

The Dynamic Power of the End of the Story

The Bible as a true story, an epic play, a blockbuster movie, should come with a warning; Spoiler Alert! We're living in the middle of the drama, and sometimes it feels like a cruel joke. Has God dropped us in the middle of something without adequate stage directions? It is really supposed to be like this? But the truth is, we know the end of the story. And the end of the story is, Jesus wins!

Many of the troubles we encounter feel like the end. You lose a job; maybe you'll never work again. You get a cancer diagnosis; is it the end of your life? You discover your spouse is cheating; your marriage is over. Someone else gets the ministry opportunity; it seems what God promised you will never happen. Terrorism, political division, natural disaster. What we see looks and feels like the end.

I faced this in a huge way with the death of my husband. What could be more final than death? Once the funeral is over, the casket lowered into the ground, the ashes spread, the flowers faded, it's over. Finished. The curtains are drawn. The End.

But wait. Nothing could be further from the truth. There's another scene. God has the final say. Like Paul Harvey's famous daily broadcast, we have yet to experience "the rest of the story."

It's hard to find any greater benefit of reading the Bible and being a Christian than that it gives us the end of the story. The enemy would tell you we're living in the final scene, but don't you believe it. Wherever you are right now, whatever is going on around you or in your own heart, this is not the end.

You need to know the end of the story to make it through the middle.

What It Meant for Jesus

As great as our struggles are, none of us experience the powers of darkness aligned against us individually with the degree of focus that Jesus did while here on earth. Sure, we face spiritual warfare, but nothing like Jesus did. How did He make it? Not by gritting His teeth, wringing His hands, griping and complaining, or giving up in frustration.

No, Jesus knew the end of the story. “For I tell you, what is written must yet be accomplished in Me, ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ Indeed, what is written concerning Me has a fulfillment” (Luke 22:37). My paraphrase: Jesus said, “There’s a point to all this. Everything makes sense in the context of the mission I am on.”

The way Jesus made it was by staying focused on the end of the story. “Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

Scorning the shame of the cross? In light of His mission of seeking and saving the lost, all the physical pain, mental torture and spiritual violation that men and demons could perpetrate against Him was meaningless. Sure, He felt it all. He was—and is—as human as you and I are. He was the Son of man. But by keeping His eyes on the end of the story He won.

What It Means for Us

A group of seminary students loved to decompress from their studies by playing basketball in the school gym. The elderly school janitor would sit patiently reading His Bible, waiting for them to finish before locking up for the night. After their pick-up game one evening one of the students asked him “What are you reading?”

“The book of Revelation.”

“Don’t you find it hard to understand? Even we theologians find Revelation hard to understand.”

The janitor smiled. “Oh no. I know what it means. It means that Jesus is going to win!”

Friends, you and I know the end of the story. And the end of the story is—Jesus wins!

The only question is, are you on Jesus’ side? Will you commit to staying on His side through the last acts of the story? That’s the only way you and I will make it.

After describing the faith heroes in Hebrews 11, some who did great exploits for God and some who endured unspeakable torment for His name, we read,

Therefore, since we are encompassed with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. ² Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

Like Jesus had to do, keep your eyes on the end of the story, where Jesus wins. And you will win too.

The End of Your Story

My husband’s death was not the end of the story. The end of the story is that death will die, and Al Tanksley, along with me and all the rest of us who trust in Jesus, will live forever!

Your cancer or other illness is not the end of the story. The end of the story is that through Jesus’ stripes you are healed, body, mind, and soul—sometimes now, sometimes later, sometimes in eternity, where the leaves of the tree of life

will bring healing to the nations (Rev. 22:2).

Your tears at the breakup of your marriage or the estrangement from your children are not the end of the story. The end of the story is that God will wipe all tears from your eyes, and you will cry no more, ever. (Rev. 21:4)

Keep your focus on Jesus and on the end of the story, and you too can despise the shame of whatever you're going through. Sure, you will feel it. But the joy yet to come will be so great that everything now will pale in comparison.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Your Turn: What is it in your life that seems like the end? How does knowing “the end of the story” change your perspective? Leave a comment below. {eo}

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