

• • TRANSCRIPT

• August 23rd 2026 "Staying The Course"

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Again, I wanted to just ask you to Pray for our website. We've been struggling to go online with the Proclaim that we use. But hopefully today we'll be able to get the message across. I want to thank those who are watching by internet. Again, if you have your Bibles, please turn to Acts chapter 20. (音樂停止) Acts chapter 20. We're going to be starting in verse 17. Acts chapter 20. If you found your place and if you were able to stand, please stand with me. Acts chapter 20, verse 17. The Bible says, and from Miletus he sent to Ephesus.

And called the elders of the church. And when they would come to him, he said unto them, "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind. and with many tears and temptations that were temptationist trials which befell me as trials which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house testifying both to the Jews and to also the Greeks repentance towards God.

and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is the gospel. And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing what things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me. neither count I my my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy in the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Let's pray. Father, we thank you. For this passage of scripture. We thank you for the heart of the apostle Paul as he's now saying his goodbye, His final.

his final talk to these pastors, these leaders of the churches in Asia. He will go to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem be arrested and brought to Rome. And we know he was beheaded for the testimony of our Lord Jesus. And father as we look at his heart focus, and we look at his steadfastness to finish his race, Lord. May it help us to realize that we're running a race also. And Father, I pray, Lord, that your spirit would move mightily in this room, mightily through the internet to those who are watching. Father, challenge us. Challenge us, Lord. Help us not to quit, but help us to finish strong. In Jesus' name. Amen. You can be seated at this time. And as we look at the Apostle Paul, we find he was wanting to get to Jerusalem. He had an offering from all the Gentile churches to bring to those who were suffering in Jerusalem. He wanted to get there before Pentecost. But he knew once he would get there, he knew that he might not see these. What the Bible calls here elders, but they were not just elders, that's another name for pastor, for bishop. These are the same names that the word of God in the New Testament calls the past the one who's been called New Testament, God calls the pastor.

One who's been called to teach and to preach and to observe and oversee. And these elders were those who the Apostle Paul personally began to teach and to get them in a place where they could also become leaders in the church. And as he's ready to speak to them, I want to ask you today, what compels you to continue following the Lord? We see. So many people turning away. We see the church dwindling down. And why do you do what you do? Is it love or is it duty? It's a little bit hard to see, but it's a little bit of a mess. If anything other than love and gratitude motivates you, it's all in vain. I believe my sermon last week was on the sweet submission, amen? Today.

It's in the same, the Lord has me in that same vein. Stay in the course. And I want to talk about the Apostle Paul's statement that he gives where he says, "Nothing moved me from finishing his course. " And Paul has spent three years in Ephesus teaching and building up the church. And these men who he was for the last time would see, and he has spent the winter in Corinth, and now on his journey to towards Jerusalem, he summons these men that he had taught, these elders, these bishops, these pastors, shepherds of the church. To meet him as he gives his final words in declaring that they will never see his face again. So you can imagine when he's ready to speak and what he's ready to say. And also at the end of this. He begins to warn them. Look with me in Acts chapter 20. Look what it says in verse 28. He begins to warn them. They will never see him and what's going to happen. And he says in Acts chapter 20 verse 28. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock The Holy Ghost had made you overseers to feed the Church of God which he had purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. " He knew. He built these men up. He taught them. He gave his life to building them up, to build up the church. For three years they looked at him. They watched him. And now they'll never see him again. And he gives them this warning. Satan's gonna come and begin to work on the church. Today, we see that this place in Asia Minor. we don't see the churches anymore. We see what? Islam has taken over. All these churches and those churches and Revelation, I no longer Viable churches anymore. Hey, praise God, this church is still preaching the gospel and teaching. 1737, before this nation, this church came together for one mission, to reach the lost with the gospel. We are now 2026 from 1737. Apostle Paul.

as we look at these scriptures, five things that compelled the Apostle Paul because of his love of Christ. That was his motivation, his love of Christ. And we see, first of all, he was compelled to obey the Holy Spirit fervently. Look at Acts chapter 20, verse 22. He says, "and now behold, I go, bound in the spirit unto you bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem. Not knowing the things that shall befall me there. " That word "bound" is a strong sense of responsibility. He couldn't get away from it. Today we find that we have all responsibility. We just heard Brother Jim from the Guineas speak of the responsibility that all of us Not just the pastor, but all of us to what? To share our faith, to evangelize the lost in any means necessary. And here the apostle Paul. he uses the word, "I go bound in the Spirit.

