

Road Trip (8)

Paul's Journeys in the Book of Acts

The Final Leg – Finishing the Race Faithfully

Acts 20:17–24; 2 Timothy 4:6–8

Introduction: If you've ever been on a long road trip (and I know many of you have), you know the final leg can be the toughest. Finishing well matters in life and faith. Paul is on the "final leg" of his journeys— he gives his farewell to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17–24); reflecting on finishing the race (2 Tim. 4:6–8). We have all heard, "*It's not how you start—it's how you finish.*" And this is a true statement. Olympic coaches remind their athletes that nobody wins a medal for starting the race strong; the prize is for those who cross the finish line. Today, we see three things that marked Paul's life and led him to finish well, (and they will lead us to do the same.

I. Run with faithfulness:

- A. Paul's example of humility, perseverance, and sound teaching (Acts 20:18–20)
 1. Faithfulness in public and private
 2. Bible examples: John Mark (started poorly, finished well—Acts 13:13; 15:37–40; 2 Tim. 4:11)
 3. Demas (started strong, finished poorly—Philemon 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:10)
- B. Faithfulness means daily discipline and dependence on God (1 Cor. 4:2)

John Maxwell wisely said, "*The bookends of success are starting and finishing. Decisions help us start; discipline helps us finish.*"

- C. Reflect: Am I faithfully running my race for Christ?

II. Run with courageous endurance:

- A. Paul presses on despite warning of hardship (Acts 20:22–24; Acts 21:13)
 1. "None of these things move me..." (Acts 20:24)
 2. Willing to give up his life for Christ's call

Pastor John Piper sums up Paul's attitude with a powerful phrase: "*Better to lose your life than to waste it.*"

- B. Endurance is vital: "run with endurance" (Heb. 12:1)
- C. Paul fought the good fight and finished the race (2 Tim. 4:7)

Pastor Adrian Rogers challenged believers: "*Endurance is a chief factor in running a race. However far ahead you may be, if you quit running, you will lose... Do not quit running until the course is finished.*"

- D. All believers face trials (Acts 14:22; Psalm 63:3)
- E. Ask: Where do I need endurance today?

III. Run with a gospel-centered focus:

- A. Paul's race was to testify to the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24)
- B. Kept the faith, guarded the true gospel (2 Tim. 4:7)
- C. Stay focused—lay aside weights and distractions (Heb. 12:1–2)
- D. Gospel mission for all believers (Matt. 28:18–20)

"There is no such thing in the Bible as a Christian without a ministry... To finish the course, you must recognize that God has entrusted a ministry to you."

- E. Hope of reward (2 Tim. 4:8)—keep eyes on the finish line

Conclusion: Paul finished his race with confidence and hope (2 Tim. 4:6–8) "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*"

- Encourage: Renew your commitment; by God's grace, finish strong for Christ!

Christian, Jesus Christ did not redeem you and empower you by His Spirit just to start the Christian life; He called you and equipped you to finish the race. He is the "author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). By His grace you can finish strong.

- Challenge: Pray Acts 20:24 as your personal commitment.