

Thinking Like a Missionary?

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you help us to know you, that you help us to love you, that you help us to trust you. We ask, Father, that... Father, we confess before you that we regularly face things that look really, really big, and they look so big they make you look small.

We ask, Father, that you would help us to remember that you are bigger than anything that we will ever come across other than yourself, that everything is small compared to you. So we ask, Father, that you help us to trust in your greatness, in your glory, that you are the creator, that you are the sustainer, that you are sovereign.

Help us to trust, Father, your means and your provision for us to be made right with you. Father, help us to trust you and long for you. Open our minds and our hearts to receive your word.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Missionaries have been a force of great evil in the world.

Missionaries have been a force for great evil in the world. And right-thinking Christians will stop sending missionaries and apologize for all the harm they've done. Now, that's not actually something that I believe, but I think if I was to say that in Starbucks or in Tim Hortons, people would nod.

[1 : 2 6] Yeah. Missionaries have been a force for great evil in the world. If I was to say that, probably at the University of Ottawa or Carleton, if I was to say it in many, many, many places, it would just be part of the common things that right-thinking people know and understand.

That Christian missionaries have been a force for evil in the world and that Christians should apologize for it and they should stop. And in fact, denominations and churches that, in a sense, come to accept that common view of Canada and of probably not only Canada, but the West, as that sort of seeps into our consciousness, there are many denominations that have stopped, in fact, sending any missionaries at all.

In fact, the Anglican Church of Canada no longer, not as a denomination, sends missionaries as it would have been traditionally understood where part of the primary obligation or role was the sharing of the gospel and the teaching of the Christian faith.

And so it's a very, very common thing. And unfortunately, or fortunately as the case might be, today we have to talk about thinking like a missionary because that's where the Bible leads us.

It's actually one of those hard texts, in a sense, just as certain texts around money or sexuality or politics or some other things in our culture. It's one of those parts where, you know, in my heart of hearts, I'd like to have a sermon and a service that really, in a sense, is touching the needs of people who are not yet Christians and also addresses the needs of Christians.

[2 : 5 9] But nobody outside of the walls of this church, and maybe some of you in here, are thinking to themselves, I really would like to understand how to think like a missionary. Like, it's not one of those questions that we're really conscious of even, even Christians often don't really, they're not even interested at all in trying to think like a missionary or have a missionary view of the world.

So we have a text here today, which is a classic missionary text. It's all about Paul wanting to go. I mean, Star Trek said, boldly go where no man has gone before.

That's really just taking from Paul. I want to boldly go where nobody has gone before to tell about Jesus. And so we have a text, which is not what really most Christians and definitely no non-Christians are even remotely interested in.

And that's what we're going to look at today. So get your Bibles out. We're going to look at it. And I think, I mean, it will be no surprise to any of you that I actually think that this, this biblical text is really, really important around some of the biggest cultural and social issues that we face.

It addresses actually profound human problems and that it's a text that Christians don't know they need, but we really do need because a lot of the spiritual fatality and vigor that congregations, that get ebbed away from congregations or from individuals' lives and they don't understand why.

[4 : 25] And part of it is going back to this failure to be gripped by how the gospel propels us to have a concern, to go to hard people groups and places to the ends of the earth and to share the gospel.

So the text that Nora read, it was Romans chapter 15, and she began reading at verse 14, but we're going to start verse 8 because really verse 14 follows upon what Paul is talking about in Romans, beginning at Romans 15, verse 8.

And it goes like this, for I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness. Now just pause there. What it means is that the circumcised, just one way of referring to the Jewish people, the promised people, the ancient covenant people, and Jesus came as a servant to them because he is going to be the means, he's going to be the suffering servant by which they are reconciled to God.

I'll start with verse 8 again. For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and verse 9 is the dynamite.

Okay? In fact, if you get nothing else out of this entire sermon in verse 9, then that's a good thing. If you leave and you forget about verse 9, I failed. Verse 9 is the dynamite.

[5 : 55] And it says this, And in order, why did Christ come? In order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. Why is it that Jesus came?

He wanted pagans from every people group on the planet to receive mercy from him that makes them right with him so that they could glorify God and enjoy him forever.

