

An Uncertain Future.

Acts 20:22-24.

Sunday morning, October 2, 2011

I. Bound in the Spirit.

“And see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem...” Acts 20:22.

- A. The apostle is speaking here of a deep seated conviction, impressed on him by the Holy Spirit, that he was to return to Jerusalem.
- B. So strong was this conviction, that not even the Holy Spirit’s testimony in all the churches, that chains and tribulations awaited Paul in Jerusalem, and that they would see his face no more, could deter him from going to Jerusalem. See Acts 21:12-14 on this.
- C. There was a time in the life of the Lord Jesus when He went to Galilee and ministered there, away from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. The Lord spent the majority of His three year long ministry in Galilee.
But then a time came when “He set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem.” Luke 9:51. “Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem.”
- D. Paul’s going bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem is the equivalent to the Lord setting His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem.
What does this teach us?
- E. It teaches us that there are seasons in life. There is a time to go to Galilee and to get out of harms way; there is a time to be let over the wall of Damascus in a basket to escape the wrath of the Jews; there is a time to run the race and the course which the Lord has set before us. But then there is also a time to finish that race and that course; a time to go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem; a time to set our face steadfastly toward Jerusalem.
- F. Why did Paul go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, and why did the Lord Jesus set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem? It was so that earthly Jerusalem might fill up the measure of her sin; first by rejecting and putting to death her own Messiah, and after that by willfully rejecting (even in the face of many supernatural signs to the contrary) the message of the gospel proclaimed by His apostles.
This would lead to the great judgment of AD 70, the end of the Old Covenant era, and the time when the gospel would be given to the gentile nations.
- G. Note that Paul here goes “bound in the Spirit” to Jerusalem; as it were like a prisoner bound in irons. When Paul leaves Jerusalem to go as a prisoner to Rome he was literally bound in irons, yet he goes “as the Lord’s freeman.” Paul writes about this seeming paradox (simultaneously bound and free) to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 7:22, saying that he who is called by Christ while a slave is the Lord’s freeman, while he who is called by Christ while free is the Lord’s slave.
- H. There is a time when we will near the completion of our course and race; a time when we too will be summoned to Jerusalem. (Jerusalem above.) Some of us will be given notice about that, and others may not have advance warning. When that time comes, then put your hand in the hand of your Savior, and walk in the footsteps of Paul saying “I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem,” and like the Lord Jesus who “set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem.”

II. The uncertainty of it all.

“Not knowing the things which will happen to me there...”

- A. There were some things Paul knew; things such as having to go to Jerusalem, and that chains and afflictions awaited him there, for in every city the Holy Spirit testified of this through the first century prophetic gifts in the churches.
- B. In the midst of those certainties there were a lot of uncertainties. Would the chains and afflictions lead to Paul’s death at Jerusalem? Would it be the Jews or the Romans he would face as his opposition? Would it be right away or would he have a time of ministry first in Jerusalem?
- C. Of all the hardships of life, uncertainty is one of the harder things to cope with. How quickly are we brought to the place where we say: “If only I knew...” Not withstanding the uncertainty, Paul sets the example of a more mature Christian before us here when he says : “None of these things move me...”

The meaning is that none of these things move him from his course, or cause him to turn back from going to Jerusalem. He means:

- 1. Not the chains and afflictions awaiting Paul in Jerusalem, of which the Holy Spirit spoke in every city.
- 2. Not the many uncertainties which awaited Paul amidst the certainties.
- 3. Not the prospect of his death which he seems to have anticipated as lying before him in Jerusalem; as such he speaks at this time of finishing his course with joy, and the ministry he received from the Lord Jesus.
- 4. He embraces it all with a holy boldness and determination.

III. The source of Paul’s boldness and determination.

“I do not count my life dear to myself, *so that* I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus.” Did you catch that “so that...?”

- A. Here is the spirit of true servanthood. The true servant no longer lives for himself; he lives for his master; he has faced the end of his own life at some point; abandoned it, and started to live for his master in radical self-abandonment.
- B. Paul speaks about this aspect of our Christian lives a number of times:
 - 1. “He (Christ) died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” 2 Cor. 5:15.
 - 2. “You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Col. 3:3,4.
 - 3. “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I unto the world.” Gal. 6:14.
 - 4. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...” Gal. 2:20.
 - 5. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things...” Phil. 3:7,8.

Do you know what it is to stand there at the cross and to surrender... your dignity, your pride, your agenda, your good fortunes, the treasures of your heart. The cross leaves you ultimately with nothing but being a humble servant in the Lord’s kingdom. Oswald Chambers has coined this as “My utmost for His highest.”