

Paul's Missionary Heart

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[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome everybody to our annual Mission Sunday and always one of the highlights in the church calendar. It's really disappointing and therefore that we can't all gather together to share in it but hopefully we'll bring a taste of it to our homes as we go through the day.

Welcome if you're new and joining with us. We hope you'll be encouraged to think about God's global kingdom and to join with us. For the rest of the day you can check your email schedule. 12 o'clock we have Zoom coffee with Matthew, one of our students who's back in India doing ministry with his dad so we'll hear an update from him. We've got a seminar at 5.30 on praying for the suffering church and at 8 o'clock we're going to get an update about a church and mission in Myanmar and a chance to pray. Quick book plug, I've got a few actually, for our children. I have no idea if it's going to be back to front or not but A Taste of Asia produced by OMF. This is a great book, we've just finished it. Great help for families wanting to engage with mission, to learn about God's church taste of Asia. I can definitely recommend that one. Maybe for slightly older children but again great for families. This one's called A Window on the World. Maybe you've used Operation World. Well this is the kids version. Gives lots of really helpful information and stories to help families to pray and engage with global mission. And I might have plugged this one last year because I really enjoyed it so I'm going to do it again. Dispatches from the Front by Tim Kesey, a journalist who goes to visit hard places where it's hard to be a Christian and looks to encourage and to learn and to share their stories. That's a really excellent book for helping us realise some of the challenges and to be encouraged by what God is doing in hard places. You can get in touch with me if you want to know more about any of those. I always like to talk about books. Our call to worship is from Psalm 67. Speaking of books,

John Piper in his book Let the Nations Be Glad famously said, missions exist because worship doesn't. And what we have in Psalm 67 is a mission psalm, a prayer that the nations would worship, that they would see and recognise the glory of God. So let me read verse 3 to 5 as we begin together.

May the peoples praise you God. May all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy. For you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you God.

[2 : 57] May all the peoples praise you. And we're going to join our voices to praise God and we're also going to remember God's global kingdom as we sing our opening song Across the Lands.

May the peoples praise you God and we're going to join our voices.

May the peoples praise you God and we're going to join our voices.

Yet you left the gaze of angels, came to seek and save the lost, and exchanged the joy of heaven for the anguish of a cross. With a prayer you fed the hungry, with a word you come to see.

Yet how silently you suffer that the guilty may go free. You're the author of creation. You're the Lord of every man.

[4 : 50] And your cry of love rings out across the land. When I shout you rose victorious. When I shout you rose victorious. Resting victory from the grave. And ascended into heaven. Leaning captives in your way. Now you stand before the Father. Interceding for your own.

You're the author of creation. You're the Lord of every man. You're the Lord of every man. And your cry of love rings out across the land.

You're the author of creation. You're the Lord of every man. You're the Lord of every man. And your cry of love rings out across the land.

And now we'll pray together. And we'll have a special focus on missions in our prayer.

Some of our friends and missions partners. So let's pray together. Lord God, thank you that we can acknowledge you as the one true and living God.

[6 : 38] The one who is King of kings and Lord of lords. That you rule over all the nations. We thank you that as we gather in our separate homes.

We are part of a global church. Worshipping Jesus as Lord in very different settings from ours. Some will be restricted.

Some will be in vast church buildings. Others will be meeting as groups in homes. Perhaps secretly others will be meeting outdoors.

Some will be meeting in prison camps. But all of us have tasted and seen that you are good. And praising the Lord Jesus forever. We thank you that the good news has come to us.

That you enabled us to have the Bible read. And preach so that we could hear about your love in sending Jesus. To be the one who would come to be our saviour.

[7 : 41] To forgive our sins. To give us eternal life. To bring us into your family. To make peace between us and yourself. And we pray that that good news of great joy.

Of a saviour who has come would spread through the nations of the world. So that you would receive the glory and praise and honour that you deserve. And so that many more men and women and boys and girls would have joy in their hearts.

From coming to know the one true God for themselves. Lord we thank you that we can bring the nations before you. We think of the many unreached people groups that there still are.