" This is a strong sense of responsibility that he had. After all that Paul had been through, his walk with Jesus, he came to this understanding that nothing This is going to deter him from finishing his course. Turn with me to 2 Timothy for a minute. Keep your hand in Acts chapter 20. But look what it says in 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy chapter 3. Verse 12. "And all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. " Mark that in your Bible. You know, we have a lot of people that think that Christianity, especially in America, is this entertainment. You come to church and you're entertained. That's not Christianity. If you were living your Christian walk out in the world, you will find persecution the enemy Persecution. the enemies of the gospel. The apostle Paul had no choice but to obey. Since he was forgiven much, he obeyed much. Remember that he was a persecutor of the church. Remember that he had a, A, I don't know how to call it. But on the road of Damascus, Jesus came to him personally. He had an encounter, and it changed his life. Christ showed him grace and mercy.

And his faith, his repentance, and faith towards Jesus. He was saved. And then Christ called him to what? To be the missionary, the apostle to the Church. And the Spirit, I'm going to tell you right now, mark this down. The Spirit does not always lead us away from suffering. Often He leads us through it. Through it. And you will find suffering in all types of ways. And here's the apostle Paul, But all that he suffered, he remained true. Amen. 1 Corinthians 15, verses 9-10 says this, this is the apostle Paul, he says, "for I am the least of the apostles.

That I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God, I am what I am. " And His grace which He bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored not more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." What is he saying? He said because he was forgiven, God showed him mercy. That desire to serve him was greater. And this is true for all of us who realize how much we have been forgiven. Amen. That was what I said last week in that sweet surrender. This is the understanding that all of us need to have when we serve Him. We need to recognize His love for us sent Him to the cross to die for you and I. And there was nothing we could have ever do. God's judgment and condemnation is on all sinners which we are but praise god for the blood of Jesus, amen, for the shed blood of Jesus. And here the apostle Paul, he recognized this. He went bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem. He went to the Jews who at one point he was what, persecuting.

It's a little bit hard to see, but it's a little bit of a mess. 3.3 "and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily unto the LORD, and not unto men." See, when you get this focus that you are serving the Lord so you could be seen of men, you're in the wrong place. God wants to have His heart, His spirit in you that guides you. And it only starts when you Humble yourself and recognize that you are nothing and He is everything. And Paul had been called to be an apostle and he knew that he needed to obey. What other choice did he have but to obey, knowing that Christ had shown him mercy? Remember when all the disciples stood and Jesus turned to them? I leave in the word of God, this "I swear to God, this apathy that's coming to the church, there's a focus on self and not on Christ anymore. People wake up on a Sunday and they say, "Ah, let me sleep in a little longer.

" People dying, and we just found out This whole young generation has never, never been raised with a goal has never been raised with the Bible. Can you imagine that? Here in America, people don't know Jesus. Doesn't that break your heart? Doesn't that tear at the strings, your spiritual strings? Where has the church gone? Are we so close to the world that we forgot our calling. Also. when we look, turn back to Acts chapter 20, verse 22, the apostle Paul was compelled to walk by faith, trusting in God. Look again in Acts chapter 20 verse 22, he says, "and now behold, I I "Not knowing the things that shall befall me there." You know, Paul had no idea what would happen to him as he traveled to Jerusalem, but yet he trusted God, knowing that trials and persecution was going to come to him. He was ready.

He didn't know. How do you do? Oh! How true it is for us today. We have no idea what will happen to you and I as we step out in faith. As we sign that check of our lives and give it back to Jesus and say, "Here Jesus, here's my life." Do what you will. Send me where you want to. And if we truly love God and we trust Him, we should be compelled to trust Him no matter what. The problem is, is people want to be comfortable. They want to go out and they want to step out and see how deep, how cold. The water is. . If you look at this He didn't let circumstances rule his life. He was obedient to the Holy Spirit. He walked by faith, not by sight. No matter what was going to happen to him, he knew he was in the hand of God. And you know, when you look at it, there was no credibility gap between the two. He proclaimed and the way he lived. What am I saying? I'm saying that when he was with the disciples and the leaders in Ephesus, he lived his faith, whether it was out in the public or whether it was private with all his own friends.

