

Faithful to the End

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[3 : 30] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. If you're able to stand, would you please do so as we honor the reading of God's Word?

Philippians chapter 1 and verse 12. The apostle Paul is writing this letter while he is in prison in Rome, a prison I got to go and visit and experience. And Paul's writing this letter, and this is what he says as he's led by the Spirit. I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. And in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this, that is his imprisonment, will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed. But with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether it's life or death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. And if I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. Let's pray. Lord, come talk to us tonight, please.

Would you, by your grace, come talk to us by your Spirit? We believe here at Faith Family that regardless of how imperfect the messenger, when your word is proclaimed, it is your voice that is being heard. And so we pray, Spirit, that you would come and help us listen to the voice of Jesus in this place as we look to your word. Lord, help me preach faithfully what your word says, that your people would be strengthened and encouraged by it. Ultimately, God, come do whatever you want to do in this place. We are ready to receive it. And we ask this in Jesus' name. And God's people said, amen. Amen. You can be seated. It was June 9th, 1973. That's when history was made at the Belmont Stakes.

[7 : 27] Even if you're not a fan of horse racing, you no doubt have heard the name Secretariat. It was 1973 that Secretariat became the first horse in 25 years to win the Triple Crown. That's the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, and the Belmont winning all three. Now, most did not think that Secretariat could pull this off. It wasn't because they doubted his speed. Oh, no. Secretariat was actually known for his speed.

The concern that people had was that the Belmont Stakes was a mile and a half long track. Now, you compare that to the Kentucky Derby, a mile and a quarter, or the Preakness, a mile and three sixteenths, many just assumed that this track would be too long. In other words, here's the point. Listen closely. No one doubted that he had enough speed to start the race. They doubted if he'd have enough speed to finish the race. And sure enough, the race started and Secretariat took off at a blazing pace, one that everyone assumed would be impossible to maintain. And yet what happened in the final moments of that race was absolutely amazing.

They're moving on the turn now. For the turn, it's Secretariat. It looks like he's opening. The lead is increasing. Make it three, three and a half. He's moving into the turn. Secretariat holding on to a large lead.

Sham is second, and then it's a long way back to Mike Allen and twice a print. They're on the turn. It's Secretariat is blazing along. The first three quarters of a mile and 109 and four fifths. Secretariat is widening now. He is moving like a tremendous machine. Secretariat by 12. Secretariat by 14 lengths on the turn.

Sham is dropping back. It looks like they'll catch him today as Mike Allen and Mike Allen and Mike the Prince are both coming up to him now. But Secretariat is all alone. He's out there almost the sixteenth of a mile away from the rest of the horses. Secretariat is in a position that seems impossible to catch. He's into the stretch. Secretariat leads his field by 18 lengths. And now Price appears to take him second, and Mike Allen has moved back to third. They're in the stretch.

[9 : 51] Secretariat has opened a 22-length lead. He is going to be the triple crown winner. Here comes Secretariat to the wire. An unbelievable, an amazing performance. Now show of hands, how many agree with me? Paul Allen would have done a better job calling that race. Amen? There ain't no doubt about that.

Ain't no doubt about that. That's for real. But what was amazing is that Secretariat not only didn't slow down, he kept running faster. And by the time he got to the finish line, he won by a record 31 length, ahead of the second place. After the race, his trainer was interviewed, and his trainer said, quote, had there been one more lap, his heart would have exploded.

You see, Secretariat ran his race with all his heart, right to the very end.

I wonder, family, if you know anybody like that. What I mean is, do you know anybody that gives it everything they have right down to the last minute? Maybe for you, you know somebody that's a really hard worker, and when you give them a task, they do it with everything they can until that job is done.

Maybe you had a teacher in life that poured their life into you right to the very last day of school. Maybe you know that married couple, and while they're not perfect, they loved each other till death did they part. Maybe you had that friend that walked with you through a very hard time right until the very last mile. And more and more examples that we can give, but most of us know someone in some area of life where they ran their race to the very end. And not only did they run their race to the very end, they were running faster at the end than they were at the beginning.

[12 : 00] That hit me hard with the Apostle Paul's life. During my sabbatical, as I'm in these places and I'm studying the life of the Apostle Paul, it struck me. The Apostle Paul was converted, most say around the age of 30, is when he was converted around 33 AD. And he died around the age of 60, somewhere between 62 and 64 AD. That means he had about 30 years of ministry, 30 years devoted to the Lord. And then, as I mentioned the first week I got back from sabbatical, I had the opportunity to actually go to Ephesus and to tour that city and the remains that are left.