Those who have not had the opportunity to hear about Jesus. We think especially of the nation of Japan. The second largest unreached people group in the world.

And we pray for our friend Ken. And we thank you for that small church that he's a part of. For their Bible teaching. For their warm fellowship.

[8 : 40] We pray that you'd help them to be salt and light. Lord we pray that you would break down barriers of resistance to the Christian faith in Japan. And we pray for missionaries and Bible teachers to be raised up.

So that unreached people would hear. So they might believe. Lord we also pray for those engaged in mission to other faiths. And we recognise the challenges and the sensitivity and the wisdom that's required.

We think of our friend Oki working in Indonesia. Indonesia is the largest Muslim population in the world. We pray for their church.

And we ask that you would continue to build them up in their faith. And give them opportunity and desire to share the gospel with their neighbours.

We thank you for the Bible college that he's a part of. And as they look to train missionaries and church planters for their nation.

[9 : 46] That you would equip them to bring the gospel to those who maybe have not heard it. Or those who are perhaps resistant to it. Lord we remember Suraj and his work in Nepal.

We pray for courage. We pray for power as he preaches and teaches. That you would continue to draw people to Jesus as Lord there.

We think of Pastor Titus and others engaged in church work in Myanmar. We ask that you would encourage them. We pray today that you would build them up in their faith.

That as they look to plant other churches. As folks look to care for orphans and for orphanages. That your spirit would be with them.

That you would continue to build your church there. We think of the vital work of Bible translation. We thank you for those who will use their language gifts to give up years.

[10 : 49] In order to learn a language. To write it down. So as to put the Bible into people's hands. We pray that you would encourage and give skill and perseverance to those who are involved.

That as they live in communities that their lives would be pointing to Jesus. We thank you for the work of Bible distribution. We think of Bible societies all around the world.

As they are so persuaded of the power of your word to transform lives. That they look to put it into the hands of the people. We pray that as people receive Bibles for the first time.

That it would build people in faith or draw people to faith. Lord we think of agencies involved in training new workers for churches.

Those who would teach and preach and plant churches. Those who would be evangelists. We thank you for ETS and the fact that it can train people for at home and for wider afield. We think of

Dumasani in South Africa.

[11 : 53] And we ask that those who teach and those who are being taught would be faithful. That they would be equipped. And that you would use them to bring the good news of the Lord Jesus to many in that nation.

Now we think of Moses working in Taiwan. We think of Sasha working in Moscow. And we pray that you would use them and their organisations to allow more and more people to know the truth that is found in the Lord Jesus.

We think of our friends the Reannos in Colombia. As they look to encourage and to pastor and to counsel those who are involved in ministry. And we pray that by their strong support and by their biblical wisdom.

That they might encourage and keep people serving you. And serving the church. So that your glory would spread. Lord we ask that you would give us a sense of your glory and greatness.

That we would want to be part of your mission endeavour. That by our prayers, by our giving and perhaps for some of us by our going. We would be part of seeing your kingdom come.

[13 : 12] And your will being done on earth as it is in heaven. We pray this so that you would be glorified. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. So now it's an absolute privilege for me to be able to hand over to Carl Dalfred.

Carl and son have been with us for a number of years. They are OMF missionaries working in Thailand. But back here for Carl to do his PhD if you don't know them.

And they're hoping to return shortly. So they'll be leaving us soon. So it's wonderful for us to have Carl preach for us one more time. And we'll also have a chance on Wednesday.

Quick plug for Wednesday. Carl and son are going to talk a little about their story. About their sense of call to the mission field. Tell us a little bit about what the church is like in Thailand.

So that's a call at 8 o'clock on Wednesday. But now it's a pleasure to have Carl to read God's word and to bring it to us. Thanks Carl. This morning's Bible reading comes from 2 Corinthians 10 verses 12 to 18.

[14 : 24] And Romans 15, 17 to 21. First 2 Corinthians. We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves.

When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits. But we'll confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us.

A sphere that also includes you. We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you. For we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ.

Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand.

