Series: Witness Distilled

Title: 6. Finishing Well

Scripture: Phil 2:12-18

Description: How many sermons does it take to produce a great witness? What makes a church finish well?

# Introduction

Have you ever wondered how many sermons actually produce fruit? How much ministry is done by counsellors, brothers and sisters that has a lasting effect? If you're in the role of that kind of ministry to people, these thoughts are very real to you. I wonder what the ratio would be of hours input to hours output. It's not always that time and effort of one person brings change to another - no matter how hard they labour...

That's the conundrum for Paul.

It may be, on that day when Christ returns, and Paul and the Philippian congregation are gathered before the Lord, all that will be accounted to their church ministry is an empty echo. And Paul knew it was possible. It was a legit fear, because already while he's writing, he wept as he counted "many" in his mind who must have at one time confessed faith, but were now walking as enemies of the cross.

Paul was confident that God who began a good work among them would bring it to perfection at the day of Christ. Yet, that confidence is subject now to the admission that only on that Day, would it be known. It was possible, that they would not be 'pure and blameless for the day of Christ' - and so this matter filled his prayers and earnest hope for them.

And so on the 6th and final sermon on Witness Distilled, we're faced with the need to **finish well** - And I don't mean finish the series, but finish our ministry. Makes you think - what will Christ say of Knysna Baptist Church on that day?

# READ

# Proposition

What is it that turns sermons into fruit, counsel into change, input into output?

It takes more than what Paul could offer! We could have the apostle himself here, but that wouldn't guarantee anything. Instead, Paul says, even in his absence, only one thing is necessary: **Obedience**. Obedience turns input to output. They have the Word, they have the Spirit; they have Salvation, and '*that from God*' - but now they need **the obedience** - to "*work out your own salvation*"

Finishing Well is a matter of Obedience, to God.

We need to close our series without closing our witness - by seeing both the attitude and the act of obedience to God.

# Attitude of Obedience

* If we can only say one thing about obedience, it is not natural to our humanity. submitting to another's will - who may will differently! And when the government requires obedience, when our parents insist, or boss - the natural response is in (14) with 'grumbling' and 'questioning'; normally without (12) 'fear and trembling' -
* But the attitude of obedience that Finishes Well, is "with fear and trembling" and "without grumbling or questioning"
* Paul motivates such an attitude - "for it is God" - God, who has saved you. The God of peace. The God who supplies every need. ***Even***... who supplies the will and the work of obedience; the desire and the do for *a life that is worthy of the Gospel*. And so the same attitude is in Paul when he comes to Corinth, (1 Cor 2:3)

3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God

* the *fear and trembling* **of trust**. I am completely unable. But God will work - much like this sermon this morning.
* You are on assignment to God. You are set in place "for His good pleasure" - that means: on behalf of His own free delight to exalt Christ, and unite all creation under Him - He is making your life worthy of that.
* So there is no place for grumbling and complaining

## FCF - no joy:

* I find it interesting that on the one hand - this Philippian congregation are really plugged in to Paul's mission support, and defence and confirmation of the gospel (1:7) - yet on the other hand, their joy is barely running on fumes - 3:1, 4:4 ; there are fears, grumblings, conflict
* Something wrong there - it's the human nature in control; not the super-nature
* When a church is lack-lustre in their mission; when the obedience is joyless, it could be either or both:
  + vision of the church: - striving together, but not "for the faith of the Gospel" - 3:19 minds set on earthly things; pre-eminence: 4:2-3 Euodia & Syntyche
  + vitality of your spirit: not filled with the Holy Spirit - 2:13 it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure

# Act of Obedience

Obedience produces an incredible synergy of the work of God and the work of man - **12-13** = They are to work 'out' what God is working 'in'

And the result : Witness in the World! PICTURE: paints a dark canvas, cuts little holes, holds up to the Sun - that majesty streams through - bright lights in darkness.

He might be using the prophetic illustration from Daniel 12:3 - wisdom - leading many to righteousness. Except this is not stars in the sky, but lights in the world - ILLUS: ISS capturing earth's lights at night > We are among the world, regarded by God, and reflecting back to Him that great Light that He is working in us. But not only to Him - to the sleeping darkness around us.

