually.

These things have been emphasized. I want to read a few more scriptures because I'm encouraged by the fact that the Bible continues to speak for itself. And as we look at some of these scriptures, we will be encouraged to see how we will continue to finish.

Because I am convinced that if we have that sincerity in our hearts, if we have opened ourselves to God to lead us, whether the devil likes it or not, every one of us who have truly given ourselves to God will certainly make it to the end. We will finish very well. I say we will finish very well.

That Acts of Apostles, chapter 20, I want to read it from the New International Version so that you see with me how that rendering comes up. Acts 20, verse 24, the New International Version. Now the word finishing comes up here and the word completing is in that particular verse, in this rendering.

Finishing and completing. And let us note, before I go to the other passage, that it talks of the task or the work and primarily highlights the fact that in the midst of all the other things we may be doing or we may be seeing as ministry, that it is the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace, preaching the word of God. And in that text you discover that it makes it abundantly clear that Paul knew the one who called him and the one who gave him the ministry.

He said, to finish the rest and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me. So the first thing I want to again bring out, which if you have been listening it might have been said and said again and again. The first thing I want to underline is the fact that we need to know the person who has given us this ministry.

The ministry is a received ministry. That is the owner of the work we are doing. No matter what titles we may have today.

No matter what positions we occupy. No matter how we think we are the people in control. We are servants ourselves.

Bondslaves to someone. And we will never ever forget this fact. Otherwise, the drifting begins.

There is a drifting that will begin. It will set in and you may not know when it begins. The consciousness of the fact that the ministry is a received ministry.

And so you see this point also coming up in Colossians chapter 4 verse 17. Colossians chapter 4 verse 17. Tell Archippus, see to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord.

Or that you fulfill the ministry you received in the Lord. Writing to the Colossians, there must have been a reason why he singled out this man for this encouragement. Perhaps he was passing through all kinds of difficulties and things that could discourage in the ministry.

And in that letter he said to the leaders of the church. Tell Archippus, one of you, one of the leaders. Make sure, endeavor to complete.

Don't go half way. Never you give up. Don't abandon it for whatever reason.

The work you have received from the Lord. But the emphasis here is receiving from the Lord. Receiving from the Lord.

And when we keep this in mind. It helps us a lot. In 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 1. Therefore since through God's mercy we have this ministry.

We do not lose heart. We have this ministry through God's mercy. No one called himself or herself to this work.

If truly we are ministers of God. He said you have not chosen me. I have chosen you.

That you should go and bear fruit. That's what Jesus Christ said. And that is very very true.

It is by the grace of God. That we are where we are. And that we are what we are.

We must know the person who gave us this ministry. It is extremely important. It's only then that some of the tendencies in the ministry.

For example of trying to be a lone ranger. Thinking that you can do it all. And we forget the place of partnership.

That tendency will not be there. Again the tendency of thinking that I am the boss. And before you know it.

It's a kind of even a dictator. A tyrant. A bully.

And people cringe. Instead of love there is fear. Intimidation.

And even exploitation. Because that is the style of leadership. And of course the person is not doing well.

And will not end well. So this point I want to remind all of us. The second thing there we may see.

Because all these things are related. In 1 Timothy chapter 4. 1 Timothy chapter 4. And there are a lot of testimonies to share. Some of these things.

Experiences. But I think that all of you have your own experiences. 1 Timothy chapter 4. Verses 15 and 16.

Writing to the young minister. This aged apostle Paul that we have been looking at. At the bible study.

Said be diligent in these matters. Give yourself wholly to them. So that everyone may see your progress.

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them. Because if you do.

You will serve both yourself and your hearers. He was saying so many things before he came to that point. But we don't have time to go into the details of that.

We must know the person. From who we have received the ministry. Then we must know there is a progress.

That is expected of us in this ministry. Progress. Definite progress.

We are not to be stagnant. We are not to be retrogressive. And that is ministry that is growing.

Flourishing. To the glory of God. In two main dimensions.

He said this progress will be seen in life. And in the doctrine. Sound doctrine.

That will propagate. And this sound doctrine is also lived out. In the lifestyle.

Two main dimensions. Of progress. Not by sliding.

As we are looking at in the bible study. But to the glory of God. You see growth in grace.

Growth in the knowledge of God. You know as I was at this point. I came to one short chorus.

At least some parts of it. We are not very comfortable singing again. But it appears to me that that simple chorus.

You know the lyrics we are singing in those days. Has a lot to also say to us at this time. No person deliberately wants to end in a bad way.

No person. No person even desires or even thinks about it. But the thing is that it happens again and again.