So that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else's territory. But let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

[15 : 29] For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends. And then our next scripture reading, Romans 15 verses 17 to 21.

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.

By the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Elysium, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known. So that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written, those who were not told about him will see.

And those who have not heard will understand. This morning we celebrate Mission Sunday, an annual event here at Beklue Church.

[16 : 32] But this year, Mission Sunday, when we normally think about missionary outreach around the world, it feels a little bit different because of lockdown and because of restrictions. Generally, when we, in the church, we think about world missions or global missions, we think about going out there, meeting people, sharing the gospel, traveling, proclaiming Christ across cultures.

But this past year, we've all been home a lot. And it's been very tempting to not think beyond our own household, our own limitations. Jesus said, go and make disciples.

But this past year, it's just frankly been difficult to go much of any place. It's been difficult. So in this context, when we're all dealing with more limitations and more restrictions than we've had in the past, how are we to think about missions?

How are we to think about sharing the gospel cross-culturally to the ends of the earth when we're expected to stay home and to limit our contact with others? To think about this, to help us think about what missions means in our current context, I want to take a look at the heart of the Apostle Paul, the missionary heart of the Apostle Paul.

Paul was a man who knew about serving God in spite of external circumstances outside of his control. You see, Paul, at various points, he had been imprisoned, beaten, near death.

[17 : 59] At one point, he was in jail for two years. Now, that's a longer lockdown than I think any of us have experienced yet. Five times, Paul got the 40 lashes minus one.

He was stoned. He was shipwrecked three times, in fact. One time, he was adrift at sea for one night and one whole day. A day doesn't seem like a lot, but if you're drifting at sea, I am sure it seems much longer.

However, Paul said, this is in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, I'm sorry, chapter 11. He said he was in danger from his own countrymen, from the Jews, danger from Gentiles, danger from robbers, danger from false brothers.

He suffered hunger and thirst, cold and exposure. All these things were outside of his control. Yet, somehow, in the midst of this, somehow, Paul remained content and he remained focused on his calling.

How did he do that? In the book of Philippians, chapter 4, starting in verse 11, Paul said, I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstances.

[19 : 03] I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. Think about that, any and every situation.

Whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want, I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Now, from a human perspective, I find this just simply amazing.

How can you do this? But when the Holy Spirit helps us to refocus on Christ and to trust in him, such an attitude, it's not impossible. Myself, personally, I still struggle with contentedness and the temptation to complain.

But through the Holy Spirit, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can all grow in this area. In the midst of all his circumstances, as Paul was learning this secret of contentment, he maintained his focus on serving Christ.

In the book of Acts, in chapter 20, when he was visiting with the elders from the church at Ephesus, Paul said this. This is Acts 20, verse 24.

[20 : 08] He said this. 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.

Now, what was Paul's call? What characterized his missionary heart? And where did that heart come from? It's those three questions that I want to look at briefly this morning.

What was Paul's call? What was his missionary call? What characterized his missionary heart? And where did that heart come from? So let's take a look first at Paul's missionary call.

Paul, as many of you may know, was not always a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, in chapter 9, we find the dramatic story of his conversion from Saul, a Pharisee who hated Christ and was persecuting the church, to one of the foremost servants of Christ, an apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul's call, as it was primarily a call to Christ, to loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 21] As Christians, our primary commitment is not to a cause or to an ideal or to a goal. It's to a person. It's to Christ himself.

Our identity, our meaning, our purpose in life is found in Christ. Paul's conversion on that Damascus road, it transformed him. It transformed his identity, his purpose in life, and his loyalty. It changed him from loyalty to self to loyalty to Christ. In a general way, that's what happens to all of us who are Christians.

God calls us from serving ourselves to wholly and fully serving him, receiving forgiveness from Christ and reconciliation with God.

We were estranged from God, condemned, being children of wrath, who will be judged for our sins. But now, as Christians, we are reconciled, saved, forgiven, adopted as sons and daughters. [22 : 22] That's our identity as Christians. Paul's call and the call on all of our lives is founded in that identity that we are Christ and our loyalty is to him.

