

The spirit of Paul

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[0:00] I want to talk along the theme of the life of Paul and some of the actions of the man Paul, the character of the man, and the burden of the Lord that Paul had.

The burden of the Lord. And Acts 17 verse 16. Just going to pick really four verses out of Acts that talk something of the man, Paul. And Acts 17 verse 16 we read, Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. The burden of the Lord. Paul had that.

And I pray and I trust we can be a people like Paul in the way the spirit can move and move us. To be a people truly moved by the spirit. Moved by the spirit. Men and women who are spiritually attuned.

Now there's a lot of talk about the Holy Spirit. But what does it say? What is it saying? That's what we need to have. To be men and women with a burden. A burden. A burden of the Lord.

Now the Old Testament prophets had that. The burden of the Lord. It's one of the things they would speak of when they gave the word of God. Men and women with a burden. The burden of the Lord. Men and women of action.

[1:49] And we see that. And we see that lived out right through the chapters of Acts where we read of the life of this man. This man, Paul. The apostle Paul. And his life. Paul was a man who knew the burden of the Lord. He knew the burden of the Lord in his life. And he was a man who knew the fear of the Lord.

An old time writer said this. We fear man so much. Because we fear God so little. So true, isn't it? And I know just in our Bible study nights of late we've been talking about Paul and reading the book of Romans. We do to start the book of Hebrews, God willing, this Wednesday night ahead. So if you don't normally come on a Wednesday, it's a good time to come. We're starting a new book to read through together. The book of Hebrews.

But as we look through the book of Romans together, we heard of something of the nature, the character of this man Paul. And it stirred me just to think of what he used to be. The man that he was.

What was Paul? He was a Christian killer. He was a killer of Christians. Certainly in complicity with those who were killing Christians, stoning them.

[3:05] And hauling people from Christian gatherings into prisons and into torture and suffering. He was a persecutor of the church.

And what a conversion this man had. And we read here in Acts 17, verse 16, we see Paul comes to this place. And what happens to him?

He sees the idolatry of the city. And it says in Acts 17, verse 16, His spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Now this word stirred, it's a strong word, isn't it? It's a strong word. It could be put in other ways, such as, His spirit was provoked.

He was strongly moved in the spirit. He was urged. He was agitated. He was pained in the spirit. There's one lexicon where I read that he was grieved.

[4:09] He was roused to anger. That was the sense of it. There was an extremity to it. There was a stirring in Paul's spirit as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

And how can we realise the spirit that Paul had in our day, in our time, in our day and age? When we read the news of our day, shouldn't our spirit be stirred?

Shouldn't our spirit be stirred? When we see the headlines, shouldn't we get stirred up about our city? You know, you just have to read the local messenger press, people getting bashed up.

We've heard stories even in our own midst of people suffering violence. The place is filled with violence. You know, the imagination of man's heart is only evil continually.

We see the nature of our city. And we've been talking this morning about the despair and the troubled souls of our city. It's a troubled place.

[5:14] It's a troubled time. And a time of unrest, of lack of peace for the wicked. And we see the city that we reside in, in this neighbourhood, in this city of Adelaide, wider afield, the whole nation, really and truly, is in a state, isn't it?

Australia is not a Christian nation. It is a godless nation. A sinful nation. Let's face it. And shouldn't we be stirred up?

Brother, we should be stirred. Sister, we should be stirred up. When we see the government of our land applauding and celebrating wickedness, wickedness, abomination, we ought to be stirred up like Paul.

Stirred up. Will we be unmoved? Or will we be stirred? Will we act on the burden of the Lord? Paul did. Paul got stirred up. He got stirred up about it. He got provoked in his spirit. And it led him to action. And our conscience should lead to conviction.

[6:25] It should lead to action. So we see firstly there, just one little snapshot of Paul. When he saw the idolatry of the city, he was stirred up in his spirit.

And we read another instance in Acts 18, verse 5, where we see Paul and the spirit of this man, Paul. In Acts 18, verse 5.

In Acts 18, verse 5. In Acts 18, verse 5. Paul came to Corinth in his travels here. He reasoned in the synagogue, persuaded the Jews and Greeks.

Verse 5. When Silas and Timotheus would come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

Paul was stirred in the spirit. Paul was stirred in the spirit. Here we read, he was pressed in the spirit. He was pressed. It's a different word here again. That, again, it's an action word.

[7:30] It's a word of challenge, really. A word that shows the character of the man, I believe.

He was constrained. He was pressed. You could put it likewise. He was compelled.

He was completely, fervently possessed. Devoted entirely. This is the sense of the word. He was pressed. There was a pressure on Paul.

There was a pressure upon his spirit. There was something that made him move. There was something that prompted him. That impelled him. That compelled him.

