

**THE BIG IDEA: Unfinished business fires up the fired up.**

The Take-Off

I have a confession: I'm not naturally a finisher.

Honestly, if you came to my house right now, you'd find a bathroom that needs to be painted because one day during a shower I pulled off a big old strip of dated wallpaper that I was tired of looking at.

I started by pulling, but I haven't finished by painting.

Starting is fun, exciting and hopeful. Finishing feels far off, dull and hard.

Honestly, starting is easy, finishing isn't.

Starting requires no thought, finishing does.

Starting allows me to have instant satisfaction without putting forth any real effort.

In fact, it could be said that starting is more about being tired of the same old routine, but not finishing dooms us to a whole new level of routine.

There is a danger in starting and not finishing, and Paul walks right into it in the 9th and 10th verses of Acts 18.

In fact, not finishing can put everything we've started at risk.

For all those reasons, God warns Paul about unfinished business and tells him three reasons not to quit:

**1. Know God's presence**

- a. We all know that things seem scarier in the dark for one reason: you can't see
- b. Sure that seems elementary, but millions of dollars are made every year based on that simple premise
- c. We all know that we need others even if we choose to live as if we don't
- d. It's interesting to me how many people choose to isolate themselves from others when isolation is so bad that prisons use it as punishment (solitary confinement)!
- e. But turn the light on - or have a hand to hold - and you suddenly feel renewed and less afraid
- f. In Acts 18:9, God told Paul not to be afraid
- g. In Acts 18:10, God tells Paul why he doesn't have to be afraid - "I am with you"
- h. Why is this such a big deal?
- i. Because when God - who is love - draws near to us, there is no more room for the fear that makes us want to quit. Instead, God's presence gives us:
  - rest (Exodus 33:14)
  - completion (1 John 4:12) "You complete me"
  - courage (Joshua 1:9)
  - contentment (Hebrews 13:5)
  - relationship (Revelation 3:20)
- j. A lot of people leave things unfinished because they're afraid.
- k. The presence of God counteracts that.
- l. Bottom line? "Don't be afraid. I am with you."

**2. Trust God's protection**

- a. Have you ever felt like you should say something but you talked yourself out of it?
- b. Do you know why you didn't say it? Because you saw all that could happen if you did.
- c. This is a little more than just being afraid; this is beginning to believe that you're defeated.
- d. But if you knew that failure wasn't even possible, that you couldn't lose what you're afraid of losing, would you speak?
- e. My guess is that you would.
- f. God knows that we tend to clam up when we see what's against us.
  - Peter saw the waves and quit (Matthew 14:30)
  - Jesus saw the cross and wanted to quit (Matthew 26:39)
- g. In Acts 18:9, God told Paul to keep speaking
- h. In Acts 18:10, God told Paul why he should keep speaking - "No one will harm you."
- i. Why is this such a big deal?

- j. Because intimidation leads to compromise, and God knows that when we think of what we'll lose, we'll never think of what we could gain.
- k. But God's protection ensures that we win, and it gives us:
  - strength to resist the devil (James 4:7)
  - refuge and peace (Psalm 91:2-3)
  - boldness (Mark 16:17-18)
  - assurance of victory (Isaiah 54:17)
- l. Let me show you what it looks like when we stop living defeated lives, what's possible when we realize that we can't lose if we go all in (clip from [Facing the Giants](#))
- m. A lot of people leave things unfinished because they're defeated.
- n. The protection of God counteracts that.
- o. Bottom line? "Keep on speaking. No one will harm you."

### 3. Remember God's purpose

- a. There is a third command that God gave to Paul in Acts 18:9
- b. God said "do not be silent"
- c. At first glance, I just assumed this was the same as when God said "keep on speaking" until I looked at the Greek and realized that the author used 2 different Greek terms
- d. When God said "keep on speaking" the word used was "laleo" which means "to utter a voice or sound"
- e. But when he told Paul to "not be silent" the word is "siopao" which means "to hold one's peace" and was sometimes used metaphorically of a quiet sea
- f. Basically, this is a term that implies quitting, laying down, not moving, giving up
- g. In Acts 18:9, God told Paul "do not be silent"
- h. In Acts 18:10, God told Paul why he shouldn't be silent - "I have many people in this city"
- i. In short, God told Paul not to give up because God has a purpose
- j. He called Paul to remember that, and if he did, he wouldn't be tempted to quit and leave the business of proclaiming the gospel unfinished
- k. Can we be honest? Paul could have stopped here and lived the rest of his life satisfied with a good run, but God had unfinished business
- l. God has a plan that involves people, and he will use people to achieve it
- m. Basically God told Paul to get up because there were still people in that city to reach
- n. The same is true in this city, and leaving that unfinished is unacceptable
- o. A lot of people leave things unfinished because they're satisfied.
- p. The purpose of God counteracts that.
- q. Bottom line? "Don't be silent. I have a plan for you."

### The Landing

First, let's address what this looks like in the life of a follower of Jesus

Let me give you 5 statements that we can use as a test to evaluate where we are in relation to unfinished business  
 Found people find people, Saved people serve people, Blessed people bless people, Forgiven people forgive people,  
 and Growing people are changed people

If you and I come up short on that test, then we have fallen short of the purpose for which we were redeemed

We have forgotten who we are

[Lion King clip]

You and I are more than what we have become, and if we see that we have begun to settle, we must take to heart the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-20 (v. 19 in the ESV - whoever "relaxes" one of the least of these commandments)

When I read that this past week, I thought it sounded so harsh, so legalistic, so works-based, but the truth is our Big Idea today: **Unfinished business fires up the fired up!**

Plus... (and this is huge) ...JESUS SAID IT!!!

The same Jesus who said in Luke 9:62 that no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God!

Why not? Because the kingdom of God is ruled by a King who finishes, and people who don't finish the purposes of God in their lives won't fit there.

Our response to the unfinished business of proclaiming Jesus reveals a lot about us

So what steps do we take if we know we've been leaving business unfinished?

FIRST, we REPENT, because God is a finishing God and we aren't like him when we don't finish

SECOND, we RENEW our minds with the word of God and our bodies to the work of God

It isn't enough to have done good when there is still good to be done.

For the follower of Jesus it simply is unacceptable to leave the mission unfinished, and even now there is a growing fire in many of us here to get the job done.

**Unfinished business fires up the fired up**, so let's get it done.