And I think that is why this warning is coming up. Such a disgrace. Such a ridicule.

And that chorus is. No turning back. No turning back.

I like the Bible study so well. Because it started at the right point. Discipleship.

And when somebody is not well disciplined. That is part of the foundation that we are talking about in the morning. Oh, I'm converted.

This and that. Somebody jumps up. You are gifted.

You are learned. You are educated. And so on and so forth.

You have the eloquence. Jumps out. And maybe it starts one ministry or the other.

Somebody gets to you and ordains you or whatever. You know. It's part of the mistakes that must have been made.

And mistakes that have been made. But I thank God for the message of hope. That message of restoration.

That although some of the things are impossible with men. Things are impossible with men. But whatever is impossible with men is possible with God.

When we realize some of the problems and where they are. And we come to God in openness and sincerity. God turns everything around.

Changes everything. Discipleship. That statement, I have decided.

Means I have decided. It is irrevocable. It is irreversible.

It's a decision. And when somebody is a disciple. It doesn't matter what offices you occupy.

Or what responsibilities you have. Or what positions you may be in. You are still a disciple.

Following Jesus Christ. And it comes to the place that says. If no one joins me.

Still I will follow. If no one joins me. Still I will follow.

If no one joins me. Still I will follow. No turning back.

No turning back. Why? Because it's a narrow way. Never mind the way it is being seen today.

It's a narrow way. Sometimes. Well, it's not easy.

And it may not be pleasant. And so that's why some people begin to draw back. He says.

I will still follow. But thank God that some will be joining. But even if they don't join.

There's no turning back. No turning back. All of you know this song.

But you are very quiet this afternoon. And I like your quietness. So dear friends.

That is it. Somebody was reminding us this morning. We need to look back.

How we started. Because by God's grace. I know.

Many people that are here today. As leaders. We are born out of revival.

And the tendency to forget. How we started. And then assume.

That because people have known our names here and there. We have become important. You know.

We begin to. Um. Give room.

To things that we should not give room to. I think that's the problem. That is the problem.

So if we. Said I have decided. It's a personal decision.

Because this morning we are being reminded of personal, personal, personal. It's a personal. It's when I have decided.

Then. I can be a member of that body. And then we can talk of we.

The body can function properly. Individual decision. But in that passage.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 4. That I read. Verses 15 and 16. It did not only talk of.

The visible progress. That is expected. That we glorify God.

In life and doctrine. I don't want to go to the issue of doctrine. Because just last week.

We had a conference at our nation. Called back to the Bible conference. Back to the Bible.

And we exclaimed. A lot of teachings going on. In many quarters these days.

That are very unfortunate. Not the courts now. Not the known courts.

But the modern. Courtism. That entered.

Into the church. And. It's very disturbing.

The thing that has caught up. With so many people who want power. Who want signs and wonders by all means.

And they go and get power from any source. And many. Even in the mainline churches.

Are now succumbing. To some of these things. So that.

During your power nights. Begin to practice. Things that are not in the Bible.

So that people. People will come. They will say yes.

This minister is now revived. What you copied somewhere. I didn't know the origin of those things.

And your bishop will say. Yes. These are the men.

But you yourself know that you are deceiving yourself. We have many cases like that now. In many places.

They started their own kind of prayer houses. There is a modern move of God. The spirit of God has not changed.

Healings. And deliverances. And all kinds of miracles.

But you must be sure. Of the source. Of the power.

You must be sure. And you must be sure. That you don't begin to do.

Practice mysticism. And spiritualism in the church. And confuse people.

And in most cases. You discover that the lives of these people. Even.

Show that they don't know what they are doing. And God will help us in Jesus name. But the third thing I want to mention there.

Is the perseverance. That is emphasized. Why the word perseverance.

Persevere in them. You know there is a similar word. In 2 Timothy chapter 4. Because I wanted to read all the verses together.

And then begin to treat them together. But however they come. In 2 Timothy chapter 4. Verse 5. Before.

This apostle started to share his testimony. Of finishing the race. And fighting the good fight.

And so on and so forth. He made a statement in verse 5. 2 Timothy chapter 4. Verse 5. He said to Timothy. But you.

Don't worry about what others are doing these days. Even as early as at that time. There was already a problem in the church.

The devil had never rested at any time. But you. Keep your head in all situations.

Others may. But you cannot. Endure hardship.

I want to stop there for now. Because that links to what I am saying. Perseverance.

Perseverance. Because there are problems to overcome. No problem that will overcome you.

In the ministry. And if they tell you that there are no problems. Of course they will tell you that.