It was the message of the Messiah. That Jesus was Christ. Not only was he stirred in that other instance, in that other city, when he saw the idolatry, the godlessness, as he was preaching, he was pressed in the spirit.

[8:38] There was a constraint. And we read elsewhere where we are constrained by the love of Christ. It constrains us. It sends us.

We must take the message. That was Paul's character here. He knew the message and he must impart it. He must give it.

He must testify of the Saviour. And this word of God, this message that we have in our hands, this gospel that we have, is a message that the Spirit presses us to deliver.

The Spirit presses us to communicate. This message is a message of wrath. Flee from the wrath to come. It's a message of righteousness.

Not our own, but his, his, his. And it's a message of refuge. A message of refuge from the storm.

[9:42] Of shelter. Of safety. Of certainty. Of security. Of absolute safeguard. Of absolute assurance that we can have in Christ.

A word that presses us. A spirit that presses. We must communicate this message. The message of repentance. The message of salvation.

The burden of the Lord. He was pressed in the Spirit. It speaks of zeal. It speaks of zeal. He could not but communicate it. Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel.

I cannot but speak the things that I've seen and heard. It's a fire in my bosom. And for each of us as believers, we have that message.

Every one of us are meant to be messengers. Transmitting that message. Pressed in the Spirit. It speaks of zeal. Here's what an old time preacher, John Ryle of Liverpool, wrote on the subject of zeal.

[10:52] Zeal. Zeal is a burning desire to please God and to do His will. And to advance His glory in the world in every possible way.

A zealous man is pre-eminently a man of one thing. He is more than earnest, hearty, uncompromising, wholehearted and fervent in spirit.

He sees only one thing. Cares about one thing. Lives for one thing. Swallowed up in one thing.

And that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives or dies, has health or has sickness. Whether he is rich or poor, pleases people or gives offence.

Whether he is thought wise or foolish, gets the blame or the praise. Whether he receives honour or is given shame. He burns for one thing.

[11:52] And that one thing is to please God. Such a one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, he will work and give money.

He will cry and sigh and pray. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will hold up the hands of Moses until the battle is won.

Zeal! We need more of that, don't we? We need to be stirred up. We need to be pressed in the spirit. Are you pressed in the spirit? Are you pressed?

Or are we a bit like that man in the boat that I talked about before? Going down the meandering river without a care, backsliding.

In prayerlessness. Friends, zeal. We must seek it. Earnestly seek it. Seek to please God. That must be our absolute and ultimate goal, mustn't it?

[12:53] As God's people, I trust. The zeal of God that it would consume you. That it would consume you. That you would want to be consumed by that. And to have that message that you must communicate.

That you must testify. To have that sensitivity in your spirit to the things of God. To the spirit of God. That's what Paul had. He was pressed in the spirit.

And there's opportunity for witnessing. You know, I've been encouraged to hear of folk with a spirit getting pressed. With a message that has to come forth.

With a witness they have to deliver. We need that. All of us need that. I need that. People, we need to be pressed in the spirit.

And thirdly, we see another reference to the character of this man, Paul. As we read the next chapter over. Acts 19, verse 21. Again, the common element is something about the spirit of Paul.

[13:57] Something about the spirit of this man, Paul. Acts 19, verse 21. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit. When he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

The words there, Paul purposed in the spirit. There was an attitude in Paul that he had a purpose. He had a purposing in his spirit.

This word you could also put, he was resolved. He was determined. He was moved. He was assigned. He was appointed. He was purposed in the spirit.

There was a purpose. There was something that he had to do. Something that he had a resolution to do. A purpose in his life. A purposing in the spirit.

And another verse is along the line of this too. In Acts 20, verse 22. Where Paul writes, speaks rather. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.

[15:12] He says that I go bound in the spirit. It's got the sense of I'm impelled, I'm compelled, I'm constrained by the spirit.

We read in our Lord that he was driven by the spirit, wasn't he? He was driven by the spirit into the wilderness. We see where the spirit can drive, the spirit can send, send, the spirit can compel us, move us.

And Acts 19, 21, it says that Paul purposed in the spirit. Friends, there's no greater purpose than what our Saviour would have for our lives.

There's no greater purpose than just that. And we need to seek his will. Ultimately, don't we? To seek what is the purpose of God for my life and prayerfully seek to do it.

And that's me, that's everybody here present, isn't it? Every one of us. We all need to prayerfully find and seek the will of God for our lives.

[16:28] And it takes a purpose in the spirit. That's what Paul had. There was a persistence there in Paul.

Here's a quote just along the lines of persistence. How important persistence is. Nothing can take the place of it. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination. That's what we must have. You know, you might be the most talented, smartest, most educated, and yet miss the boat as far as what God's purpose is for your life.

