

Acts 20:22–25

How to Finish Our Race with Joy

**Saturday, May 6, 2023 • Read Acts 20:22–25**

*Questions from the Scripture text: Where does Paul now go (v22)? How bound? What doesn't he know? Who testifies where (v23)? What does He say awaits Paul? What don't any of these things do (v24)? What doesn't the apostle count dear? What does he wish to finish? How? What has He called a race? From Whom did he receive this ministry? To do what? Of what does he testify? And what does he know about them (v25)? What has he done among them?*

**How does God enable ministers to do minister the Word faithfully?** Acts 20:22–25 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **God enables ministers to minister the Word faithfully by compelling them by His Spirit to serve the Lord with our life, because our race for the gospel of grace ends soon.**

The apostle had opened by reminding the Ephesian elders of his ministry among them as a model. He will return to this in v26, but first he sets them an example of the minister's proper commitment to the ministry.

The minister (like all Christians) is bound by the Spirit v22. Paul is going to end up in physical chains, but that doesn't faze him at all, because as far as he is concerned, he's already in chains. He is bound by the Spirit. He doesn't have any say in whether or not to go to Jerusalem. Similarly, the believer is a bondsman of Christ. Obedience to God's commands is not optional. Fulfilling our calling in our role in the church or in the family is not optional.

The Lord doesn't tell us everything that we'd like to know. The apostle did not know what would happen in Jerusalem (v24b), and we do not know what will be the outcome of our service or obedience. But He does tell us what we must do. The Scriptures are sufficient for all of faith and practice.

The minister (and all Christians) must be prepared to suffer v23–24a At that time, each congregation had those with revelatory gifts, just for the ordering and content of public worship (v23a, cf. 1Cor 14:26–40). At every stop, those who spoke by the Spirit announced to Paul that chains and afflictions awaited him (v24b).

But this didn't move him (v24a). Why? Because he had received his ministry from Jesus. Jesus would preserve him for that ministry until his job is done. And, if he dies, his job is done. There is a race to finish, and rather than stress over the suffering, he is going to willingly and gladly do the work the Lord Jesus has given him to do.

The minister (and all Christians) must be prepared to die v25. What Paul tells these Ephesian elders would one day be true of each of them with their congregation. It may be true of any of us every time we see our congregation or our family. We should always minister or interact as we will wish we had if we should never see one another's faces again in this world.

What are your duties in the church? What are your duties in the home? What suffering have you endured for them? What suffering might you have to endure? Why would it be worth it? In what manner should you be serving until the Lord takes you from this world? What might you do differently if You knew that You were about to stand before Christ and answer for how you are interacting with your family and your congregation of His church?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for taking us to be Your bondslaves. We look forward with joy to being with You forever in glory. And we ask that by Your Spirit, we would be able to serve You with joy until we have finished our race in this world. Grant unto us always to live as we will wish we had done that moment when we come to answer for it in glory, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP23B "The Lord's My Shepherd" or TPH231 "Whate'er My God Ordains Is Right"**

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Acts 20 verses 22 through 25. These are God's words. And see. Now i go bound in the spirit to jerusalem. Not knowing the things that will happen to me there. Except that the holy spirit testifies in every city. Saying that chains and tribulations await me. 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. Indeed, now i know that you will Among whom i have gone preaching, the kingdom of god. We'll see my face.

No more.

So far the reading of god's inspired and And errant worked.

So, the apostle has been Talking to the efficient elders about His ministry to them, and among them that they have experienced. As he ministered to them. As an example to them of what their ministry in the congregational to be like As an and also, as an example, since they are an example for the congregation and they have seen him Minister.

Not only when they were elders but also to them. When they were part of the congregation, As an example of what the christian life is, like, The first thing that he Now, goes on to say as he is. Um, coming to the end of his ministry and Faces or at least just thinking about.

The end even of his life on earth. Is that he is already bound. He says now, see now i go bound in the spirit. To jerusalem. Whenever we think of our life as our own, Rather than as those being bought with a price. Whenever? Uh, we think of wanting to have our life.

Be something that in which we accomplish all of our goals, rather than in which we follow the lord's direction and trust to him that he has of purpose for our life and That he has already planned. What he will bring from it. Um, We both. Live foolishly. Because, Uh, we live according to For our own glory and according to our own wisdom instead of gods and Also, very frustratedly.

Because, The things that we want to do and to get done and to be the effect that we want to have, Uh, we are unable to make those things. Make those things happen. And, So, we are always afraid that we will be. Uh, hindered From getting done or Obtaining or succeeding in Whatever it is that We plan to do or whatever it is that we plan to obtain.

Uh, for ourselves. So, we may always in this case, the apostle, Has the prospect of Um, but being bound and chained, the holy spirit has told him that it's coming in verse 23, but why doesn't it bother him? Well, because Is already a prisoner of sorts. He's already a slave.

