



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Faith in Uncertain Times

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THEME Discipleship from a Distance

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught the world a big lesson – uncertainties can strike suddenly and unexpectedly. Nobody expected that 2020 would kick off with a pandemic that brings so many uncertainties - health crisis, job losses, economic hardships, fear, disruption to church, etc. In his sermon on Acts chapter 20, DSP Edric shared about the Apostle Paul’s perspective of uncertainties, and how believers today can exercise faith in uncertain times.

THE CONTEXT OF ACTS CHAPTER 20

The Apostle Paul met with the elders of the church of Ephesus. This was during his third and last leg of his missionary journey. Paul knew that he would be leaving them for good, so he was preparing the church to face a “new normal” where he could no longer be with them to handhold them. Paul wanted his early church to know what it means to mature in their faith, so that they could stay resilient in the face of uncertainties during his absence.

The circumstance that the believers in Ephesus faced is similar to the situation that churches are in today – where believers are physically separated from their leaders, and discipleship needs to take place from a distance.

THREE KEY THINGS OF OUR FAITH

1. UNQUESTIONABLE TESTIMONY (ACTS 20:18-19, 33-35)

The Apostle Paul had served the Lord tirelessly since the day he arrived into the province of Asia. He reminded the Ephesian elders that they had seen how he had lived the whole time while he was with them. He coveted nobody’s silver or gold or clothing, he earned his own living, and he helped the weak, just as the Lord Jesus did. Paul was showing them that true faith is not merely about what is hearing and preaching, but is backed up by a life of works and deeds that bring glory to our God. It is about living life as Christ did, be a humble servant, and building up unquestionable testimonies for God.

2. USEFUL THEOLOGY (ACTS 20:20, 29-31)

The Apostle Paul said that he did not hesitate to preach anything that would be helpful to the church. He warned that false teachers would arise to distort the truth and lead the church astray in his absence. Paul was challenging the church to discern what is useful versus what is not. Useful theology should invoke acts of love and works of faith, whereas non-useful theology leads to foolish controversies about our faith, endless arguments and quarrels about the law. The reminder for believers today is that we must stay on guard to discern the true Word of God, and avoid disagreements on theology that is not helpful for building the body of Christ.

3. UNSHAKEABLE FAITH (ACTS 20:22-24, 36-38)

Finally, Paul revealed that he was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and he did not know what was ahead of him, except that the Spirit had revealed to him that prison and hardships await him there. He considered his life nothing as compared to his aim to complete the task that the Lord Jesus had given him, the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. This passage showed us that Paul was very focused on finishing his God-given task, such that no amount of future uncertainties could derail his faith in God. Paul had complete trust in the Spirit's leading, and he entrusted his future to God. This is the mark of unshakeable faith.

CONCLUSION

Let us be like Apostle Paul and learn to trust God regardless of the uncertainties ahead.

In conclusion, there are three things we can cling on to as we face uncertainties today:

1. **The Unerring Spirit of God** – God has given us His Holy Spirit to guide us. By being sensitive to the Spirit's promptings and obeying the Rhema Word, we allow God to lead us step by step through times of uncertainty.
2. **The Unfailing Word of God** – Know that all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen (2 Cor 1:20). Therefore, we can believe the Bible that promises us this: "Do not be anxious about anything... and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7). Through trials and tribulations, the unfailing Word of God offers us comfort and strengthens our faith.
3. **The United Church** – In dealing with uncertainties, we must make the effort to stay connected in cell groups, encourage, help and pray for each other. Even if we cannot meet physically as a cell, the bonding and unity forged through various communication platforms can help to sustain us and strengthen us through uncertain times.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the Apostle Paul struggled in his decision to go to Jerusalem where prison and hardships await him? If you were in his shoes, what might you have done? How does his unshakeable faith amaze you?

2. Consider the uncertainties that you have been through before and have overcome by God's grace. How can you relate today's study to your personal experience in trusting God through those uncertain times?

3. Are you dealing with any uncertainty in your family, finance, career, and relationship, and felt tempted to give up on your faith? How has clinging on to the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and the unity of the church / cell group given you strength to handle the situation?