And think about the fact that Paul spent over two years, over two years of his life doing ministry there in Ephesus. You can read about it in Acts 19 and 20. I went to Corinth, where Paul spent over a year and a half, Acts 18, pouring his life and discipling the Corinthians. Paul at Mars Hill, I had the opportunity to go there where he's debating and engaging with the gospel, the philosophers of the day, which you can read about in Acts 17. And every place I went, every next stop along the way, I kept thinking about all the laps that Paul ran. The laps in Ephesus and the laps in Corinth and the laps in Athens and the island of Crete and on and on and on until he comes to Rome. As I got to visit Rome, and while I was in Rome, it was really the last day of the trip. And it was probably some of you have asked me what was the most impactful day. And I've said it was the last day, because on the last day I went where many believe Paul was imprisoned and was beheaded for his faith and then visited his grave where he was laid to rest. And it wasn't just that grave in and of itself. It wasn't just where he was imprisoned. It was the accumulation of it all. It was the thinking about the time in modern day Turkey and the years in Ephesus and the years in

Corinth and the time in Athens and this 30 years given to the gospel. And how did it end with him running faster than how he started to the point that he is willing to lose his head and be beheaded for the sake of the gospel? And it hit me, this man gave it all to the ministry of Christ.

He gave everything he had right down to the last moment, like the words that he says to young Timothy and likely some of the final words that the apostle Paul would write. Here's 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 7. I have fought the good fight. I have, say it, finished the race. I have kept the faith.

And in verse 6, right before, says, for I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure is near. And he will say to the Philippian church, which we're looking at tonight, this is Philippians. I believe it's 2 verse 17, says, if even I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I'm glad and I rejoice with you all. I want you to stop and think about that imagery of being poured out. Paul is referring to his life as a drink offering that was constantly poured out for the Lord, constantly poured out for others, constantly poured out for the gospel. Even in hardships that he had to endure, even a life that ended in martyrdom, Paul was a man committed to running his race to the very last lap. And I hope that that challenges you and motivates you as it does me in our own race, the race that we've been called to run, the race of faith. And I got to thinking about how could Paul be running faster at the end than he did when he started. And this is what the Lord impressed upon me, and it was this. Notice it on the screen. [16:46] Paul's relationship with Christ was not a part of his life. It was his life. I want you to think about that. It wasn't a part of his life. It's kind of like what we talked about last week. It wasn't a merger. It wasn't, I'm just kind of living my life and I accept the Jesus thing and I go to church some. No, no, no, no. The apostle Paul did not view Jesus as a part of his life.

He viewed Jesus as his life. And that enabled him to run his race to the end. I think we get a great example of this here in Philippians 1. So let's dive in. Number one, here's the first thing I want you to remember tonight from the text, and it's this, that Paul ran his race or he poured out his life even in personal suffering. Why did he keep running? I want to show you how the apostle Paul was still running hard even at the end of his life, even through suffering. Look at verse 12, Philippians 1 and verse 12 says, I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me, now stop, because I want you to feel this. I want you to understand the context behind this. Imagine that you had a son or daughter that's serving overseas and you've not seen them in a while. Imagine, and I know some of you experience this right now, you have a daughter that's off in college and you've not seen her in a while. You've not heard from them. You haven't had a call. You haven't had an email. You haven't had a text. How do you respond when you finally hear from them? You're overjoyed. You're excited. You're hanging on every word. Like this person that you love so dearly, you finally now have contact with them again. Now, why do I say all that? Because I want you to understand what's happening here. The Philippians are hanging on every word. What's happened to you, Paul? Where are you? What's going on with you? What are you dealing with? You see, the apostle Paul had founded this church 10 years earlier on the second missionary journey. We're going to look at all of this in the book of

Acts. You may remember that the apostle Paul receives a vision to go to Macedonia. There the church will start with a wealthy woman by the name of Lydia and a slave girl and also a jailer to whom Paul is in chains next to. You remember the earthquake? All of that is the start of this church in Philippi.