Paul's call to the Gentiles was a specific application of the general call that all of us have. In Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20, Jesus said, Go and make disciples of all nations. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean physical travel, but indicates intentionality. Not all of us are going to go to the other side of the world to proclaim the gospel. But as we go, we are to make disciples.

In word and deed, we are to do things and say things that point other people to Christ. As it were, we are representatives of Christ. Paul spoke specifically about this, our role as representatives, in 2 Corinthians 5, where he calls us ambassadors.

He said in 2 Corinthians 5.20, We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

[23 : 34] What does an ambassador do? When the ambassador for the UK goes to some other country, then what he or she says and does is understood as being the will and action of the UK as a whole.

That person, that ambassador, is a stand-in for the whole country. As Christ's ambassadors, the things that we say and we do as Christians should be and are, for good or for ill, understood as who Christ is and what he does.

So, if we're ambassadors of Christ, how should we speak? How should we act so that people know who Christ is? That's our role as ambassadors. That was Paul's role as an ambassador, specifically an ambassador, a representative, an apostle, a messenger to the Gentiles.

That was Paul's call, an ambassador of Christ. How did he try to fulfill that call? Acts chapter 13, we see Paul and Barnabas set apart by the church at Antioch, and they traveled around the Roman Empire.

Paul preached, he disciplined, he established churches, but there are many obstacles to him fulfilling that calling. There are many obstacles for us today in fulfilling God's call upon our lives.

[25 : 00] Now, regardless of what our circumstances are and what we can or cannot do under current conditions, I think it's helpful for us to look at Paul's missionary heart, because even though Paul was sometimes restricted in what he could do, his heart didn't change.

He still had the same focus and the same motivation, even though temporarily he may not have been ideally in the place that he wanted to be, or having the experiences that he wanted to experience.

He trusted in God's sovereignty, that no matter where he was, God's hand was somehow in that, and that he was able to be obedient to God in those circumstances, even if it didn't look like what he thought it should have looked like at that time.

So, two characteristics, two characteristics of Paul's missionary heart. Pastoral care and evangelistic advance.

Pastoral care and evangelistic advance. These two things were in his heart. First of all, pastoral care. As Paul traveled around and preached, sometimes he stayed a short time, sometimes a long time.

[26 : 09] Partially, sometimes he just only stayed a short time because he was driven out of town, he was persecuted, he was stoned, that he had opponents who drove him away. But even when Paul was only able to stay someplace a short time or not be able to visit the believers in the various churches like he wanted to, he was still thinking about them.

He was praying for them. He was writing letters to them. He was planning for the future when he could come back and visit them. And when he wasn't able to go personally, he would send others in his place to check up on and care for the churches that he was connected with.

Now, in the case of the Corinthians, this morning for our scripture reading, one of them, our scripture readings was from 2 Corinthians chapter 10. Now, what's the background for the Corinthian church?

What was Paul's connection with Corinth? Paul had visited there. He preached in Corinth. He saw the birth of a new church there. So in many ways, he was the father.

He was the founder of the church in Corinth. And despite opposition, he stayed there for a year and a half under the protection of the Holy Spirit.

[27 : 18] And he preached, he disciplined, he built up the church at Corinth. Later on, he had to move on. But after Paul had left town, problems developed in the Corinthian church.

There was sexual immorality. There was abuse of spiritual gifts and more. So what did Paul do? He couldn't get back there right away. So he wrote letters to them to address the problems.

Eventually, he made another visit. And when we get to the book of 2 Corinthians, he's laying down plans to visit them again. But while he'd been absent this time, a new problem had developed among them.

There are some false apostles, or in some translations, are called super apostles. False apostles who had wormed their way into the congregation at Corinth. Now, Paul wasn't territorial.

He wasn't jealous. He wasn't opposed to other preachers coming in and building up the work that he had started. In fact, at one point, an evangelist named Apollos came after Paul to Corinth, and he was teaching the congregation.

[28 : 21] We each have our limits. We can't be in every place at every time. And there's many members to the body of Christ, and we all each have our part. Paul understood this.