And that's why Jesus came. When we look at the transgendered communities, when we look at the gay communities, when we look at the artistic communities, when we look at the hard-left political communities that seem to be so opposed to much in the Christian faith, when we look at the people who are profoundly pro-choice and find Christians very, very threatening and hateful, when we look into Asian communities and African-American, African-Canadian communities, when we look to China and we look to Japan and we look to South Korea, we are not to see people that we should be frightened of, that we should treat as other, or that we should hate or be afraid of.

We should look at them and have to know that it's the heart of God that people from every one of those people groups would glorify him.

That's his heart. That people from every one of those groups, with no exception, would come to glorify him for his mercy.

[7 : 39] That's the motivation for missions. And to lose that motivation is to start to shrivel and die as a Christian and as a church. Verse 9 again, and then we'll keep going, and then I'm going to put it up on the screen just so you get this, this sort of this big thing at the beginning, and all of the rest of the stuff in verse 14, and it only makes any sense if this has sort of gripped your heart in some way at all.

Verse 9 again, in order that the Gentiles, that's the pagans, might glorify God for his mercy. And then he's going to quote the Bible as it is written, therefore I will praise you among the pagans and sing to your name.

And again it is said, rejoice, O pagans, with his people. And again, praise the Lord, all you pagans, and let all the peoples extol him. And again Isaiah says, the root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the pagans, in him will the pagans hope.

Now here's this prayer, a prayer that God writes for us to pray. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Andrew, could you put the, I've just taken the scripture text, I've just sort of put basically the beginning and the end together. I've not done anything to take it out of context, but could you, could you all say this with me because this is the heart, all the things that are going to follow, this is the heart of the text, this is the missionary heart of the gospel.

[9 : 08] Could you say it with me out loud? For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcisions to show God's truthfulness in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. That's Paul's message.

And in fact, Andrew, could you just put up my summary, or Rebecca, my summary point? The living God desires men and women from every people group on the planet to enter together into the joy, peace, and hope of glorifying him for his saving mercy in Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

See, the book of Romans is, we're going to look at Romans 1, 16 to 17 in a moment, but the whole book of Romans begins with Paul's, you know, he's unashamed of the gospel.

The gospel is what God has done. The gospel is power that comes from God, that's a right power, that's a just power, that's a merciful power, that comes from God.

[10 : 28] It's the news that God has provided a powerful means by which, when we put our faith and trust, faith in God, in his power, his means, that he will make us right with himself.

And that's the gospel. And then Paul has spent all of Romans 15, all of Romans, the book of Romans, just trying to help us to understand that so that we would be gripped by it. And now as the book of Romans is coming to an end, and his concern is once again to just drive into us that as we receive this gospel ourselves, as we receive this power from God ourselves, that it would naturally compel us, as we're gripped by it, to have a changed view of every people group in the world, and to have a heart for every people group in the world, with no exception.

And so that's why I've tried to put it here, summarizing this scripture text. Could you put it in the scripture text again, Rebecca? Can you flip back to it? Could you say it all out loud with me? Remember, this is the whole, you know, if you're going to fall asleep after this, then I guess at least you'll remember the part here that's the important part at the beginning, not the end.

But could you say this with me out loud again? For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. And then, Rebecca, if you could flip that first point back up on the screen.

- [12 : 11] The living God desires men and women from every people group on the planet to enter together into the joy, peace, and hope of glorifying him for his saving mercy in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

Now, there's no question that some missionaries have done great evil throughout the history. I'm not going to say that every missionary was perfect, that he or she did a spectacular job that they were self-effacing and humble and sacrificial.

Nobody can make that type of claim about anybody or any group. But, you know, it's really, really, you know, I think if you actually were to study the history of missionaries in terms of what they've done, and then you compare it to what armed forces have done, business people have done, academics, aid groups, the United Nations, Christians, I actually think Christians don't have to hold their head low.

I really don't. It's not as if somehow or another the United Nations, for instance, has done such a spectacular job throughout the world that it's putting Christians to shame.

I don't think it's the case. And I think it's a lot of time, a lot of the criticism of missions is really a criticism of just of the gospel in general, but it's not really a fair type of thing.

- [13 : 44] And in fact, actually, and here's the human problem, in our culture, it would be widely accepted in our culture that we shouldn't be ethnocentric. And in fact, one of the dangers of some missionary movements throughout the past is that they didn't just share the gospel, but they also were trying to share British culture or Canadian culture or American culture.