He has a wonderful relationship with them, but after he starts the church, Acts 16, he leaves. And then he returns in Acts 20, and then he leaves again. And after leaving that time, he ends up being imprisoned in Jerusalem, Acts 21, where he's ultimately going to end up in Rome. And what happens to the apostle Paul along the way? Only he goes through a storm, death threats, he's shipwrecked, he's bitten by a snake, and then he arrives in Rome and gets put in prison. How's your life going? That ought to cheer you up, right? And so my point here is to say the Philippians haven't heard from Paul. And so when he says, I want you to know that this, I mean, they are hanging on every word, like we want to know what's going on with this apostle we love. Now look what Paul says in the rest of the verse.

I want you to know, brothers, that what's happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. I mean, what an amazing testimony. Like I thought about if I got stranded on my trip overseas and wrote you a letter. I don't think it would sound like that. I think it would be like, you have no idea how terrible this food is. Or the cell phone signal is awful and my phone won't keep a charge. Or you won't believe how long my flight was delayed. Or I guarantee you, if I know me well enough, there'd have been a little bit of complaining in there. Amen? You can say amen. You would too, sinner. What's impressive is about all the apostle Paul went through, which is very, very little any of us have been through stuff like that. And yet Paul doesn't make any mention of complaint about what he had to go through. He says, you know what? All of this has actually served to do what? Advance the gospel.

[21 : 23] I don't have any reason to complain. Why would I quit running this race when everything that's happened to me, God is using in me to display his glory and advance his kingdom? I'll keep running.

Even in the suffering I went through. He could rejoice in this. Now we know and we'll see this in the book of Acts. Paul was unfairly treated. He doesn't mention that here. He was treated unjustly. He went through a lot of pain. I mean, as I've mentioned before, I get bit by a snake in the ministry of Jesus. I'm tempted to quit running. Like, Jesus, if there are snakes involved, I'm not sure. Okay? But Paul doesn't mention any of these things that he goes through. He just says, listen, everything that's happened to me, here's my report to you. Here's my newsletter. It served to advance the gospel. Here's the point. Paul's commitment to Christ changed the way he viewed his suffering.

Let me say that a different way. Because Jesus was his life, it changed the way he thought about his life. Notice this on the screen. Suffering was not a hindrance to the mission. Suffering was the mission.

[22 : 41] In other words, as I'm running this race, there are going to be difficulties along the way. That's just part of it. But because Jesus is my life, I view my life very differently. Namely, that when I go through that difficulty, that suffering, that hardship, I see that as a part of the deal.

It's a part of the ministry. It's a part of the mission that God has called me to. So here it is. When Christ is your life, and your life goes through suffering, you're able to see suffering as a part of your ministry. As a part of your ministry. And that's why you don't find the Apostle Paul wallowing in self-pity. He just keeps running to the very end. So let me ask you this tonight. Everybody, pay attention here. What's the thing in your life that you would complain about the most?

And that's a joke. That's just a joke. I'm making sure you're awake. I'm just making sure you're awake. Put the picture down. Put the picture down. That is a joke. Most of us, and it worked. I got you. Most of you, you know me. I am not a political preacher. I just knew that'd get a laugh out of some of you. But let's be serious for a moment. What is the thing in life right now you would complain about? Maybe it's an inconvenience, a hardship. Maybe it's genuine suffering. Maybe you're still single. Your child has down syndrome. Inflation has destroyed your investments. You can't find a job. You're stuck financially. You've been hurt by someone. Your marriage is on the rocks. You've been persecuted for your faith. You're fighting a painful disease.

Your business won't get traction. You're crushed by a never-ending expectation of other people.

What is it for you? What's the hardship that you're enduring in life? Here it is on the screen.

Realizing that Christ is your life allows you to see your prison as a mission. Allows you to see.

Because remember, Paul's in prison here. That's his hardship that he's speaking of here in Philippians 1. And he says, my prison is my mission. And that will enable you, faith family, to keep running to the end. You know why most people quit and give up? Because it gets hard. It does. And Jesus told you it would. And if you remember in the parable of the soils, Jesus says there will be one that grows for a while, but the heat will destroy it. The weeds will choke it out. The cares of this life will destroy it. But the good soil continues to persevere.

[25 : 34] And I'm telling you that will only happen, as I believe it did in Paul's life, when you see Jesus not as a part of your life, but as your life. Because if Jesus is your life, then whatever comes about in your life is ministry and an opportunity to advance the gospel. That'll preach. Amen?