He was the same out there as he is in here. There was no change. As He is in here. There was no change. Look what He says in Acts chapter 20 verse 18 and 19. You see it here when He says, and when they were come to Him, He said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility Of mine, and with many tears and temptations, was befall me by the lying and wait of the Jews. " What was he saying? he was doing what God had called him to do, there were those who would come behind him, persecute him, even those around him who would lie about him. Isn't that what happens today?

Yes. But that didn't deter him. You know, it was not being a leader. I mean, being a leader is not easy. As Brother Jim will tell you, how many churches are closing because the leaders are falling, leaving the ministry. Today, will you stay the course? Will you allow circumstances to get to you and to change you and to make you give up on what God has called you to do? The problem today is people are afraid of what their peers think of them. Peer pressure. Not stepping out in faith. Not being courageous to speak the truth.

To live truth. But to cower because other people, if you get out there, oh, you're not going to be well liked. That didn't stop the Apostle Paul. I pray God it doesn't stop you and I. And listen, it can happen. You can get so disgusted. That you feel like you're not only fighting those outside, but you're fighting those around you. You can get so discouraged. But I'm here to tell you keep your eyes on him and the

prize and finish your course no matter what. Though none go with me, yet will I follow. Amen. It will get hard. But Jesus is there right with you. In Proverbs chapter 29, verse 25, the Bible says, The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Ain't that true? You know, when you look at the Apostle Paul's life, he was real. Amen. You know, the greatest thing somebody could say to you and I is, You're real. You know, I worked in the prison system. You all know my testimony. And one of the things the inmates, they know who's real, they know who walks around in fear or who doesn't.

They know when those who come into the church to minister to them, to teach them or whatever, they know how to control them because they know if there's fear on what man may do or say. And I'm here to tell you the Apostle Paul was one who lived and the way he lived in his public life. Life is the same way lived in his private life. And you could tell. And listen, there were times he had to defend himself because of the lies that were said about him, because of the false teachers that would come and undermine his teaching. But yet, they knew him. That's what he says. You know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after that, what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Don't listen to what they say, watch what I do. Today, can we say that in the church?

Some people come to church, and this is all the spiritual life that they have as they come in and they have their duty. They come in and they hear a message, and then they go back out living just like the world. And we wonder what's going on with the church. And then when trials come, people lose their faith. They walk away. Why? Because there's no root, there's no strength in their faith. The Apostle Paul, he was in tears. He always wept because he knew that one day the church would be weak. One day, St. Can overtake the church with false teaching and persecution. We called the Apostle Paul the real deal. He was. Turn with me to Philippians chapter four. Again, here we just read this earlier today. Philippians chapter 4. Look what it says in verse 11. And here's the Apostle Paul speaking. He says, Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to abase and I know how to abound. What is he saying? He knows how to live. He's going to live whether he's struggling or whether he's being blessed.

And then look what he says. And where it, I know, verse 12, I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. Why? He says, I can do all things through Christ's. Which strengtheneth me which strengthened me. He was real because he followed the Lord, he trusted the Lord, and he served the Lord. The question is what will keep you living what you believe? Will it be trials that stop you?

Will it be persecution? Also, he was compelled to serve just as Jesus served. Turn back to verse 24 of Acts chapter 20. And look what he says. He says, But none of these things move me, neither count my life dear unto myself. Man, how do we count our lives not dear unto ourselves? We need to be very clear on this. When you recognize the calling on your life, when you recognize that when this is all said and done, the promise of salvation, of eternal glory, is still yours. We serve, we pour out our lives for others, we dedicate our time for others, we find our gifting.

And pursue it to serve others. We make time for evangelism and to seek the lost. This is what God has called us to do, not to focus on our lives and our comfortable living. We need to stay the course more now than ever before. More now when you see what's going on in the world. We don't have that much time. Some of you are in your latter days and it's time for you to what? To finish strong, to not give up. Well, I can't go. Then pray. Pray. And you that are young, You need to take up the mantle.