And there's no denying that sometimes missionaries would get that quite confused or not be able to necessarily understand the difference between a cultural thing and a biblical thing. But it's a common human problem if you think about it for a second.

And it's, on one hand, at least in our culture, because many cultures think there's nothing wrong with ethnocentrism. They would just say that, I don't know, our culture is the best culture.

I mean, that would be, the whole idea of actually being critical of our culture is really a Christian idea because it's a Christian idea because the power of the gospel is that the gospel does not emerge out of any culture.

The gospel is something that comes from God. And the culture is going to come, the gospel is going to come from God just as the Bible doesn't in a sense really emerge out of any particular culture, but that the Bible is ultimately God's word.

- [14 : 59] And as a result, every culture, there's going to be some things in the culture that resonate with the gospel and resonate with God's word. And there's always going to be in every single culture something which is offended by God's word and is offended by the gospel.

There's not going to be as if there's a culture that perfectly aligns with the Bible and with the gospel. So, you know, at the very, very heart of this Christian faith is this idea that there's always something a little bit limited about every particular culture.

And, you know, so it is in our modern age, we, you know, accuse people of the dangers of ethnocentrism. Yet, you know, if you think about it, when it comes to things like abortion or same-sex rights or transgendered rights, our culture, the leading progressive edges of our culture are quite willing to transgress and step all over other cultures in pushing that.

But isn't that ethnocentrism? Like, why isn't that ethnocentrism? Like, why isn't it? I don't understand why that isn't ethnocentrism. And, like, where is it within the culture that you can find, like the leading progressive edges of our culture, that you can find some type of self-critical approach to understanding what it is that's going on in the Western cultures, whether it's through business or whether it's through the media or whether it's through social action, where is it within a culture outside of the Christian faith, any type of self-critical reflection upon what's being done.

You see, I actually think that texts like this and the biblical mandate, that the understanding that the Bible is coming, something that's a word from God, that Jesus, actually, why don't we put up Romans 1, 16 to 17.

[16 : 44] Can you put that up for me, Rebecca? Can we all say this together? For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. So here we see that the gospel, that means good news, not good religion, not good advice, not good culture, not good techniques, but good news and it's good news that God has revealed a type of power that God has revealed, not that sort of somehow human beings have discovered, but that God has revealed, God has done something and God has done something that breaks into our human order and it's something that he does which is right, it's his power, it will make people right with him and it's a way that will make people right with him that's completely right, it's completely just and it's completely and utterly, it fits with who we are and who God is and it's completely and utterly received by faith and it's a power that comes from God.

And so even if we Christians don't always get it, we at least understand that there has to always be a bit of a self-critical perception of our culture and our practices just as there should be a heart for other people.

This was very, very, very powerfully illustrated to me about 13 years ago when I went, I was one of four Canadians that was invited to go to this international consultation of Anglican evangelicals, an international consultation and it was in Kenya, Limuru, Kenya and I was one of four Canadians who got to go.

Most of the people who were there are from the two-thirds world and one of the things that went on in the conference was that we spent most of the time, about half the time with about the same group of about 15 people discussing some theological issues to try to come to a common mind and the one that I was in was one of the most theological issues.

[18 : 49] Some of them were more missiological or economic but it was around the uniqueness of Christ and there were three guys there from England. They all had PhDs from Oxford or Cambridge.

From their point of view, I'm a guy from third-rate universities and only a master's degree and there was Sri Lanka, India, Singapore.

There was lots of Christians from Africa. There was somebody from one of the indigenous tribes in South America and I went into this conference excited, a bit nervous because as I've shared in other times, it was a time when there was some significant violence and most airlines weren't flying into Kenya but I decided that I would go.

My wife and I prayed. We decided I would still go. Anyway, I really wanted to try to honor this distinction about not importing my Canadian way of doing Christianity and talking about the Christian faith.

I really wanted to sit and listen deeply to how a Nigerian or a Kenyan or somebody from Sri Lanka would articulate these theological things. Anyway, we go into this and we get talking about this in our group of about 15 people and lo and behold, to my complete and utter surprise, the three people from England with their doctorates were basically trying to change the doctrines of the uniqueness of Christ to make it compatible with fashionable post-modernism in England.

[20 : 21] And I'm really taken aback by this. At first, I'm just sort of giving them the benefit of the doubt but they just keep wanting to change the doctrines, changing the wordings and everything and I know because of my background that they're just wanting to make this doctrine acceptable to post-modern narrative and discourse in the West.