In 1 Corinthians 3, verse 6, he says, I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the growth. Each of us has our part to play in the body of Christ. We don't all have the same gifts or same abilities, but we just do what we can with what God has given us.

Paul wasn't interested in hogging all the honor among the Corinthians or all of their affection. He wasn't lording it over them in that way. But he was the spiritual father of the congregation.

Now, the problem with the false apostles who would come in wasn't just that someone else was preaching there, but they were boasting. They were trying to exert authority and lift themselves up in the eyes of the Corinthians and push Paul down.

They boasted about how great they were and all their deeds and how much they had done, even beyond the limits of truth. And they were trying to push Paul out of the picture.

[29 : 29] They were saying things like, you know, Paul is mighty in his letters, but he's weak in person. Now, this was a common tactic in the ancient world, to boast about oneself and exaggerate your accomplishments.

It was expected that rhetoric teachers, politicians, would toot their own horns, would talk about all their wonderful accomplishments, and speak derisively of their adversaries.

That's how you got followers. That's how a rhetoric teacher got paying students. Now, in the world today, this is still not uncommon. On social media, among politicians, there's still lots of boasting and comparing.

Maybe you can think of other realms of life where this still happens. But Paul, Paul would have none of it. This just wasn't a Christian thing, comparing ourselves with others all the time, trying to push others down to lift ourselves up, boasting about how great we are.

This is not a Christian thing to do. That kind of thing is what people who want to honor themselves do. It's not what someone who wants to honor God does.

[30 : 37] But in the specific Corinthian situation, because these false apostles had come in and were boasting and lifting themselves up and trying to marginalize and push Paul out of the picture, and to get not only the respect, but also the money of the Corinthians, Paul felt like he needed to say something.

His authority was being challenged, and these false apostles were having a detrimental effect upon the Corinthian church. He had to say something. So, in this context, how did Paul, the missionary founder of the church, speak about his own work?

There's lessons here today for how we speak about our own work, and how we as a church should expect missionaries that we support to speak about their work.

The false apostles had come into Corinth, commending themselves to the Corinthians. They wanted to take control of the church. They wanted the believers there to think they should be paid for doing what they were doing and coming in and trying to control the church.

They were using worldly criteria for judging themselves. Specifically, they were talking about their commanding presence, their shows of power, authority, their impressive speech, their worthiness to merit compensation from the congregation, something that Paul had never done.

[31 : 52] He didn't want to be a burden to the congregation. He got support money from elsewhere, but he didn't want to ask for money from the Corinthians themselves. These false apostles boasted of their Jewish pedigree, their endurance of hardship, their mystical visions.

But Paul's response is this. He says that they have usurped God's role in evaluating their ministry and ignored the only criteria that matters, what God has done in and through them.

Regardless of all these other credentials I could have, the thing that really matters is, is God working in you and through you? It's not really what other people think about us and our work that matters.

It's what God thinks. And oftentimes, we ourselves are not a good judge of our own work. And we may not really be being in a place, know enough to judge the work of other people.

Ultimately, the only judgment that counts is God's judgment. But because Paul wanted to help the Corinthians, he cared for them. He wanted them not to be taken advantage of in this way.

[33 : 01] He set an example, and he told the Corinthians how he wanted to speak with them about his own work. And in the passage we looked at, 2 Corinthians 10, both before and after the passage we read, he talks about the things that it's proper to boast about.

He doesn't really like using the term boasting, but he feels like, well, the false apostles are boasting, and even though this is completely ridiculous to do so, it's foolish to do so, I will boast. What does Paul boast about?

If it could even be termed boasting. He boasted about his own weaknesses, not something you normally advertise to the world. He boasted about his own weaknesses, and in God's work, what God had done among the Corinthians.

Paul thought it was only appropriate to speak about the work that God had assigned to him, not about someone else's work. We shouldn't be claiming for ourselves what someone else has done, and Paul said, I can't do that.

I shouldn't do that. Paul's not trying to win respect for himself by taking, he's not trying to win respect for himself by talking of someone else's accomplishments as if they were his own.

