

Introduction:

- The last time I ministered to us I spoke on How Beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News!
 - Beautiful feet are those feet that are going into the fields white unto harvest! It is beautiful to both Jesus and lost souls! Beautiful feet run to the darkness because they realize they are the light that make the darkness flee! They run to the darkness because they know there are prisoners there that can only be freed by the light!
 - We then looked at the two kinds of ground: Ground that is fallow and ground that is plowed.
 - Fallow ground is ground left undisturbed. It has stability. It is safe. It has no seed and will bear no fruit.
 - Plowed ground is ground that has been broken up. It is prepared for seed. Fruit follows plowed ground. Plowed ground is ground that welcomes the tilling by the Lord. Tilled hearts received the seed of Gods Word. And fruit follows the plowing of the fields of those hearts!
 - God is looking for FCC to get plowed, enter the harvest fields, and bear fruit.
- Convenience and Comfort are enemies of the harvest. And they are enemies that keep the church out of the harvest field. The church that fears the plow signs its own death certificate.
- Our text today: *"Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."* (2 Corinthians 11:23-28, ESV) The apostle Paul believed that every person mattered to God. He went to great extremes to let the know.

I. The Temptation Of Convenience

- A. Convenience and comfort are not bad. They are really quite enjoyable. I like AC! I like microwaves. I like Lazy-boy recliners vs. African 3 piece sectional logs. Convenience and comfort are not bad.
- B. Convenience and comfort become bad when they subtly become an idol in our lives. When we choose the subtlety of convenience over the great commission we have been neutralized by hell. Threat eliminated!
 1. The western gospel often sounds like our culture...very convenient.
 - a) God came to save us so we find His 'wonderful plan' for our lives.

- b) God saves us to solve our problems and make us happy.
 - c) Invite Jesus into your heart that you may experience a problem free new life!
 - d) With this kind of Gospel, would anyone ever go to the mission field...to our next door neighbor.
2. When convenience and comfort become our idol we sacrifice the fields white unto harvest on the altars safety and fruitlessness.
 3. When our hearts subtly bow to the god of convenience we no longer take up the cross of Christ; it is now alien to us. In fact, the message of the cross gets lost in the comfort of our spiritual sofa.
- C. Jesus conquered the temptation of convenience and comfort! Luke 4:2-13
1. Vs 3. *command these stone to become bread!* How convenient!
 2. *Worship me and these kingdoms are all yours.* How convenient!
 3. *Jump off this cliff and prove you are the Son of God.* He will catch you. How convenient! Jesus did not allow convenience and comfort to interfere with His mission!
- D. Convenience has the potential to take us away from Jesus and His mission.
1. The rich young ruler: *"Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."* (Mark 10:22, ESV)
 2. Great possessions are nothing more than great conveniences. And when convenience become an idol to us it stops the movement of the Kingdom in our lives.
 3. Notice: Jesus saw what convenience was doing to His soul and in vs. 21 he exposes the mans idol. *"And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.""* (Mark 10:21, ESV)
 4. Go sell your 'conveniences' and you will have treasure in heaven.
 5. We cant let our Gospel be a gospel of convenience nor can we let convenience become our idol.

II. What Is Our Motivation?

- A. Paul was not motivated by convenience or comfort! How do we know this? By looking at what he went through for the sake of Christ and the church.
1. Jesus says to Ananias, "He (Paul) will carry Gospel to Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. Acts 9:15. Big vision!
 2. *"For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* (Acts 9:16, ESV).
 - a) Big suffering! Does God have vendetta with Paul? No! Paul understood what he had done to the church and compared to what Christ had done for him he was willing to suffer, pay the price do what ever it takes to let other know the love God

in light of their guilt of sin!

- b) Because we let convenience get in the way, we eliminate suffering for His names sake into our lives.
- B. Paul gives us insight into what his motivation is. *"Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."* (2 Corinthians 11:23-28, ESV)
- C. Paul was not motivated by convenience or comfort! How do we know this?
1. Greater labors
 2. More imprisonments
 3. Countless beatings
 4. Often near death.
 5. 5 x 40 lashes minus one.
 6. 3 x beaten with rods
 7. 1 x stoned
 8. 3 x shipwrecked
 9. 1 x night and a day adrift at sea
 10. When I traveled
 - a) frequent journeys
 - b) danger from rivers
 - c) danger from robbers
 - d) danger from my own people
 - e) danger from Gentiles.
 - f) Danger in the city, the wilderness, sea
 - g) danger from false brothers, toil hardship, sleeplessness (frequently), hunger and thirst, often without food (frequently), cold exposure.
- D. And daily I carry the pressure and anxiety of all the churches. Paul was not motivated by convenience! Therefore we have to ask what motivated him?
- a) The ekklesia is his concern. The assembly of the body of Christ. Why?
 - b) His motivation is his love for the body of Christ.
 - c) His motivation comes out of the revelation of "the cross!" The cross was what saved Paul!

Conclusion:

- Will we follow Jesus like the disciples or like the rich man the 'wanna be disciple?'
- There is nothing convenient about the Gospel!
 - It is an invitation to die! "Take up your cross and follow me."
 - One only takes up the cross if he is expected to die.
- "I know a place a wonderful place where accused and condemned find mercy and grace. Where the wrongs we have done and the wrongs done to us. Were nailed there with Him there on the cross." *"At the Cross" Lyrics, Guy Penrod, 2005*

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (John 3:18, ESV)