So I start to go after them and I start to challenge them and it really, you know, I go after them and they're also making all these really negative, you know, they're making these like dismissive comments about the idea of demons and stuff like that.

Dismissing it is like a type of myth. I'm going after them, going after them. For two days, I'm the only one going after them and I'm getting tired and nobody else, the other 11 are just silent.

At the end of two days, I say, well, I'm tired of doing this. I'm just going to be silent from now on. You know, whatever. I just got the worst group. Like, why is it always me that I get the worst group?

And then just, this doesn't always happen this way in life but this is one of those times where it happened to me in life this way. That after I had made this decision, I was going to speak out anymore. the very next day at breakfast, three brothers, one from Sri Lanka, one from Singapore and one from Nigeria.

[21 : 38] They said, can we talk to you? And I said, sure, let's talk. And then, they said to me, you know, a guy from Sri Lanka, a guy from Singapore and a guy from Nigeria, they said, when we came to this conference, we didn't want to mistake our cultural practices in our countries for what's in the gospel.

We really wanted to learn from each other. That's what they said to me. And so, at first, when these three guys from England start talking, we just think, well, okay, this just must be something the way they talk in England.

But then they said to me, you're white. You're from the West. And you start disagreeing with them. And everything you say, we agree with.

And everything that they say, we completely disagree with. And it's taken us two days because we wanted to be really patient, but we came to understand that it's not a cultural difference. They're wrong. That they're not being faithful to the gospel and they're not being faithful to the Bible.

We want to thank you for revealing that to us and to keep it up. After that, they went after them, by the way. It's one of those funny things. I could just sit back and they went after them.

[22 : 52] And that really made them squirm, the three people from England, because they did not want to be ethnocentric. And now all of a sudden, it's not just the rube from Canada who's going after them.

But what do they do when all of the rest are going after them to challenge them as to whether they're being faithful to the Bible? You see, what I'm trying to get at is that there's something inherent to this message that both draws us in love to the world and acts, if we have a conscience at all or a heart at all, to make us challenge and try to understand the difference between our cultural practices, our personal likes and dislikes, and what's God's heart.

And the true and living God is the true and living God for every person who is on the planet. There is only one true and living God. There is only one creator. There is only one sustainer. There is only one who is sovereign.

And he does not pick and choose and say that America is his favorite and he hates South Korea or North Korea or China. He doesn't pick any favorites like that. Every nation, every people group is under God's judgment and every people group, every person in every people group needs the gospel.

There is both something here which is universal, which we can share. And at the same time, as we go deeper into the gospel and deeper into the scriptures, provides a mechanism by which we can be self-critical about our culture.

[24 : 20] Could you go back to the point number one? Could you put that up again, Rebecca? I'm really making it work hard today. The living God desires men and women from every people group on the planet to enter together into the joy, peace, and hope of glorifying him for his saving mercy in Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

Now here's the big challenge. We're not going to look at verses 14 and follow. We're going to go through them very, very quickly. And I'm going to do something, any of you who've studied how you do public speaking or if you listen to Andy Stanley, they'd all go, oh my good grief, this is the wrong way to do it.

I'm going to have lots of points. It's really just, what I'm going to try to do for the rest of it, I'm going to help you to pray the scriptures. That's what I just want to do. I just want to help you to pray the scriptures. To take a text and say, how do we pray it?

But here's the thing, you know, this is a huge challenge for me because I can be very, very shy about sharing the gospel. I really can. Like, it's not something natural that I do.

This past week, there's a man that I've been praying for at one of the Starbucks that I regularly go to. I've been praying for him off and on for several years. He's about my age.

[25 : 33] He's very, very fit. Drives a really, really, really high, I mean, a really expensive vehicle. He just, he's, I don't want to say anything more about him in case I give away some identity things, but he's obviously very, very, very, very successful and he seems very, very confident.

And I have to confess, I just think that people who are very successful and very confident, often they can be very far from God and not know they realize and they don't, maybe they can be like the story of the rich man not knowing that they need God.

So I started to, I've been praying for him off and on. So this week, I think it was Thursday, I'm there working on my sermon. He comes up to me and he says, because we've been nodding at each other for a while, hi, hi, hi.