[34 : 21] If they have done something that's worthy before God, so be it. But he can't claim that. He only wants to speak about what God has done. Another thing Paul says that he's not going to do is try to assert superiority over others.

There's no room in the kingdom of God for the comparison game. In 2 Corinthians 10.18, Paul says this, For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

So it doesn't matter how many people praise us, how many likes or thumbs up we get on some social media platform or how many accolades we get from the world. It's only the Lord that matters and pleasing him.

Whether one person is superior or more accomplished or someone else is, it doesn't really matter. Our business is only to do our best in serving God in the place that he's assigned to us.

Paul didn't want these false apostles setting up a bad example for the Corinthians, taking their money and setting up this worldly idea of lifting ourselves up and praising ourselves rather than praising God.

[35 : 30] There's a holy humility that needs to be modeled by a missionary, really for all of us, in only taking pride and only glorying in the things that God has done in us and through us.

And by extension, we can also praise God for the things that he's doing elsewhere, but not taking credit for those things ourselves. This is a picture of Paul's pastoral heart.

Even though he's away from the Corinthians, he's still concerned about them. He doesn't want them to be taken advantage of. He doesn't want them to be confused about what the gospel is, about what it means to walk in faith.

So this is the first part of his missionary heart, pastoral care. He may be away in body, but he's there with them in spirit. The second thing in Paul's missionary heart that's really important to notice is his desire for evangelistic advance.

He cares for the Corinthians. He wants them to grow and be built up in their faith, but he wants to do more than just care for those who are already converted. He wants to be pushing beyond, to go out to where Christ has not been named already.

[36 : 52] He wants to see the church grounded in the truth and growing healthily and with joy. But there's still others who haven't yet heard the good news. What about them? In our world today,

there's parts of the world where the name of Jesus has not been named.

People don't know who he is. Or sometimes they've heard of him, but it's just a name. It's like, oh yes, that Christian God thing. Or even here in Scotland, in the UK, there's an alarming degree of biblical illiteracy.

If you compare people's Bible knowledge and familiarity with Christianity with, say, 50 years ago or 100 years ago or 200 years ago, people just don't know the scriptures anymore.

They may have heard of Jesus, heard of Christianity, know bits and pieces they've heard here and there, but have they heard the gospel? I would conjecture that many people really haven't. They may think they know what Christianity is about, but they don't.

So they may know the name of Jesus, but do they know Jesus? Do they know the gospel? There's a place for us to work in our own families, in our own backyard. Do we have an evangelistic heart like the Apostle Paul to bring the gospel to those who do not know the gospel, both those who think they know him, but they just know his name and don't know much?

[38 : 14] And also to bring the gospel further beyond to those who really have just never heard of Jesus. We see this desire in this passage that we read this morning.

2 Corinthians 10, verses 15 and 16. Paul says this. He says to the Corinthians, our hope is that as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand so that we can preach the gospel in regions beyond, in regions beyond you.

For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else's territory. Paul expressed a similar sentiment to the Romans. In his letter to the Romans, chapter 15, verses 20 to 21, Paul is saying that it was his ambition to preach Christ where Christ had not already been named.

In writing to the Romans, he said that he hoped to visit Rome to encourage his saints there and when he was visiting there to get some support and help from them in pushing even further east to Spain.

We don't know if Paul ever got to Spain, but he certainly wanted to. It was a good thing that he wanted to get there. Now, in this past year, we probably all had things that we wish we could have done.

[39 : 30] We may have had travel plans or events we wanted to do or people we wanted to see, but we never got to them. Circumstances changed and we weren't able to do what we wanted to do.

But even if we can't do all that we want to do, it's good that we have motivations to do those things. If there's good and noble and right things to do, we should hang on to those desires.

And with open hands, though, because we don't know what we'll really be able to do in this life.

Some things we'll get to, some things we won't. The Apostle Paul wanted to go to Spain. He wanted to bring the gospel still further out to where Christ had not been named.

Did he get there? Maybe. Maybe not. We don't have any evidence that he did. But it's a noble and commendable thing that he wanted to do that. Do we have that desire?