That's Paul's perspective here. In fact, look at what he says in terms of what his prison or his suffering did to advance the gospel. Verse 13, Philippians 1.13. Thank you, Lord, for turning that air conditioner on. 13 says, so that it may be known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. So the first thing he mentions here is that there are actually non-believers that are hearing the gospel because of his suffering. In other words, and I love this perspective. This is a perspective that we'll preach. Notice it on the screen. Paul's perspective was this. I'm not chained to the guards. The guards are chained to me. I'm right where I'm supposed to be in this prison. And Bubba here, because he's probably named Bubba, that's a good Roman name.

He's chained to me. And guess what? He can't get away from me continuously talking about Jesus. What a great opportunity to be in this prison. And guess what? In three or four hours, a new guard's going to come in. And he's going to have to listen to it. No, you need to understand that God is sovereign. And that means I'm not chained to a guard. The guard is chained to me. I am where God has placed me for ministry and mission. Here is a non-believer. And we're going to see again in the

church of Philba, it's a jailer that gets saved along with his family that will start this church. They get it. They understand that the apostle Paul saw his imprisonment as an opportunity to tell people about the gospel. In other words, think of it this way. Roman guards won't come to church, so God has taken the church to the Roman guards. There ain't no way they're going to come over here and hear me preach. So I'll preach in prison and there'll be nowhere they can go. Faith family, suffering will give you opportunities that comfort won't. Suffering will give you opportunities to speak about the good news of Jesus that comfort won't. If Christians never got cancer, who would bear witness to the goodness of Jesus in cancer? If Christians never lost loved ones, who would bear witness to the goodness of Jesus at the funeral? You see, listen, listen, I'm not going to let you get away from this tonight. When Jesus is your life, then whatever comes about in your life, you see in a whole new way.

I'm not chained to a guard. The guard is chained to me. And he, this unbeliever, heard the gospel. Here's the second way Paul sees his ministry as an encouragement, his suffering as an encouragement.

[28 : 50] Verse 14, he says, and most of the brothers, so that is the believers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. In other words, not only are non-believers hearing the gospel by my imprisonment, but believers are actually being encouraged to be more bold with the gospel. Don't you see that because of my suffering, other Christians are being motivated to persevere. I mean, haven't you been around a Christian that persevered? Again, not perfectly. They had weak moments. There may have been even times they wanted to give up, but they continued by God's grace to endure, and that motivated you to endure. I mean, those of you that know that you've been around me, like, you know that if anything, in fact, I even said two weeks ago that this ministry is more about my weakness than my strength, right? I don't want this to be about my strength, but I've had people come to me and say, the fact that you kept going has encouraged me not to quit.

And I hope that's the case in your life, that when you keep running your race, that the Lord has called you to run, it will encourage others, when they want to quit, to keep running as well. Paul's refusal to quit, even in prison, emboldened other believers to say, if Paul can go through that, we can go through what we're going through for the sake of the gospel. In 1976, in the Summer Olympics, Shun Fujimoto competed in the gymnastics for Japan, and he, in doing so, broke his knee.

And yet he refused to stop. In fact, he went on to compete in the most difficult event, which is the rings. He astounded everybody by squarely dismounting a triple somersault twist. That just sounds impressive, just saying it. But he did so on a broken knee. And when they asked him afterwards, this is what he said, quote, the pain shot through me like a knife. It brought me to tears. But the goal to get the gold made all the pain go away. The apostle Paul was so obsessed with the life of Jesus and the advancement of the gospel that his pain of prison became momentary light affliction. He kept running his race, stronger at the end than when he started. Number two, jot this down, is Paul ran his race or he poured out his life even in relational conflict. These others won't be as long, but there are 15 more. Kidding. Two. Paul ran his race even in relational conflict. That is, if prison wasn't enough to make him stop running his race, look at what else he went through. Verse 15, Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. I don't know if you know this, but not everybody liked Paul. And that's very plain even in the New Testament. There were a lot of people that didn't like the apostle Paul. He made enemies along the way, and some Christians tried to take advantage of Paul. Now, the question we would want to ask here is, who is this group that he's referring to here in Philippians chapter 1? And the answer is, seminary taught me this. I have no idea.

[32 : 44] I don't know who these people are. They're not identified, but here's what we do know they're not. They're not false teachers. We know that they're not false teachers. That is preaching a false gospel, because Paul is much more critical and harsh about anybody that is preaching a false gospel.