You need to stand. It's our time to shine for the Lord, to use you in a mighty way. " Jesus said in Matthew 10, verse 39, He that findeth life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Do you believe the Word of God? Do you believe what Jesus said? He's calling all of us, not just the pastors, he's calling all of us to stay the course. Man, we're seeing that in the churches, we're seeing Sunday school is not a priority anymore. You know what's happened? The priority is not Sunday school, it's the football games out there, the baseball games, it's the athletics.

They're focused on that. The real thing is Jesus and Him only. That's secondary. Amen. Now, I'm not saying that living in the world and doing all these things is evil or sinful. That's not what I'm saying. But make sure Jesus is first in your life. I think they have this thing, I'm not sure, but it's God, family, and football. There's some program on there. I see the commercials. What a blessing. You see the coach, his whole heart is for these young men to know Jesus. And then these young men to be what? To be raised up to be able to lead families.

And then the last thing is football, which the coach uses to point to Jesus, to point to responsibility, to point to disciplined lives. He that findeth his life shall lose it. And he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. That's what the apostle Paul knew. He knew deep down inside. That's why in Galatians chapter two, verse 20, as I spoke last week, where Jesus said in Galatians chapter two, verse 20, he says, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Why, who loved me and gave himself to me. That's the desire. That's what motivated Paul, the Apostle Paul. That will motivate you and I when we recognize that God's mercy has saved us and his spirit had filled us. And his desire within us is what? For us to live for him and to love him the way he loved us. And then to love the lost by bringing the gospel to them. That's what we're here for for all these coming together to be entertained.

And also, my last point I have with the apostle Paul: he was compelled to finish the will of God with joy. Look again in Acts chapter 20, verse 24. He says, But none of these things move me, neither count my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. " He knew. His joy was to finish strong. His joy was to stand before Christ when Jesus looked at him and said Well done, thy what?

Is that who we are? Are we just playing church? Is that what we are? Are we focused on how people look at us? Look what I do. It's about Him and Him only. Paul, though, his Life was difficult, surrendered daily to accomplish the will of God in his life and to finish his course with joy in the Holy Ghost. That should be our desire. The will of God is the only thing that can bring true and lasting joy.

Jesus, others, and yourself, joy. And listen, when you recognize how much God has blessed you and how much God has forgiven you, and when you look at the world and when you look at all the other countries, let's just say, how can we not live for Him?

How could we not finish the course He's given us? Now, I don't know how many of you are Sunday school teachers by heart and are not teaching it by heart and are not teaching. I don't know how many of you who are standing on the sidelines, sitting on the pews, sitting out their home and not being part of a church where you can be used by God. But I'm here to tell you, God wants you to finish your course with joy. And that joy comes as serving the king of kings and lord of lords. It's not a The Lord's. It's not about you. It's about your life being given to God as a living sacrifice. Will you choose to finish your course or will you sit on the sidelines and watch people die without Christ? Why don't we stand? It breaks my heart as we can read how vibrant the church of Ephesus was when the Apostle Paul met the leaders, the pastors of those surrounding churches in Ephesus, and he says, You will see me no more. I am bound to Jerusalem. I don't know what's going to happen to me, but I know my life will be poured out.

As an Offering to him who poured his life in his shed blood for me. And what does he say? I will finish my course no matter what with joy. What are we doing? What are you doing? What will cause you to have the same spirit? Here are my Lord's. Same spirit, here am I, Lord, send me. My family's lost and they need me to live for you and to reach them for Christ. Father, we thank you. Father, as we look at the Apostle Paul, as he brings all these leaders who he poured his life for three years teaching them, warning them with tears.

Father, help us today. Help us to finish our course. Help us, Lord. Help us to stay the course that you've given this church, that you've given each and every believer here, that we would not falter, that we would not slumber. Father, we need your spirit to burn in our hearts. We need that flame to be hot, harder. Burn it in our hearts, Lord. Your compassion for lost souls burn in our hearts, Lord, to stop the bickering amongst ourselves and focus on what truly matters. And that's lost souls and people who are suffering. Father, keep our eyes off ourselves and put our eyes on you. And may we walk with your heart. Father, I think of Christ who looked over Jerusalem and he wept over the city. Father, I ask you, Lord, help us to weep over our city. Help us to weep over the lost around us in our own families. Father, help us. Help us, Lord. We're so lazy. We're so filled with the world. Father, help us. Help us to get back to what you've called us to do, to love each other, to reach the lost with Christ. In Jesus' name amen.