Do we have the desire to make Christ known where he is not known? Do we want to do what we can? Do we want to do what we can, what we can do to see the gospel reach more and more people?

[40 : 32] In this day of restricted travel, closed schools, businesses, and churches, limited contact with others, going out to share the gospel with people, especially those we may not know or we may not know very well, it seems well-nigh impossible.

How can we do that? Of course, there's creative possibilities online, and as a church and as people, we're already stepping into some of those possibilities, but those are still limited.

In many ways, it's Zoom or other mediums that are just not quite the same as being there in person. There's more you can do when you physically see someone. Paul knew about this.

Paul is often limited and restricted. He was stuck in jail for a long time, and later he was under house arrest in Rome, but as far as I can tell from reading the scripture, he didn't moan about it.

For me, it's maybe for you, you can answer for yourselves, it's sometimes difficult not to complain. My personality, sometimes I'm prone to take a glass half empty approach to situations, to be cynical, and it takes effort.

[41 : 40] I have to put concerted effort into being positive and being hopeful and looking on the brighter side of things. It's easy for me to slip into pessimism, but I think for me and for all of us, Paul is a good example of being content where we are and making the most of his situation and seeing God's sovereign hand in his circumstances.

Even in jail and house arrest, being beaten and persecuted, he was able to take things as they came and to continue to show care for other people and to keep the flame alive, to keep the flame of wanting to push out in evangelism, alive in his heart, even when he wasn't able to physically go. The desire to preach the gospel where Christ had not yet been named, the desire to preach the gospel where Christ had not yet been named, it stayed in Paul's heart, even when his body had to stay in one place.

In writing to the Corinthians, he hoped that their faith would grow so that the Corinthians, they could help him in turn in pushing out to share the gospel with still more people.

But in order for that to happen, the Corinthian church needed to be healthy. If Paul was always having to put out backfires and solve crises in the Corinthian church, then he wouldn't be able to go out and preach to yet more people who hadn't heard Christ.

[43 : 18] And this is the tension between pastoral care and evangelistic outreach. Myself, having served in the mission field in Thailand for more than a decade, I've seen this tension.

There's a, if you establish a church and, you know, there's people who, believers who are beginning to be able to lead it, the temptation is to think, well, this church is okay, I'm just going to keep pushing on and evangelism.

But the challenge there is if you, if you leave a church too early without ongoing pastoral care, you know, they may, the church may unplant itself. It may descend into conflict and other problems or get sucked off into some sort of heretical cult.

So, a church needs a certain amount of pastoral care until it can really take care of itself. But at the same time, it's easy to become too self-focused and too inward-focused on one's own congregation.

So much so that you never get out in evangelism, that there always seems to be something that needs to be done, some sort of issue that needs to be attended to in a congregation.

[44 : 24] Because as people, we're weak and sinful and there's always going to be some sort of issues and problems in our lives, if not in our lives, then if someone else in the congregation. So, how do you balance this?

Pastoral care and evangelistic outreach. It's a tough nut to crack. But Paul sought to do this. He cared for the congregations, but he also wanted to move out in ongoing evangelism.

Where did Paul's missionary heart come from? That's the last thing that I want to ask here. It's great, because so far we've talked about Paul's missionary call. We saw he wanted to care for the congregation.

He wanted to keep alive the flame of evangelism, regardless of whether he could physically move out and preach the gospel or not. But, how did he do this? Where did this come from?

Sometimes it's easy to look at the Apostle Paul and think, wow, you know, he was just, you know, an absolute saint. He was a spiritual overachiever. But, you know, I'm just me.

[45 : 27] You know, I'm not, you know, super spiritual like the Apostle Paul. You know, it's nice that, you know, he had such an ardent flame to preach the gospel and the boldness to do so. But, but I feel discouraged.

I feel like I'm just sort of putting out fires in my own life and my family's life and right around me.

How can I think about, you know, sharing the gospel with others and moving out beyond that?

Sometimes even if we have the time or ability, we're just discouraged and we can't focus.

