



THE FAITHFUL RACE: INDIVIDUAL AND TOGETHER

ACTS 20:16-18A

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them,



I WANT TO SEE YOU...BUT

- Paul was heading to Jerusalem.
- He wanted to stop and see the Ephesian elders but he didn't dare stop in Ephesus.
- He came up with an alternate solution.

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

- Are we making plans to serve God?
- Are we seeking to encourage each other even if it might inconvenience us temporarily?
- Are we willing to make alternate plans to help keep us on God's path for success?

ACTS 20:18B-21, 25-27

(18b-21) “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(25-27) “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”

YOU KNOW HOW I RAN

- He served God with humility and tears through trials and plots.
 - He boldly taught them profitable things publicly and privately.
 - The same message of repentance and faith was taught to Jews and Greeks.
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- The image features two runners in silhouette against a sunset sky. The runner in the foreground is a man, and the runner behind him is a woman. They are both captured in mid-stride, moving from left to right. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a pale blue at the top. The overall mood is one of perseverance and endurance.

OUR SERVICE TO GOD?

- Are we serving God only when we are getting honored?
- Are we agonizing over those who reject God's message?
- Are we changing the message based on what our audience wants to hear?

ACTS 20:22-24

"And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

GOAL...FAITHFUL FINISHING

- God has a plan for Paul that begins in Jerusalem and includes suffering.
- Paul's focus is not on himself.
- His focus is on staying faithful to Jesus, and continuing to teach the message of salvation.



GOD'S COACHING TODAY?

- Have we taken the time to see how God has worked in our past?
- Have we taken the time to see how God is working through us now?
- Where is our finish line focus—faithfulness to Jesus or comfort?

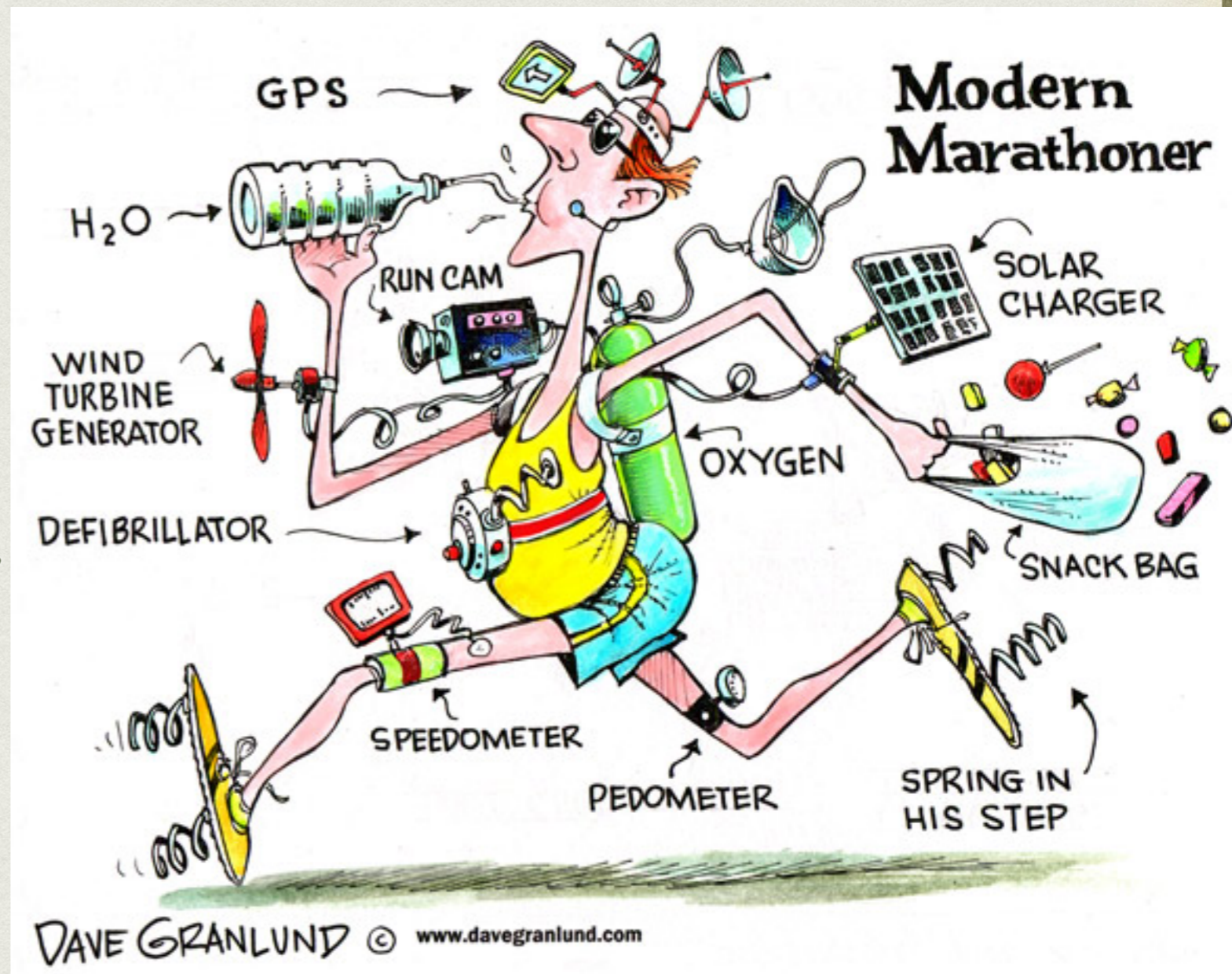


ACTS 20:28-31

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."

YOUR GOAL...PROTECTION

- Guard the flock (church).
- The attack on the church will come from both outside and inside.
- The leaders (and the church) needs to be prepared.



SAFEGUARDING TODAY?

- Are we seeking to guard the church?
- Are we prepared for Satan's attacks from the inside and the outside?
- Are we able to recognize the difference in someone trying to help us think about something a different way and someone who is a legitimate threat to the message?



ACTS 20:32-35

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

SAFEGUARDING INSTRUCTIONS

- παρατίθημι (paratithame)- to entrust for safekeeping, give over, entrust, commend
- Paul is entrusting God's message to them. He wants the church to keep running faithfully.
- God is able to build them up and reward their faithful effort.
- Paul wants the Ephesian church to continue to work and help others.

FAITHFUL RUNNING TODAY?

- Are we running our race faithfully individually and as a congregation daily?
- Are we trusting God to help build this church up spiritually?
- Are we convinced that God will reward us for running faithfully?
- Are we willing to work to provide for those who need help?



PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.