

Acts 20:18-38 A look at Ministry Past, Present and Future – Part 2

In the Classic movie Chariots of Fire – Eric Liddel is having a conversation with his sister

A) She didn't understand his love of running and his interest in competing in the Olympic games - Calling – Missionary

B) Liddel – Answered his sister in this way: *All I know is that God has made me fast & I feel his pleasure when I run!!!*

C) I can honestly say that I have never shared that sentiment – I am one of those guys who has always hated running. –

1) Never enjoyed it – at all.

I did get into it once! For a day – The year was 1976 – I was about 13/14 yrs old – Just seen the first Rocky Movie!

A) Next morning gray sweats / Beanie {Remember that look - 4am run – pitch dark – Pack of dogs / Running ended that morning

One morning – driving to work down OCSD BLVD – saw 3 different runners

A) First guy – **gray T-shirt – grey gym shorts** – regular tennis shoes - trudging along in agony – looked like it / pain on face /

B) This guy was hating every minute of it **why did I eat that extra piece of cake last night / should have said no to that 8th piece of Pizza**

C) **2nd was this lady** – sweat pants sweat shirt – also regular tennis shoes – she was doing one of those **walk run kind of things** – where – she was moving head like this / Arms were moving like running – legs were bent – but the speed was – mild walk

D) I Thought – God bless her – at least she is out here / HONK

3rd Guy: WELL He was a runner: JUST TELL – nylon shorts / tank top / expensive light weight running shoes – Bounce in his step –

A) His whole appearance, the pace/ the bounce Portrayed the attitude *I LIVE TO RUN – I enjoy running – I am out here – because I want to be*

B) Now Spiritually speaking – every believer has been given a race to run by God – **Question is how is the race going?**

1) Trudging along in agony? – Trying hard but barely moving? – Or are you running with a sense of enjoyment.

C) Here in our text this morning – that is how Paul describes his race – **Finish the race with Joy! {The desire of JESUS for us all!**

1) Like Eric Liddell – God has made me..... I feel his pleasure

D) Now some of you here today are NOT IN THE RACE of faith / haven't started – Haven't received Christ as your Savior & Lord

1) Today is your day to begin

The Apostle Paul is on his way to Jerusalem and he is in a hurry to get there.

A) His goal is to make it there for the feast of Pentecost – for that reason he passes by the City of Ephesus on his Journey.

B) He just didn't have the time to be w/ the believers in this Church that he had Pastored for 3 yrs.

C) But being so close he could not pass up the opportunity to meet with

the Elders of that Church.

1) So Paul stopped at Miletus and called for them to come to him.

D) It was about a 20 mile journey – but they came eagerly to meet with their beloved Pastor.

1) His meeting with them is laid out for us here in Acts 20:18-38! It was sort of a mini – **Leadership Conference**.

His sermon can be broken up into three sections

In verses 18-21 Paul reviewed the **PAST**

In this section, Paul reminds these leaders about his **faithfulness to the Lord and to the church** as he ministered **for three years** in Ephesus.

In verses 22-27 Paul discussed the **PRESENT**

In that second section Paul tells these leaders his **present approach** *in light of the past and future*.

In verses 28-35 Paul spoke about the **FUTURE**

Paul warns these leaders of the dangers that they and the church would face.

Last week we looked at what Paul had to say about the Past.

Today – Focus on the Present – Wrap up next week – The Future.

V.22 introduces us to 2nd part of Paul message where he gives a testimony to the present !

A) The phrase “*And see*” shifts the emphasis from the past to the present as Paul opens his heart and tells his friends just how he feels.

Acts 20:22-27

22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

B) We have noted that key phrase in this whole sermon is found in v.24 – But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus,

Paul's view of his life and ministry was that of a Runner!

A) Paul was running to finish his race with Joy – which means that he was running with Joy!

B) He was enjoying the run and in this section of his sermon – Paul gives us three insights that are involved in running the race with Joy.

#1 Running with Joy involves being led by the Spirit. V.22 “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem,”

A) the point is that Paul is a man under strong conviction and constraint: his spirit is being compelled by the Spirit of God to do the will of God.

B) Happens as we surrender to Jesus: Paul on the road to Damascus –

who are you Lord and what do you want me to do:

1) Passion and his Pursuit – Passion – who are you – Know Jesus

C) Pursuit – Being led by the Spirit!

D) There is great Joy in living a surrendered life – great Joy in knowing that the Holy Spirit is directing You!

Good question to ask ourselves is what is driving you?

A) What is the driving force in your life.

B) Some Cause – ambition for success –

C) Some Goal -

D) Or is it a desire to be surrendered to God – His Spirit directing your life.

1) Paul was running with Joy – because He knew the Spirit of God was directing his life.

#2 Running with Joy involves being content not to know in detail what tomorrow will bring.

22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, *not knowing the things that will happen to me there*, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me

A) Paul didn't know how tomorrow was going to play out except for the fact that it was going to involve hardship.

B) Think about how many people in this nation and in our own community had their world fall apart – the day the stock market crashed.