Problems of all kinds. Is part of the natural phenomenon. And some of them may be spiritual problems.

Some of them may be. But none are problems. All kinds of problems.

Whatever they are. We are not ignorant. Of the fact that we are in the world.

And there are many promises in the scriptures. Of God's abiding presence. Of God's power.

To help us to overcome. And let me tell you. A lot of problems.

Is not just marital disharmony. As we may put it. But even some marital problems.

Not in the sense of disharmony. That have caused ministries to disappear. To collapse.

That is just one example. Financial problems. That people thought they could not cope with.

Problems of misunderstanding and criticisms from people. Unnecessary criticisms. Rabbi Lee was telling us.

At a point. Not only that God was watching him. But the church was watching him.

And suspecting him. Whether he will take the people away. You know.

It is normal. And people will still talk anything against Boko. Even till tomorrow.

But if your ears are just open. To what they say. And what they do not say.

Then what we are talking about will be lost. You are just busy listening to what people may say. And what they may not say.

Suspicious. Accusations in fact. Direct accusations.

And that is where I want to link. To this great apostle again. Because before he said.

There is something that Paul said. I think in Acts. Chapter 24 verse 16.

That. I cannot forget. It has lived with me for many many years.

I will wait for you until you get it. Acts chapter 24 verse 16. Perseverance.

But this text. Is one of the things that will help you to persevere. Acts 24 verse 16.

In the new international version that I am using. And the authorised version has it also very beautifully. Spread out there.

So I strive always. Not sometimes. Not sometimes.

I strive always. To keep my conscience clear. Before God and.

That is very important. The two dimensions. The clear conscience.

They say he has no accusation. But how do you have that clear conscience? How do you maintain the clear conscience? Before God. Yes.

And also before people. Avoiding shady things. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians.

Where we read there. I mean 1 Corinthians chapter 4. We do not lose heart. We deliberately avoid.

Undermining God's word. Peddling God's word. You know.

We don't want to do things. That we won't give room. To do suspicions.

And scandal and so on and so forth. But we need to persevere. No matter what happens.

We need to persevere. A lot of stories could be told about that. The other thing.

I need to point out here. Maybe point number 4 or whatever. Is what I call.

A plea for comprehensive ministry. This question of completing. Of fulfilling the ministry.

Of finishing well. We may understand it. When we go back to that.

Well. Colossians chapter 4. It says. See to it that you fulfill the ministry.

Or complete the ministry. But when you come to. That 2 Corinthians chapter 4. Verse 5. That I read.

I want to finish it now. That chapter 4. 2 Corinthians. But you keep your head in all situations.

Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Discharge all the duties.

Of your ministry. That's how it is rendered here. Discharge all the duties.

Of the ministry. That's I think what they call. Full armed ministry.

R.B.E.D. Full armed ministry. That is. It is true that.

We are talking about preaching the gospel. Winning souls. You know missions.

Discipleship and all these things. And some people. Like to ride their hobby horses.

They major on one thing. In particular. It's good to specialize.

Ministry emphasis. You find some people. Just prepare some lessons on marriage.

And do some research on it. So they carry out marriage seminars. They are marriage counselors.

They are just. That seems to be the ministry. You know everything about marriage.

Either premarital counseling. Or postmarital or whatever. Others go and study about second coming.

Eschatology. In fact the latest thing about Israel. And Palestine.

And so on and so forth. They will tell you about the signs of his coming. They have this well documented.

And that is what they are teaching everywhere. Just as some now talk about healing. As the only thing.

You know healing seminars. Healing services. Deliverances.

Family courses. And all those things. They package these things very very well.

That's where they specialize. That's what they carry out. Fair enough.

Because I believe that in the body of Christ. You know these things should be there. Some people are more gifted in this area than others.

And so we complement one another. That's fair enough. But.

Um. You know. We have to listen to the Lord.

Because that is why. I. I thank God for the testimony of. Something that was packaged and then unpackaged.

Cancelled. For those who listen to the Lord. What is the Lord asking me to do? Because if I have not.

If there are things I have neglected to do. And I'm expected to do them. I don't think I'm doing well.

So. Say the duties of the ministry. What are the things involved.

In these things that I'm doing. So that I take time. To make sure I carry them out.

And not just. Put my head in one thing. And veer off there.

Am I ready to listen. And see what God is telling me. And that's part of the growth of ministry.

You know. From time to time. From year to year.

And things like that. In pastoral ministry. What are the components? Am I truly a pastor? Do I have the shepherd's heart? Invisitation is part of what.

I'm supposed to do. I may not be doing it regularly. But do I do it at all? Is it completely abandoned? Anyway.