He's already in chains. They are the blessed chains of god, the holy spirit. Jesus who bought him with his blood. Uh took, uh, took paul to be his very own. Has given him his holy spirit, and the holy spirit has never Uh, never tells us to indulge our flesh or Uh, he is always.

Setting before us, the praise of the lord jesus. The service of the lord jesus. The goodness of the lord jesus to us and everything that he gives us, praise God. But those things then don't become. Uh, our purpose or even despite their pleasantness often. They do not become our chief pleasure.

And so, the holy spirit reminds him. That he is bound to christ. That is a bond slave of christ. That is a prisoner. Of christ. And all of these things are very happy and should mere men at some point, slap, some chains upon him. Um, that will not take away.

The blessed and superior the ultimate chains. Of the holy spirit. And so one thing that as believers we have to do is we Mortify, the flesh, as we look to god, to grow us and grace. Is to put to death to get rid of this idea. The that we can be our own people that i can be my own person to serve my own purpose for my own praise.

Uh, to find my own pleasure. Um, No, we must already be bound. In, and by the holy spirit, And so, he says, see now i go bound in the spirit. To jerusalem. Uh, we also must be prepared. Uh, to face the unknown. Unknown to us, of course, but not unknown to god.

Here paul is he has the holy spirit. He often preaches and writes under the inspiration of the holy spirit. He even Tells us and Uh, Verse 23, that those who have revelatory gifts of the spirit in every city or telling him about things that are going to happen to him, that chains and tribulations.

Await. Await him. And we don't have refillatory gifts. Uh, today it's unlikely that This sort of thing would have been done for the ephesian elders. But even with all that he did know and receive from god, the holy spirit. Uh, he still did not know all the details that he might have wished to know.

And so he says in the second half of verse 22, not knowing that things that will happen to me there.

Excuse me. A christian. Trusting in the lord jesus and belonging to the lord jesus. Well, ought not have anxiety. Over his not knowing. The things that will happen to him over her, not knowing The things that will happen to her. When we? Um, when we have repented toward god and trusted in the lord, jesus christ us Uh, the that's the apostle has just finished.

Summarizing was his preaching in verse 21, repentance toward god and faith toward Our lord. Jesus christ. Then we are okay, not knowing. The details. Of what comes between now and glory. We know that christ has come. We know that he is that and raised again. We know he has given us his spirit to bring us to faith and repentance.

We know that it ends. In glory with him. We know that there are things that he has planned for our life in which To serve him and bring him, praise between now. And when we die, So we do not know, we do not need to know that details of what will happen to us.

During those plans. A believer ought to be someone who Not only. Um, Considers himself. Owned by. Uh, the lord, the prisoner. Of the lord bound, by the spirit. But also someone Who is not worried about the details. Of water is going to happen to him. Between now and his death.

Very specifically, a christian needs to be. Prepared to suffer. So he says, you're not no. The things that will happen to me there. Except verse 23, there is one. Uh, one thing that he knows is going to happen in jerusalem, and that is that chains and suffering chains and tribulations away in This doesn't discourage him, he is still.

He has his face set towards jerusalem. We've seen that he is going as fast as he can. This was very obvious to the Ephesian elders who aren't in Ephesus. They're at my latest. Why are they at my latest? Because paul is in a hurry to get to jerusalem and Didn't take the time to go all the way in.

To emphasis. So they've come out and met him there. But he's going. Uh, he's doing what the lord has called him to do. Even though. Uh, although he doesn't know other details, he is certain That chains and suffering await him in jerusalem. And me too have been given things to do by God.

Honoring your parents. Uh, Bringing your children up in the discipline and instruction of the ward. Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. Eating and drinking and working. All to the glory of god, all in the name of jesus christ. Uh, working hard as Uh, someone who does it unto.

The. Unto God rather than In order to please, man. Bearing with one, another forgiving one, another. Being patient. Uh, with one another. Filling our hands with good works as much as we can. Seeking. Not to be wealthy in this world, but counting ourselves already wealthy in christ and desiring to To build up that treasure, which is in heaven.

The praise that rebounds unto the lord jesus by the good that we do. Loving our neighbors. Particular in the particular providence in which the lord has set particular. People around us and in the providence of the season. Um, in their life and our life in which we go through it together.

Whatever. Part we have in the body and the local congregation. We all have things that if we're paying attention to The bible we have been assigned by god so even though the holy spirit has not come and said you should really go to that city. The way he did.

Uh, for The apostle paul, i'm going to jerusalem. We have things that the Lord has given us to do. And we're also told. That generally what we can expect to suffering. For many tribulations. We must enter the kingdom of god. The apostle preached to all the churches, all the cities.

At the end of his first missionary journey, jesus told his disciples. And this world, you will have trouble. And his final letter to Timothy, at least the final one that we have. That was inspired. As holy scripture. The the apostle told Timothy everyone who desires to live godly in christ, jesus will suffer persecution.

Peter. Yeah. By the holy spirit says, don't be surprised at the fiery trial but i'm upon you. The whole bible is full of examples of how in this life in this world. Belonging to christ and especially being faithful. To christ. Even in times when the church isn't persecuted, the church persecutes the faithful from within And so,

the minister and all christians, The faithful elder.

