

Sermon Topic: “Bound in the Spirit” by Rev Teresa Wilborn

Sermon Text: Acts 20:22-24

²²“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.

²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

²⁴However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

Background of Missions in our Church

Aldersgate Methodist has become a Missions church over the years, turning vision into ministries that were life transforming with God’s help, and continues to lead outreach through education in both Cambodia and Timor Leste. Today, we have more members from our church serving with MMS than any other churches in Singapore.

Methodist school ministry is not about numbers, it is about transforming one child at a time, to transform their families and communities one at a time, and eventually impacting a nation as these children grows up.

Using St Paul Methodist School as a contextual example to the Scripture text

In securing and establishing the permanent residence of St Paul Methodist School, there has been numerous obstacles and hurdles, but through it all, God has remained faithful and has been bringing the vision to fruition in His time.

Today’s Scripture text presents a very personal testimony by the missionary and apostle Paul. Paul expresses his deepest conviction, on what it means to him to follow Jesus.

What Does Paul Means To Be “BOUND IN THE SPIRIT”?

What Does It Mean To Live It Our In Our Lives:

1. CONVICTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

- ‘Bound’ – Implies a certainty, a lawful obligation. In NIV of the Scripture text in v22, it is said that Paul was “compelled” by the Spirit, and the Greek word suggests “constraints” as if by a rope. It was long debated if Paul meant he was bound by his own spirit, or by the Holy Spirit. However in v23, it is affirmed that his **inner spirit has been held captive to do what the Spirit of God has asked of him.**

2. CONTENT WITH NOT KNOWING

- ‘Not knowing’ – Although Paul is committed to the Lord, he doesn’t know what might happen to him. But **the lack of details did not deter him from the goal.**

“Every race course that God appoints for his children to run, disappears over a hill called ‘the future’ and every minister takes turns around corners called ‘the unknown’.” – John Piper

- As believers in God, we do not know what, or when, or how a certain God-given task will be done. But we do know, that it will be done, as God decrees. Missionaries working in developing countries experience God’s wisdom and sovereignty through the unknown conditions of work amidst the changing political scenes and the lack of workable data.

- They have learnt to rely on the knowledge that God will provide in His time. They have learnt to be patient, faithful and carry on.
- What about us? Are we content with not knowing, yet strive to press on with the ministry that God has given to us to completion, in complete trust and faith in His wisdom and sovereignty?

3. COURAGE TO PERSEVERE

- 'Finish the course' – Paul goes on to say, **his life matters nothing at all, and his only aim is to complete the ministry given to him by God.**
- Is faithfulness to God's calling worth our life? Life is not the opposite of death. Life is how we choose to live, how we spend our time, talents and money. The goals in our lives may not be necessarily wrong, unless they keep us from fulfilling the ministry that God has given unto us. Are we willing to sacrifice comforts and lifestyle to be faithful to God's calling?
- Rather than coining the later stage of our life as "retirement", we should consider calling it "a change of station", "a new front in the battle", "a new assignment from the King". When we retire from our jobs, we can still continue serving in the church, in areas that we have dreamed about but had no time for previously. There is no such thing as 'retirement' found in the Scriptures. As read in Proverbs 4:18 – *"The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day"*. **A Christian life is not walking towards night (as a terminal point), but towards light.**

4. COMPLETE THE GOAL

- 'Testify to the gospel of grace' – Paul's ministry was to testify to the gospel of grace to the Gentiles. Using whatever gifts God has entrusted to us, we too are called to be faithful by our lives, and our words, always testifying to the Gospel of His grace. The foundation of Paul's life, was that God is gracious and God is King, and that is the same foundation of our faith today, and the assurance of salvation, and eternal life in the kingdom of God

Discussion Questions

1. What are the three ways in v.20-21 which show Paul did not let personal trials interfere with his ministry?
2. Paul was attacked by people on earth in the course of his ministry and mission (his work). According to v 22-24, the Holy Spirit warned him personally of the future certainty of more personal trials in the course of his ministry. How did he cope with these things? According to v.24, how did Paul view his mission in life?
3. Do you view your work as a gift or mission that God has entrusted to you? Explain.
4. In what ways would you handle your difficulty at work differently if you know that the Holy Spirit is with you ?