I'm just throwing these things. So that all of us can think together. On this issue of.

The ministry. The duties of the ministry. The full of the ministry.

And not just. Suddenly we narrow. Ourselves to one thing that.

Perhaps. It is the thing that is now raining. It is the thing that is now popular.

It is the thing that everybody is now talking about. If I don't preach prosperity. And tell people.

Or if I'm not a fundraiser. Anywhere I go I raise funds for them. Then they will not invite me.

I don't know. So you begin to search for scriptures. All the things about how to raise funds.

So that. You join the group. Of what is popular.

And then you abandon. A few other things. So.

You know. We are speaking under the general theme. Of.

Finishing well in ministry. Finishing well in ministry. And.

The message started with. At least the main message. The pains of not finishing.

And then. There was another talk. By Dr. Ishola on.

The general theme. Finishing ministry. And then Brother.

Brother Billy came. And used the word parameters. And it was a kind of a continuation.

Of what Dr. Ishola was telling us. Although he. Carefully avoided the subtitle.

And then. Because you see. There is a way words we use.

Create pictures in our minds. We talk of pains. Agony.

And so on. We talk of the parameters. We talk of foundations.

And those things we still continue. All these things. We still continue.

You know. Before we leave here. Maybe Thursday morning.

The things I've been trying to mention. I call them. Pillars.

If there is foundation. There are pillars. I want that picture to be in our minds.

Because the word building has been used. The ministry. It's like a building.

We are still building. And God is the builder himself. Of course.

And we are co-workers with him. There are pillars. Very important things.

We need to put on ground. Which will hang everything. If we must finish.

And end well. But then he sang the song that I wanted to sing. I said that the song I'm going to sing.

When I come up here. We're going to sing it. By the time I hand over to somebody.

He's going to pray. And that is keep me true. Lord Jesus keep me true.

So bear that in mind. As I just read one other scripture. And then we pray.

I think that's Acts chapter 20. We go back to that Acts chapter 20. Because I was talking about this full old ministry.

Verse 27. You know in the context of that verse 24. You find so many things about finishing well.

Acts chapter 20 verse 27. For I have not hesitated. To proclaim to you the whole counsel of God.

Or the whole will of God. That is part of the satisfaction. Towards the end of his ministry.

That's part of the joy. Not only as he said earlier on. You know he went from house to house.

Publicly everywhere. This is somebody who. You know he was sold out in the ministry.

No reservations. He go to other places. He will tell you about how he suffered.

He was beaten. He suffered shipwreck. Sometimes hungry.

And so on. Those are those problems. And how to persevere.

The apostle Paul. And we face some of these things. Not all of us will be in Lagos.

With big ministry. Some of us are in villages. We don't need to grumble.

We don't need to complain. I told some people a few days ago. One of the things that kills ministry.

Is grumbling. Murmuring. Complaining.

Unnecessarily. And do you know that ministers can grumble? How can you finish well? With the spirit of grumbling? You want to be like A or B or C. Why that kind of competitive spirits? It's not a good one. He said the whole council of God.

So it's an assignment. What do I understand by the whole council of God? Can I begin to spend more time in prayer and study? So that I'll be able to teach my people. Not from January to December.

They're hearing almost the same thing from you. I called some people. I will not tell you where this happened anyway.

But I called some of my friends somewhere. Because I listened to them. You know they have this thing they call Wednesday.

Wednesday faith clinic. Or miracle hour. It is a time to pray together.

And encourage people and minister to them. And I discovered that the message there is the same thing every week. Every week the same message.

So I called them and said. Do you know that these people. Even though they will not tell you.

They won't complain. I'm very sorry for them. How can they grow? How can they be hearing the same thing? Every week.

Don't you have any other message? Even if you want to develop faith building messages. You can do that. You know.

But not just the same thing every day. You tell them how sinful they are. And they repent and so on and so forth.

And you pray for them. Every day how sinful they are. You continue to say the same thing.

Nothing from the scripture. I hear this is the bible. No systematic preaching of the word of God.

We don't take series from the word of God. We don't have time to build the word of God. That we are teaching people.

Whether it is thematic series. Or whatever kind of series. That we help to build the people up.

Say I give them the whole counsel of God. The full of ministry. The Lord will help us in Jesus name.

The pillars. That we need. In order to finish well.

Shall we stand to pray together? Keep me true Lord. Jesus keep me true. Keep me true Lord.

Jesus keep me true. The sirens that I must run. The love it brings to be one.

Give me power and strength. Every hour to be true. One more time.

Keep me true Lord. Jesus keep me true.

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