I'll give you an example of this. Look at Philippians 3 and verse 2, and notice the language change from chapter 1. Look out for the dogs. That's not a compliment. He's not saying, look out for a little sweet puppy. No. These ravaging dogs that will destroy you. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for

those who mutilate the flesh. That is, those that were adding circumcision to faith in Jesus. We talked about the Judaizers in those last week. My point is, is that if it's a false teacher, Paul has very harsh things to say. So back in chapter 1, whoever he's referring to here, we do not believe that they are false teachers based on the language Paul uses towards them.

More likely, I hope you're listening, they have false motives, not necessarily towards Christ, but towards Paul. They're out to get Paul. They mocked him. They wanted to see him fail. Why? Because it benefited them. That's why there's a concern about their sincerity, is because they are not concerned about kingdom work. They're only concerned about their own.

So if Paul can be seen in a negative light, if Paul can be brought down, it only lifts them up. And let's be honest, faith family, it is sad when people narrow the kingdom of Christ down to their own ministry in hopes to destroy another ministry. Amen? That should not happen among the people of God. And it was happening in Philippians 1. And here is Paul's response to that nonsense, verse 18. This is amazing. What then? What are we to do? How are we to respond? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, guess what? Christ is being proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, I will rejoice. That's awesome. I was going to say, maybe I'm the only one that thinks that's awesome.

[35 : 24] But his response here is not, why me? His response is not, how dare them? His response is, well, we're going to get a group together and make sure that they get torn down. His response is, so what?

Look at it on the screen. Because his concern is more about gospel advancement than personal advancement. I don't care if their ministry thrives because I'm in prison so long as Christ is proclaimed.

No, no, no. You don't proclaim Christ. You start adding something to Christ, then beware of the dog. Watch out for the evildoers. Have nothing to do with them. But listen, if it's just people that don't like me, if it's just people that want to destroy me, if it's just people who want to take advantage of me, well, guess what? This thing ain't about me. So if in my suffering they gain, so what? If Christ is proclaimed. That'll preach. And you know what? That should be preached in every church, everywhere, because we are way too competitive in the kingdom of Christ.

Well, I liked that point. I'm not sure you did, but oh well. When we are fully committed to Christ, faith family, the gospel ministry becomes the most important thing over our personal aspirations.

And this is what I so desperately want in our culture here at Faith Family. And it's this, because listen, every church, every church that I've pastored at some level has had personal aspirations over a gospel ministry. Okay, so when it comes to a building, is it going to have what I want? And when it comes to the ministries the church offers, is it going to have the ministries I like? Or what about the color of the carpet? And what about the style of music? And what about the...

[37 : 25] Stop. None of this has anything to do with us. And if one ministry wins at the loss of another ministry, and Christ is proclaimed more because of that, we rejoice. Yes, we rejoice.

You show me a church like that, I'll never leave it. If the senior adults can lose so that the young children can gain, oh, we rejoice if Christ is proclaimed because it's not a competition.

It's not about me. It's about that the gospel is advanced. And so we're going to keep running our race even in the midst of conflict and disagreement. Am I the only one in this place tonight? Listen, there's 25 years. There's 25 years of ministry preaching on this stage tonight.

And my own heart, oh, how we would be a church that would rejoice in the win of another if it means that Christ is proclaimed. Because Jesus isn't a part of our life. He is our life.

And so when we lose, we gain. And when we're weak, we're strong. And when we're last, we're first. We're going to let the Lord work it all out.

[38 : 58] Last one. Paul ran his race. He poured out his life, not just in relational conflict and not just in personal suffering, but in physical uncertainty or personal uncertainty. In other words, on top of prison, we saw that earlier in the passage, and on top of the relational conflict he had with this other ministry, these other believers, get this. Everybody right here, Paul doesn't know if he'll be alive tomorrow. He's awaiting a verdict. I mean, man, feel this. There's people that don't like him.

He's not gotten along with everybody. Some people are taking advantage of him. He's in prison. And on top of all that, he may hear tomorrow, later this afternoon, your time is up. It's time to be killed, be executed for your faith. And so here's what he says. Verse 19.

I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus, this will turn out for my deliverance. As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with

full courage now, as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether I live or die. And here's why. Because if I live, Christ. And if I die, gain. And which to do, I have no idea. And Paul's human. Paul is very human. And if you've ever been in a situation where you didn't know if you'd live or maybe you got that report from the doctor and you thought maybe you only had a short time to live or maybe a family member that you've been through that, you know that these are scary times. I assure you, Paul's not in prison like, ah, death, big deal. I'm the apostle Paul. No, he's, there's, there's, there's, there's, there's, there's uncertainty. But it won't stop him from running his race. [41 : 38] You see, he could see his prison as a mission and he could see his enemies as gospel opportunities. And he could also see death as gain. How? Notice it on the screen. Christ wasn't a part of his life.

