

May 7, 2017

Finish Right, Start Now

## EPHESIANS 3:7-21

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith... all three verbs are in the perfect (prophetic perfect perhaps). Even though Paul is still alive and writing these words, he views his life lived for Christ as complete... and as my Greek teacher, Roger Hahn always loved to point out for the perfect tense – completed action that has continuing and ongoing repercussions... I like that idea – our finished lives continue to speak, to influence, to make a difference in the lives of those we have served. That’s how we leave a legacy — M. Jackson, TNU (2017)!*

*Read Ephesians 3:20 carefully. Then think of what God might do in you and through you—you as a community, you as an individual. Now reflect on the fact that God is perfectly capable of doubling that, trebling that, going so far beyond it that you would look back at the present moment and wonder how you could be so short-sighted. But this isn’t a magic trick. God’s power is not our to do with as we like. If you want to get on the map of verse 20, get on the map of the three chapters that brought Paul to this point - N.T. Wright (2004).*

*As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:6-8*

**Next week:** *Marvelous Revelation!*

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# THE STORY

FINDING YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY

Paul's life truly began on the road to Damascus.

Through trials and loneliness, Paul trusted in God.

Paul anchored his life to hope in Jesus.

Paul was finishing well because:

- 1) He reproduced his life in Christ—in others.
- 2) He viewed his life as an offering to God.
- 3) Death was a transition, not an end.
- 4) He remained "in the race."
- 5) He was eager to meet the Lord!

With whom am I reproducing my Christian life?

How can I encourage someone to keep going?

To what is God calling our faith community?

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