

FINISH STRONG: CALEB
FRANCIS CHAN

The older I get the more intense I feel about this.

I think we do things backwards in the Christian church. We do these amazing things for God when we're 18 to 25 years old. But as we get older we tend to mellow out. We get more comfortable, and we do fewer things by faith.

I look at that, and I think that's so backwards. Every year, I get closer to that moment when I'm going to see Him. Wouldn't you think we'd get more intense and more urgent the closer to get to the end?

I was on the phone with a pastor friend of mine from India, part of a conference call. He said, "I'm 63 - Do you think I care what anyone thinks of me on the phone?"

I look at the age of 60. I've had friends who have passed away before reaching that age, and I have some others who are still going strong well past it.

If I have 13 years left, I start to think: Is this -- this -- a good use of my time? What is the most loving thing I can say to you? I don't want to waste a moment of my time.

My wife sees our marriage like that TV series, "The Amazing Race". We're in a race. There's no time to celebrate, there's no time to fight. Anything could slow us down. That's what our lives should be like. But we do it backwards. We slow down as we get older.

I get some of this. When we're 18, we have nothing to lose. But as we get older, we get married, we have a career, we have some kids. I don't want to slow down. I don't want to get comfortable. I want to take bigger steps of faith every year.

To me, "Happily ever after" starts at my death, standing before God. That's when I can celebrate.

Look at Caleb. He was over 40 when he was sent to spy on the Promised Land, and he was one of only two who came back who was convinced that Israel could take the land. 45 years later, he's 85, and he was ready to march in and take the land. That's who I want to be.

2 CHRONICLES 16:9 - "The eyes of the Lord roam to and fro throughout the Earth, looking to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him."

Do you believe this? God is looking throughout the Earth. He's doing this right now. He knows my heart. He knows my mind. He knows yours. He's actively looking to give support to those whose heart is blameless towards him.

He's looking for someone to support. We ask, "God, please support me!" And he's saying, "I'm looking. Is anyone's heart really for me? Are you really seeking my kingdom" Do you want my will?" God sees that.

I want to be that person where god stops and says, "Okay, him. I'm going to strongly support him, like Caleb and Joshua.

What I love about this verse is the context -- the real story of this verse. These words were spoken to a king named Asa. He was an amazing king. When there was a good king, good things happened. But that was rare.

Early in Asa's reign, a prophet said to him, "Take courage. Do not let your hands be weak. Your work shall be rewarded." As soon as Asa heard these words, he took courage.

Think about that. "Take courage." It's something we have to take. We see in 2 Chronicles 15 what Asa does. He rebuilds the altar, he removed the idols, and he makes a covenant with the Lord with all the people. He even removed an idol that his own mother had made. Don't you want to be a man or woman of God like that?

For 35 years, there was no war. But in the 36th year, the King of Israel started a war. At this point, Asa makes a deal with the King of Syria, to help defend his kingdom. Most of us would think that this was a good idea. But in verse 7, Hananiah the seer came and told Asa that because he had relied on the King of Syria and not on God, that Asa had acted foolishly and that there would never be an end to war.

That's the context of that verse. Asa had changed his ways from his earlier years because he had gotten a little success. He'd gotten comfortable. It wasn't like the early days when he cried out to God, and this prophet was reminding him of that.

God's looking for people who always seek him throughout life, but what does Asa do? He's been a king for 35 years, and he'd made other king buddies, so they'd join him. Asa was told that this was a very stupid thing to do. He would be at war from then on.

The really sad thing is, after hearing this, did Asa change his ways? No. He got angry at the prophet and had him imprisoned.

In Asa's 39th year, God gave him a disease in his feet. He still refused to pray to God, and he died.

I've seen this happen in my life. I've had some success, and I need to get back to the old Francis. I don't want to sit back and relax.

I saw the older folks in the choir here, and I was shocked, because I'm used to speaking to college kids. I was grateful to God, but it was shocking how loud they were. It got me excited. I see all these ages together. I speak to so many college-age kids, and they're all longing for an elderly mentor whose life makes sense to them in light of the Gospel.

I want my kids to model the same intensity that they see in me. I want my two-year-old to see an even more intense me than my 18-year-old did.

I've never seen a church where the elderly led the young in faith.

A couple of weeks ago, I was at a conference. The actor who played Jesus in the movie "Son of God" was in the crowd. After the message, he found me and said, "Great job!" And I know he's just an actor, but I was excited! Now, I don't know what it's going to be like in the end, but that's what I like for. If I can hear "Well done" from God, that's all I want. I want that for you. Is there anything you're going to care about then whether he says, "Well done"?

I'm going to take courage. I'm going to turn around. I'm going to live for God for the rest of my life, and I want to hear God say, "Well done." God will say, "You know I had something better for you, so come in and enjoy the riches of my kingdom."

There's that "Happily ever after".