So armed with the attitude of obedience, what is the act of obedience?

14 Do all things without grumbling or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom **you shine** as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain.

Churches that shine, are the churches that finish well. (15-16)

I'm ready to strive side by side with the church, I'm ready to face the kickback of the world, I see as Christ sees - I'm ready to obey: What must I do, Lord?

## Become blameless and innocent : become children of God without blemish

* Blameless and Innocent - such a life as Christ - and by the power of the Spirit, putting off the Old and putting on the New
  + Blameless: before God. *1.* Luke 1:6 saysZachariah and Elizabeth walked *blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord* - blameless means : in all your spheres of life, under every hat, you're doing what He instructs; there's a wholesale ready obedience to God; walking the walk; above reproach; no reserved harbour - single-minded devotion to the will of God
  + Innocent: among people. 2.Matt 10:16 - as you go, be innocent as doves - in the world where it's easy to mingle right and wrong, to have integrity - being sincere and true towards all people: not a person of harm - - genuine interest, intention of the heart, no guile/ being two-faced; purity, trustworthiness - in relationships and morals
* It's not that we don't know this - but it doesn't happen without an attitude of obedience, and action

## Be : (15) in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine

* Christ made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men yet without sin - have this mind of Christ in you: Get amidst the darkness. You need to be in the middle, among the crooked and twisted generation.
  + That may include putting up with some perverse language, twisted ideas; shocking stories and eye raising attitudes. Some broken and hopeless homes; Drunkards; Cigarette smoke; It may be rough at first, but my experience is, the rough stuff doesn't last for long when the Holy Spirit is around. We are the salt of the earth. ILUS: Another believer relating to me how swearing of a new friend diminishing - because she doesn't entertain it. Sanctifying effect; softening
* If you aren't in community with unbelievers, how will your light shine? You may as well put it under a basket. I'm convinced that every believer needs to be an active citizen in secular society - in a network, a club, sports team, PTA, or getting into the homes of unbelievers, and have unbelievers in your home.
* The only place you shouldn't tolerate crookedness and twistedness is in believers!
* The Obedient church comes together for weekly worship, and midweek gatherings - that's your refuge and encourgement - and then it goes back out again and beams : blamelessly and innocently - the children of God amidst a crooked and twisted generation. ("Don't start a church cycling club; join the secular one") - and then when the time is right, God will open a door to proclaim Christ : Even Paul says that in Col 4:3 - It's God at work - whether in response to their personal story, or some relevant event the church hosts to which you can invite them; and they will enquire about the reason for your hope...
* which leads us to the 3rd point

## Be : (16) holding fast to the word of life

* This is part of the image of (15) "*shining as lights in the world holding fast to* ***the word of life****"*: you need to picture this - so you can imitate it
  + **#1 = it's a grip**: an outstretched hand, gripping on to the word of Christ : you are anchored, it is unrelenting because it is "***the word of life***" - It really needs to be the word **of Life** to you. When you are doubtful and struggling, those words must ring in your ears: *To whom else can I go; You have the words of LIFE*! The sine-que-non of Life is fellowship with - holding on to - the Son of God ...
  + but there's more to the picture -
  + **#2 = it's a visible grip** -: Because you're stretching out to hold on, the world's attention is drawn to it.
* How does that picture look in real life? Well, there are many "**words**" in the world - but you have a different word - and it's about "Life". Now for the most part Christian Scriptures are probably of little interest to the unbelievers you're among. But what will be of particular interest is the **Life** it produces in you - in contrast to all their other mates, you're living Real Life - blameless and innocent. Your Life amid their crooked world reveals to them True Life, **Christ-life**, "Redeemed Life". Which they, like you, can reach out and take hold of - and confess Jesus Christ IS THE LORD to the glory of God their Father.

We could have the apostle himself here, but that wouldn't guarantee anything about our ministry. Instead, Paul says, even in his absence, only one thing is necessary: **Obedience**. Obedience turns input to output.

**What is it that turns God's pleasure into Reality?** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men; And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming Obedient ; to the point of death ;

Therefore, my beloved, **do the same**.