

in the good of this truth, we can finish well. We can be like Caleb and say in the final season of life, 'My passion for Jesus burns as brightly as it did on the day I was saved. My faith in Him is as strong, if not stronger. My experience of Him is altogether wondrous and unlike anything else in my life. I will press on to take hold of my inheritance in Christ until I go to meet Him. And meet Him, I shall.'

FORGOTTEN TREASURE, OTHER TREASURES, AND STUMBLING BLOCKS

If you are still with me, you are already formulating your objections. To be fair, not many of us will go through life like Caleb, a literal slave, or a nomad wanderer or someone who literally goes to war. Also, as a Christian, you already knew that you are born again, will go to heaven, blah, blah, blah. But maybe you aren't seeing the connection with this and finishing well.

- Maybe you hear Caleb's words and think, 'Nope, not me.'
- Maybe you can't recall ever having a passion for Jesus.
- Maybe you recall a passion and zeal to live for Christ but it has faded into a fond recollection.
- Maybe the idea of tasting and seeing the Lord seems a bit foreign.
- Maybe you have a vague sense that this Christian walk should be different but are too caught up with 'life' to figure out what is keeping you from it.
- Maybe you don't even care to have such a spirit; you just want to get through this life as best you can.
- Maybe, just maybe, you want what Caleb had. Not

a land. But for a life lived passionately before and with your glorious Savior. To the end. And are provoked afresh to consider how to do that.

Unfortunately, for many of us today, Caleb's passion to take hold of his possession of the land far outstrips our contemporary efforts to walk by faith today. It can be quite embarrassing.

- Do I live with this overarching love of Christ that transforms my life?
- Do I live in light of what I have received already and will inherit in full after I die?

Too often, the answer is, 'No.' Instead of living lives in which Jesus is our great treasure, we trade away that treasure for other pleasures, for smaller treasures, and counterfeit treasures, here in this life, without recognizing the harm. And more than that, the trials and tribulations of this life—whether divorce or poverty or prejudice or crime or illness or war or abuse—these too can rob us of our great joy in Christ as well.

A.W. Tozer puts it this way:

It is my opinion that the Christian concept of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century [he wrote this in 1961] is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.⁴

Do we diminish the value of our God and our salvation? Being saved should be the most wonderful experience in our lives. We may even 'know' that. But is it really? Do we live in the reality of our great salvation, day in and day out, month in and month out, year in and year out?

4. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (HarperCollins Publishers, 1961), p. 2.

For some, that treasure isn't such a treasure. If becoming a Christian isn't a compelling experience, then the trials and temptations in our lives will undermine how we live. But be assured, passion for Christ is supposed to be a compelling and hedonistically pleasurable experience that reorders all other pleasures and puts our trials in their proper perspective.

So why is it so often not the case?

Why aren't more of us finishing like Caleb, still passionate for Christ after all these years?

There are stumbling blocks that keep us from having a Caleb-like life. The rest of this book explores a few of those stumbling blocks and counterfeit treasures:

1. What is your treasure in life? Mr. Scougal bears repeating, 'The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love; he who loveth mean and sordid things doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well placed affection doth advance and improve the spirit unto a conformity with the perfections which it loves.' In Chapter 2, taking a hard look at Solomon, we can examine what we truly love and treasure in life. Solomon, who started with what appears to be ideal circumstances spiritually and materially, ends badly because he replaced his first love with a lesser one.
2. Do you think rightly about yourself? If, as A.W. Tozer says, the most important thing about you is what you think about God; the second most important thing about you is what you think about yourself. In the midst of all the ways we evaluate our lives, do we think rightly about ourselves from the Lord's point of view? Many of us are sidetracked from finishing well by thinking unbiblically about ourselves. We may have a clearly defined therapeutic or worldly

idea of ourselves that contradicts how the Bible defines us, burdening us with an inner conflict as to what our ending well should look like. We explore this in Chapter 3.

3. Here is a simple truth: All of us are being either transformed or conformed into something. The story of Lot gives us a simple but valuable measuring rod: are we being transformed or conformed? Lot slowly conformed to the world around him. And the social and psychological pressures of the current age are constantly at work to mold us to a certain way of life. On the other hand, being a Christian means being transformed into someone who is more and more like Jesus Christ. Chapter 4 explores this idea.
4. Properly understood, contentment is one of the greatest treasures of our lives. Chapter 5 explores the idea of a godly contentment amid prosperity and desire. While one might think prosperity is a sure guarantee of contentment, that's often not the case. Using Paul and insights from the Puritan writer, Jeremiah Burroughs, we explore how to live the contented life while challenged by the temptations of prosperity.
5. Are you in danger of falling away? In Chapter 6, we meet Demas, someone who professed faith in Christ, worked alongside Paul himself, but then fell away. We see this happen far too often, and for many it is a secret dread. There are lessons from Demas' life to encourage and caution us in living and finishing well.
6. How does family, church and community help or hinder our finishing? As much as we might like

to think otherwise, we are all parts of groups and tribes, whether family, ethnic groups, political parties or social groups. And these groups can significantly affect the way in which we live our lives and finish. In Chapter 7, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians provides a framework on how to deal with factions and divisiveness.

7. Memorials are not just for the Old Testament. They are milestones and testimonies of the importance of grace in finishing well. In Chapter 8, we look at examples from Joshua as the Israelites conquered the Promised Land. Do we forget what we have and what we are going to receive? How can we create reminders of God's grace in our lives—what He has done, our inheritance in Christ—and how does remembering those evidences of grace increase our faith in this life as we finish? How can we build uplifting reminders of what God has done, what our inheritance in Christ is, and how does remembering what He has done increase our faith as we enter the final stages of life?
8. How compelling is heaven for you? Adam and Eve tell us as much about heaven as Revelation does. The anticipation and reality of Heaven can shape how we live our lives here and now, contributing to an unshakeable joy and anticipation as we approach death's door.