



Hednesford
Salvation Army
Corps and Community Centre

Finishing Well

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Shift / Ministry; Genuine; Traditionalism; God: Providence; Hope; Past; Future / Ecclesiastes 7:8-14

Taking Our Eyes Off the Rearview Mirror

Objective

Every Christian would be wise to place their hope in God for the future to help them finish well.

Staring into the Rearview Mirror

After all, it seems often as if life is a series of never-ending transitions. We find ourselves in such a world of change, that life begins to lose its meaning. Our passage this morning, from Ecclesiastes, will hopefully help us to navigate change and transition in our lives and in the Salvation Army without staring into the rearview mirror, but instead getting a proper perspective on the future, on what God has in store for us, and ensuring that we finish well.

Ecclesiastes 7:8-14, TLB

The Hard Work of Finishing Well

The Teacher, the writer of Ecclesiastes, is trying very hard here to change the perspective of his readers. In the first verse of our passage he brings it altogether by saying, “Finishing is better than starting!”

Stephen Covey, a business writer, wrote the fabulous book, *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*. In this book, he suggests that one of the best habits we can develop in ourselves is to begin with the end in mind.

Finishing well often means giving up something and letting go of something that is important to us.



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Some endings are sad, but some are good. Some endings have new beginnings in them. Today is Pentecost, and Pentecost is almost an ultimate beginning within an ending.

This mix of sad endings and new beginnings takes hard work.

Place Your Hope in God

When we go through change and transition, it's easy to fall into nostalgia. But in the mind of the Teacher, he has already established the past, present and future are all the same:

Ecclesiastes 1:9 The Living Bible

⁸ everything is unutterably weary and tiresome. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied; no matter how much we hear, we are not content. History merely repeats itself. Nothing is truly new; it has all been done or said before. What can you point to that is new? How do you know it didn't exist long ages ago? We don't remember what happened in those former times, and in the future generations no one will remember what we have done back here.

So, rather than focusing on our rearview mirrors, the Teacher encourages us to look ahead.

How do you know that you are looking through God's eyes at the world? Perhaps one of the best ways is to see how angry you get when things do not go your way – the sin of exasperation:

Ecclesiastes 7:9 The Living Bible

⁹ Don't be quick-tempered—that is being a fool.

We would be better to focus our energy on being attentive to the work of God in the world.

Begin With the End in Mind

Focusing ahead in this way helps us to know how to respond to change and transition in our lives. Today and every day is under the sovereignty of God. Accept what God has done in the past. Surrender the present and the future to his sovereign will. Take your eyes off the rearview mirror, look straight ahead and finish well.