Of the church and emphasis the apostle. Before then the congregations to him, the administer. We must all be prepared. To suffer to have this in common with christ to have this in common with the prophets. And the apostles. To have this in common with the faithful elders to have this in common with all.

Faithful believers. This is something that we have a hard time getting through our heads because we have not suffered so much Uh, you guys Maybe not. As aware of, it have suffered a little bit more than others just for Being my children being part of Uh, part of my family, not that i have been marvelously faithful but By God's grace, it has been enough to suffer at times.

For the, for the sake of christ, and that faithfulness. But our suffering is so small. We've hardly suffered it all. When sometimes, when things are going like they're going in our nation now, Um, Uh, sometimes i hear. Uh believers talk about how suffering may be just on the horizon and it's going to be this really strange thing.

And this experience that we really have to gear up for Um, The only problem with that is suffering is the majority report of all the scripture and almost all of christian history everywhere and even now, for most faithful christians in the world. We are the unicorns. We are the ones.

Who Who are really out of place. And the ordinary means of grace the lord's day by lord's day, gathering of the church. And the spirit blessing, the ordinary means and the in the public assembly especially The lord blessing to us the word and prayer. Day by day in the home.

The lord giving us to see ourselves as the slaves of christ. To whom. The blessedness that jesus has earned absolutely belong. These are the things by which christians are given in the bible to live. And these are the things by which we are prepared to suffer. Think the most difficult thing about the suffering that faces.

Uh, faces us. Uh, we have made such a goal in life out of Being comfortable and enjoying ourselves. That this this wrong-headed view. Of, of what the Good life is Has made us rather ill prepared to suffer. But that's not the good life. The good life is to be bound by the spirit, the good life is to be united by christ.

The good life is to see. Our responsibilities in the church, and in the home. And in the society as a signed to us by the lord jesus for his praise, As the god and savior. The god of all the savior of his people. That's the good life. And if that's the good life, then we are prepared.

To suffer if suffering. Uh, comes with it when suffering. Comes with it. And finally, we should be prepared to die. He said, none of these things move me nor do i count my life, dear. To myself. So, he's not moved by. The loss of comfort because comfort was never his goal.

Nor do i count my life, dear to myself, because staying alive, as long as possible was not his goal. What has been his goal? To run with joy. In the service that the lord had appointed to him. So that i may finish my race with joy. And the ministry, which i received from the lord jesus, that's where the joy comes from.

The joy comes in him who has appointed to him his life and his service. And in his providence, that life and service comes with trials and tribulations and whatever else comes with it. But it comes from It comes from the hand. Of the lord jesus christ. Comes from the hands of the savior.

This precious lord, jesus. And so, he's running a race that has been assigned to him. This, of course. Um, Uh, mix as well or corresponds? Well to The athlete and that triple illustration that we had in second, Timothy 2, the soldier, and the athlete, and the farmer. For the second serial reading for this week.

He has given it been given a race by the lord jesus to run. And as long as lord, jesus run gives to him to run. He wants to run with joy. And if you worry about what you might suffer, you won't run with joy. And if you're trying to make your race be as long as it can be, You won't run with joy.

But if you run as someone who has been given, Uh, your particular race by the lord jesus. And know that he supplies the grace by which You do the running. And that everything that he has given you to do and dependence upon his grace. The goal. Is to bring him, praise Then you can finish your race with joy.

And so the ministry he has received us from the lord jesus. And the ministry that he has received as for the lord jesus, the end of the verse there. To testify. To the gospel of the grace of god. And so he knows verse 25. That the portion in which he preached the kingdom among the ephesians is over.

And that's up to the lord jesus. And he'll give and he'll trust him with that. And it might be that he's coming. To the point where the portion that he's been given by the lord jesus, not just to preach to the ephesians but to preach anywhere. Will come to an end.

But he's living as someone who's prepared to die. And we need to be those who live. As those prepared to die, who run? Well, the portion of the race. That we are in right now. That we would live today as we will wish we had. When we come to the end and we look back, Over the whole course of all the things that the lord jesus gave us to do.

As his people. Gonna say i served. The lord, who assigned me those things on that day? I served him with joy. For his praise. He's the one who gave it to me to do and i did it for his His glory. That's all that. We would always not only be ready to suffer but then, That we would always be ready.

To die. Because we are his Let's pray. We thank you lord jesus for Giving us this portion of your word for today. To go along with. Our duties. Of today. And we pray that you would help us then by your spirit. To. Not make our goal to be. Comfortable or entertained.

Or to have. Earthly pleasure. But to make it our goal to enjoy. Belonging to you and doing what you have given us to do. Unto your praise. We pray that you would help us to do this more and more. And every day. Until we finish. That race which you have plotted out for us.

In this life. Give us to do it with joy. We pray under your glory. For, we ask it in your name. Amen.