It must be a purposing of your spirit. But you want to press on in that gospel race. Let nothing deter you. Let nothing deviate you from this.

[17:31] Another repeated man who loved the Saviour was General Booth. He had lost his eyesight and his son came to him and had the difficult task of telling his father that there would be no recovery.

And the general asked, Do you mean that I am blind? The son said, I hear we must contemplate that. The father said, I shall never see your face again.

The son, No, probably not in this world. Booth said, Bramwell, his son, I have done what I could for God and for his people with my eyes.

Now I shall do what I can for God without my eyes. Nothing was going to stop him from serving God's purpose. He would serve God.

Why? Because he saw the need. He saw the need even while he was blind. The gospel purpose.

[18:35] The spirit's purpose. Will we heed it? Will we obey it? Here's another account. Charles Spurgeon told some missionaries. Some missionaries went to Greenland.

I think I might know the folk who went to Greenland. There was Zinzendorf. Who are those people? Moravians. Yeah, the Moravians.

Julie and I watched a video lately about the Moravians. And there's another account of Moravian missionaries. And the story went, and it's a factual account, where a man came to Europe as a slave.

And he told of the harsh conditions in the cane fields of, I think it was Ecuador or South America somewhere. And these slaves were there bearing the brunt of the whip and the privation in awful conditions and suffering.

And these two missionaries heard of the story. They saw one of these African, of African origin people who were slaves and now in this other country.

[19:44] And the man showed his back, how it had been beaten and scarred. And these two Moravian missionaries, they said, we're willing to go, even if it means being slaves.

Even if it means going as slaves to serve in these cane fields so that they could witness to these folk. That was the nature of these people, the Moravians, who went to this land.

Spurgeon told a story of some other Moravians, I presume it's Moravians, who went to Greenland, and who also wanted to go and minister, to give the gospel witness to the people native to Greenland.

And Spurgeon said this, he quoted their comment, These people are in such darkness that it cannot be of any use to preach Jesus Christ to them at first.

They do not even know that there is a God. So let us begin by teaching them the nature of the deity, showing them right and wrong, proving to them the need of the atonement for sin, and setting before them the rewards of the righteous and the penalties of the wicked.

[20:52] And Spurgeon said they went on like this for years, without one single convert to Christianity. Spurgeon said one day, one of the missionaries happened to read to one of these poor Greenlanders, the story of Jesus bleeding on the cross.

How God sent his son to die, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life. The Greenlander said, Would you read that to me again?

What wonderful words! Did the Son of God die for us poor Greenlanders, that we may live? The missionary answered that it was so.

Hallelujah. And clapping his hands, the simple native cried, Why did you not tell us that before? They missed the point, going into all the finer detail of theology, and yet not preaching the bleeding land, the precious blood, the saving grace.

The purpose must be clear. The purpose must be the communication of the gospel message. And that can be a message that's confronting. I know the folk down the Rundle Mall, while they're declaring it, they don't generally get people clapping and applauding their eloquence, because it's a message that the world doesn't want to hear.

[22:21] The world curses Christ. Still. It still mocks him. It still spits upon him. And I was in their number. I was one of their crowd. I was one of them.

Cursing him, in effect, by my sinfulness, by my lack of repentance. And it's only when conversion happens, conversion is when the light goes on.

It's when we realise the darkness that is within, without Christ. And that's the message. That must be the message that we must communicate. That we not are only stirred in the Spirit when we see the wickedness of the city, when we see the idolatry of our land, of our government, of our nation, of our community, the Christlessness, the lostness of it.

We're pressed in the Spirit where we must do something. We're pressed. We're sent. And we've got a purpose in the Spirit.

We're purposed in the Spirit with this one thing. Preach Christ and Him crucified.

[23:35] I've determined to know nothing among you save Christ and Him crucified. This one thing. This one thing. This one simple message. And I want to say it over and over and over again so everyone can receive it and respond to Him.

And do not turn away. Do not turn away. Flee from the wrath to come. And we must be communicators of that simple message. And heed His call.

Is there not a cause? Yes, there is a cause. This cause is more than any other. It's more vital, more essential. It's universal. The cause of Christ.

Is there not a cause? And that must be our determination. That must be that which we purpose to do. That which speaks to our spirit.

The Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit. The Holy Spirit stirs up our spirit and puts on our heart a conviction. Will you be empowered to action?

[24:41] To action. Purpose in your spirit to do something for God. This is a call to action.

I'd like to close this message with a call to action. A call to response. You know, we had a prayerful close to our morning service and I believe that the Lord was speaking to hearts today.

And I trust that He can speak to each one here tonight in some measure that our spirit can be stirred. Pressed and purposed.

The Saviour beckons still. His invitation is still extended. This one. The Christ. He speaks to us still today from His Word, by His Spirit.

Come to Him today. Let us pray.