



All-In – Finish Your Race

Acts 20:22-37 | Mark Foreman | September 27, 2026

✧ Introduction

- The context here is Paul's farewell to the Elders of the church of Ephesus.
- Paul is sailing back to Jerusalem from Troas.
- Paul sails to Miletus and there he sends for the Elders of Ephesus. It would have taken them 63 miles by foot or 30 miles sailing and walking. This is the distance from Carlsbad to the John Wayne Airport.
- Paul's teaching to these elders is content of his sermon. This is Paul's only sermon to Christians in the book of Acts.
- In the tradition of Deut. 31-32 by Moses and 23-24 by Joshua (F.F. Bruce). Last speech of a dying person is one to listen to. When you know the clock is ticking. This is the only recorded message to a Christian audience by Paul in Acts. This is his farewell testament. Let's listen.

✧ Finish Your Race - My Only Aim Is to Finish My Race (18-24)

- How Paul lived was important - all in! (18-21).
 - Humility - not defensive or proud.
 - Tears and opposition - not easy.
 - I didn't hesitate to share the gospel - no mission drift.
- Compelled and warned by the Spirit (22-23)
 - Compelled → should be Bound (*dedemenos*) (so KJV; RSV; ASV). Some metaphors need to be left alone, to allow us to feel and picture its weight, instead of having a translator take out its force, by making it just a concept.
 - Holy Spirit Warns—here Paul explains why he used *dedemenos* by the Spirit.
- My life is worth nothing to me. (He isn't denying his value as a child of God.) He's stating what ultimate value is (24).
 - No ME-ism in Paul - "not my will but yours" (Gethsemane)
 - My only aim is to finish the race course (see 1 Cor 9:24-27; Acts 20:24; Phil 2:16; 3:13-14; Gal. 2:2; 5:7; 2 Tim 4:7-8).
 - Focus: Complete the task (ministry) the Lord has given me.

✧ Paul Passes the Baton - Keep watch...be shepherds (25-31)

- Sobering goodbye - never see me again (25-27)
 - Paul knew by the Spirit's warnings
 - I am innocent - I did my job (Ezek. 33 watchman on the wall language).
- Now it's up to you - be good shepherds (28)
 - Keep watch (sent for the elders (*presbyteroi*) v.17; overseers (*epikopos*) and pastors (shepherds, *poimainein*) are interchangeable terms without hierarchy in the NT. The last (shepherd is a verb) and using all of these as verbs keeps us from taking pride in positions
 - Over yourself
 - And over the flock; pastors, parents, friends, business and sales execs, school teachers, coaches all have flocks.

- It's your sphere of influence.
- Wolves will come – be on your guard (as I was for 3 years) (29-31)
 - From outside and
 - From within

✘ **Prayer - Now I Commit You to God (32-35)**

- Commit means prayer (32)
 - Entrust – put in God's hands
 - And to his Word of Grace
 - This is Paul's prayer.
- Don't be afraid to work (33-34)
 - Paul was a missionary who had to communicate he was not "selling" anything.
 - Don't be afraid to make believers responsible for the work.
 - Best when we are co-responsible, co-ownership.
- Helping the weak is not when it's convenient (35)
 - "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts is only reference)
 - So Paul gives us 3 things in his sermon to the elders:
 - 1. Finish your race
 - 2. Be a shepherd to your sphere of influence.
 - 3. Prayer: "I commit you into God's hands."

✘ **Thinking It Through**

- What part of Paul's speech speaks to your heart the most?
 - The idea of finishing your race.
 - Being a good shepherd?
 - Not being afraid to get my hands dirty helping others?
 - Prayer
- In your own words, what race has God called you to run?
- What is the most difficult part of your race and what is the most joyful?