Christ was his life. It's the only way to make sense of this. Christ is my life. So if I die, I'm good. If I live, I'm good. Because my life is not me.

It's the life of Jesus. Notice these scriptures. In fact, why don't you just say these scriptures? Let's just say these together. I really am almost done. Look at Colossians 3. Notice these on the screen. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Next verse. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Let's read together Galatians 2 verse 20. I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. One more. Romans 5 verse 10. We'll read this together.

[43 : 09] For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Are you starting to get it?

What made all of this happen for Paul to keep running his race faster at the end than at the beginning was that he began to understand life is Christ.

And so if I'm in prison, then guess what? The Lord's calling me to prison ministry. And if I'm in Athens, the Lord's calling me to philosophical ministry with the Athenians.

Wherever I go, ministry. Why? Because Jesus isn't a part of my life. He is my life. And when I'm not getting along with people, because newsflash, sometimes that happens, even among Christians, I'm not going to make that big of a deal of it. Why?

Because I don't care if they win and I lose or I win and they lose because Jesus isn't a part of my life. He is my life. And if this is my last day, if this is it, and the time of my departure has come, let it be.

[44 : 35] Because if I live tomorrow, guess what? More fruitful ministry. And if I don't, the face of Jesus. I can't lose.

Therefore, I won't quit. I can't lose. So I won't quit.

It's exactly what I taught last week. Paul did not merge his life with Jesus. He traded his life for the life of Christ. And so Paul's life is no longer about Paul's life.

Here's the summary of what I just said and then we'll be done. When suffering came, ministry. When conflict came, well, is Christ being proclaimed. When death came, I get Jesus.

And here's the point that in approaching life this way, here it is. I'm bringing it all together, so don't zone out on me here. Here it is. This is what allowed Paul to pour out his life in Ephesus.

[45 : 36] This is what allowed Paul to pour out his life in Corinth. Think of all these laps. It's what allowed him to pour out his life in Athens and pour out his life in Rome until the day it all came to an end.

seeing Christ, not as a part of his life, but as his life, allowed Paul to run his race to the final lap.

And it only makes sense that Paul would live this way. Think about this statement. Think about this statement, Faith Family. Paul was able to finish his race because his life was a race that had already been finished.

Think. Let me say it again. Paul was able to finish his race because his life was a race already finished.

That is, what motivated Paul to keep running and finish his race was that Jesus had already finished the race for him.

[47 : 02] Look at it. Hebrews, Hebrews says, chapter 12 says, therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that's set before us.

How? How do we do that? Looking to Jesus. Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him ran his race, endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated

at the right hand of the throne of God.

In other words, how do you, like Paul, run your race to the end by looking to the one who already finished the race for you? You will.

You will cross the finish line because Jesus has already crossed the finish line for you and that gospel reality motivated Paul, I hope it motivates us, to run our race secretariat style.

Look to the one who in the agony of Gethsemane never looked back. The one who in the face of the cross never turned back.

[48 : 23] The one who kept running until his heart exploded and three days later finished his race and won the victory.

And my dear friend, he received more than a triple crown. He received the name that is above every name for he is king of kings.

And because, because he has finished his race, you, Christian, will finish yours.

And God's people said, amen. Let's pray. Lord, thank you. Thank you for lessons from a life.

I pray that just the things that you impressed upon me as I had the privilege that this faith family was so gracious to provide, to study the life of the apostle Paul.

[49 : 25] And I pray that these last few weeks and certainly as we get into the book of Acts, that these will be things that will be impressed upon us as well. to be encouraged to keep running our race.

Knowing it has nothing to do with our strength or how fast we are. Praise God. But it's completely based on the fact that Jesus has already won the race for us.

And that frees us to run with all our hearts. Tripping along the way, but getting up and still running until we get to that final breath where death becomes gain.

and we see the one who ran the race for us face to face. Oh, I pray that the person in this place who is battling cancer or the person in this place that is serving the one who's battling cancer or the person who is dealing with business issues or financial problems or the person in this place that's in a relational nightmare, whatever it is, Lord, may none of these things keep us from running the race you've set before us looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Oh, that we would keep running the race of faith yet not I but Christ in me. And all God's people said amen.

[51 : 08] Amen.