Or, sometimes we just don't want to. So, where did Paul's motivation, where did this heart come from? When we're discouraged, we're tempted to look only at our own difficulties, to have a pity party for ourselves.

We do have legitimate needs. They need to be taken care of. God knows our needs and is concerned for us. But, how do we, how do we avoid being consumed by our own situation?

How do we lift our eyes up and find the joy in God's calling and what he's done for us? For Paul, his missionary heart sprang up from the knowledge of what Christ had done for him.

[46 : 40] When we meet Paul in Acts 9, he was a wicked man persecuting the church, but God saved him instead of condemning him. Paul knew he deserved judgment and many times throughout his life, he thought back to what God had saved him from, what Christ had done for him.

he had a very low opinion of himself. He knew he wasn't anything that God should save him or do anything with him, much less make him an apostle to the Gentiles. One of the many places where he thinks back and thinks back to what God has done is in Romans chapter 5.

And in this passage that you hear in chapter 5, starting at verse 6, you can almost hear Paul breaking into this spontaneous praise. He's writing this letter to the Romans, instructing them on many weighty doctrinal matters.

But there's almost sort of a breathless joy in what Paul wrote here. He wrote, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, but perhaps for a good one one might dare to die.

But God shows his love for us in this, that while we're still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we've been justified by his blood, much more shall we save from the wrath of God.

[47 : 59] For while if we were still enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. How much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life? More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now receive this reconciliation.

Paul had joy because he was continually looking back. He was looking back. He was looking back, reflecting on who Christ was and what Christ had done for him and what Christ was continuing to do in this world.

Paul's heart of missionary service was not some sort of extraordinary zeal that he conjured up in himself. It wasn't something that an ordinary believer can't ever hope to aspire to.

But the source of his missionary heart was simply his joy in Christ and his salvation. If we are discouraged, if we are tempted to look only to ourselves, if we are tempted to neglect others, neglect sharing the gospel in word and deed, let us look back to Christ.

Let us remember what he has done for us. Let us remember the blessings in our lives that we have seen by the hand of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us think about his faithfulness to his people in scripture and throughout the ages.

[49 : 22] Let us meditate and reflect upon Christ, looking to him day by day by day in all sorts of circumstances, both easy and difficult, precedented and unprecedented.

Because when we continue to look back, look to Christ, to what he's done and who he is, it's from there that joy and thankfulness springs up. It's from there that we have that motivation and desire to be a blessing to others, not just to absorb God's blessings for ourselves and keep them.

It's not easy to regain or to maintain joy as we're buffeted by the world, the flesh, and the devil, but it's worth it.

To sum up, what I want to remember, what I want you to remember from this sermon is this.

Regardless of our circumstances, let's turn our eyes upon Jesus and kindle our joy and motivation in him.

Let's remember Christ and what he's done for us and what he is doing. Because this is the source of Paul's missionary heart. Paul cared for people pastorally and he wanted to reach out to the regions beyond to make Christ known where Christ had not yet been named.

[50 : 34] As a church, let's behave and speak and think with a Christ-word focus like Paul and let's support missionaries and missions endeavors where there's a commitment to pastoral care and ongoing evangelism as reflected in life of Paul.

Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for the example of the Apostle Paul. We thank you for the joy that he had in you and the salvation that you draw on his behalf and the behalf of all of us.

We pray that we would have thankful and joyful hearts as Paul did and that you would kindle in us a desire to care for those around us in Christ's name and to share your word of life with those who do not know you both in our limited circumstances now and as the world changes going out and beyond as we can to make you known in a multitude of ways using the gifts that we have.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. And now we're going to conclude with our final song, Psalm 67, which is a wonderful song of praise to God asking for his blessing to bless us not for our own sake but so that his name may be proclaimed to the nations of the world.

Amen. O God, may the peoples praise you May all peoples sing your praise For it is us the nations justly May they all rejoice as one O God, may the peoples praise you As they all unite in song Then the land will yield its harvest

[53 : 03] God will pour his gifts abroad God our God will surely bless us Holy and will fear our Lord Lord