C) The bottom dropped out on their future - - Their plans were radically

altered.

1) So much so that people slipped into severe depression – some committed suicide –

I find it very interesting that what our church has gone thru this past year parallels what many in our community have experienced.

A) We had a plan – a direction – sought the Lord – his leading – the bottom dropped out – I don't like that – that happened.

B) But I will say this – it has given us a Unique perspective and compassion toward – so many who are personally battling the same thing.

C) What has happened is a perfect illustration of the fact – that know one really knows what tomorrow is going to bring.

**1) Infact the Bible declares that “Tomorrow is promised to no man.”
James 4:13-16**

D) You could die – tomorrow – you could go to bed and not wake up.

1) Natasha Richardson – Skiing

18-year-old Ian Patrick Phillips of Carlsbad – Running – Carlsbad BLVD – Tamarak -

E) My Point is we don't know what tomorrow is going to Bring.

1) Running with Joy – means being content with that! –

Instead of worrying about tomorrow or fretting over things that I can't control. –

**A) It means – making the most of the moment and doing what we can do.
– Continuing to seek to fulfill our calling.**

B) For us as a Church – not building right now – Focus is on Jesus – 1)

Pointing people to Jesus – Sharing Jesus – here – community – Camp Pendleton.

C)Outreaches this year – Ebo Elder – Camp Pendleton – Victor Marx – Mike Rozell –

1)Seen many come to Christ.

D)I don't know what tomorrow holds – but I know that God is on the throne – I am good with That – Running for Him

1)That is why Paul could say: Don't count my life dear to myself – It is in God's hands

#3 Running with Joy involves staying the course. V.24-27

A)Paul had been commissioned by Jesus to testify of the gospel of Grace.

B)The message of the Gospel is a message of the Grace of God!

1)Man was lost in Sin – Rebellious – separated – Enemies – all terms the Bible uses to describe man in his lost condition.

C)God in His Grace – Grace = getting what you don't deserve – God in his grace –stepped in – For God so loved the World

1)Hates sin – loves the sinner – His love for the world – lost humanity – He sent his son – to die for sinners – pay the price for sin – take the wrath.

D)Paul was commissioned to preach that message – The gospel of Grace and to call men to respond – to turn from sin and to turn to the living God.

Now here is what is really interesting about Paul and his message –

A) Paul saw people respond – he saw people repent – but he saw far more reject – Almost every city – riot – run out of town.

B) Paul stayed the course – he didn't waver from the message – he didn't try to water it down or twist it or – make it more palatable.

C) This is what he means in v.27 – **didn't shun to declare to them the whole counsel of God.**

1) Paul was true to that message!

D) Doesn't mean – He preached the whole OT – but that he was in his **3 yrs in Ephesus – true to the message – Overall – picture of Salvation**

Hebrews 12 we are exhorted to Run this race with Endurance – keeping our eyes on Jesus – the Author and finisher of our faith.

A) Run with endurance – this race is not a sprint it is a marathon race.

B) Not quick starts and stops – but a consistent day to day – put on the shoes and go for it – **Looking to Jesus**

1) Author – He ran first

C) Finisher – He has already finished the race!

D) He knows the difficulties – he ran before us –

1) We fall – he is there to pick us up –

I love the story of Derek Redmond

In the 1992 Barcelona Olympics Derek Redmond of Britain was favored win 400 meter race!

A.) But Halfway through semifinal heat, fiery pain seared through right leg - crumpled to track with torn hamstring

B.) As medical attendants approaching - Redmond fought to his feet Pushing away coaches - medical people - determined to finish race!

C.) When he reached the home stretch, a big man wearing a t-shirt read *"Have you hugged your child today?"* and a hat that challenged *Just do it!* Fought through crowd and security on to track the man was Derek's father

D.) *"You don't have to do this?"* - he told his weeping son! *"Yes, I do"* Derek declared *I have to finish the race/* Dad said - **We are going to finish together**

E) And w/ his arm around his son the two finished the race together in what was one of the most touching moments in Olympic History !

In one sense that is like what the heavenly Father did for us - saw us crumpled on the track

A.) **Unsuccessful - in trying to keep law - to do right - fallen short/ down**

B) Not a prayer in the world of finishing the race - let alone winning!

C) He, in His love; compassion sent His son - to win it for us - to pick us up & to carry us at times toward the finish line !

1) And as we continue to run the race of life - given H.S. come along side!

Two years after the olympics in Barcelona, he was told by a surgeon that he would never run again or represent his country in sport.

Derek Kept running – turned his attention – other sports

After trials at several basketball clubs, he secured a place on the GB basketball team. He

sent a signed photo of the team to the surgeon that had assured him he would never represent his country in sport again.

After playing basketball professionally, he turned his attention to rugby, another of his favourite sports and managed to reach division 1 with the intention of representing Great Britain professionally in three different disciplines of sport.

Finish turning to 1 Corinthians 9:24

A) Reward – Well Done – Crown of Life