And he comes up to me and he says, whoa, I see you working here all the time. Are you working on a book? Now, okay, here's what goes on in my mind, okay?

Because here, I'm being honest, I'm not a natural evangelist. I really, I get terrified, okay? In our culture, saying that you're a pastor goes, boo. Saying you write a book goes, whoa.

[26 : 42] Whoa, you're working on a book, buddy, you know, whoa. Pastor, boo. Book, whoa. Okay, so you, this is going through my mind, right, very, very, very quickly, you know, I could say, yeah, yeah, you know, I'm doing some writing and thinking and, you know, etc.

You know, I could probably even turn it about, yeah, you know, the meaning of life and deep questions and I could answer that question in such a way that he'd go, whoa. All flashes quickly before my tired little mind and I say to him, this is one of those good stories for me, not one of the bad times when I failed, okay?

But I said to him, well, actually, I'm not working on a book. I'm a pastor of a church. I'm working on a sermon. And I'm reading the Bible and I'm working on a sermon. And he goes, oh, well, that's interesting.

Then he said to me, I thought that's what you were doing. I thought that's what you were doing because I've seen you with your Bible open, pounding away at it. Anyway, it turns out that he goes to one of the better-known evangelical churches and has been a Christian for 40 years.

I've been praying for the wrong guy. I didn't tell him I was praying for his salvation for the last two years. But I, you know, the angels laugh, right?

[28 : 05] And here's the whole thing because I, you know, I have shared times where I do share something about like I'm a pastor and people go, oh, like that, you know. But this is one of those times that he became even more friendly, right?

And he'd noticed that I was reading the Bible, that I wasn't just writing a book. I don't know why he asked me the question in that way, but anyway, it was all from God, I guess, right? So, there's a reason why I was telling you this story.

I can't remember what the reason is now. Anyway, oh, that's it. That's it. This text is so important for us.

If we understand that the reason that God, Jesus came, not only to show God's truthfulness, his faithfulness and his truthfulness, but it's his heart that people from every people group would glorify God for his mercy, that they'd enter into hope, that they'd be filled with joy, that they'd have peace, that they'd know the power of the Holy Spirit, that they'd abound in hope, that that's why Jesus came.

That's why he came. And so my neighbors, I shouldn't look at it. I should look at it that this is what God wants for them.

[29 : 18] And he's put me in my neighborhood to pray for them. And that when I go to, whether it's a Tim Hortons or a restaurant or a Starbucks, part of the reason that God has put you in that restaurant is that you can pray that those people, you don't know if they're Christians or not, but if they're not Christians, that God wants them to have joy.

It's not all about you. It's not all about your experience. It's not all about how successful you are. It's not all about your problems. It's not all about how perfect you are. It's all about the fact that God has done something and he desires.

Human beings were made to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And we share the gospel so people can enjoy God and worship him. We're to pray for that opportunity.

Let's go through this, the rest of the book very, very quickly. Verse 14. I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourself are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

Now just pause. Isn't that sort of a neat thing? Paul's done a lot of rebuking throughout the book, but at the end of the day, he believes that, you know, goodness is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Did you know that? Look in Galatians chapter 5.

[30 : 36] What are the fruits of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Could you put up the prayer, please, Rebecca?

Can you, I'm going to ask you to say these prayers with me. This is the really powerful thing. At the end of the day, Paul, this is what Paul believes. That because it's a power that comes from God and God, the gospel still works and the Holy Spirit still works.

And that means, could we pray this together? Lord, please help me to trust that you can work in and through ordinary Christ followers. So we need to pray that God, God does work through ordinary people.

He uses ordinary people to instruct others. The gospel works. verse 15. But in some points, I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, to the pagans in the priestly service of the gospel of God so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable.

In other words, that as the pagans come to faith and they offer themselves to God, that it will be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. in Christ Jesus, then, this is verse 17, I have reason to be proud of my work for God for I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum, I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ.

[32 : 26] I'll just sort of pause there for a second. Could you put up the next point, please? This is what we're being asked to pray for here, is that Paul was able by word and deed, and when it says here by signs and miracles, that's not something, like you can't go out and say, well, if you do, you know, 400 push-ups, God will do a miracle, or if you run the marathon, God will do a miracle.

You can't engineer that. There's no technique to accomplish that. What you do is you ask. You say, Lord, I need a miracle here. We don't have any money. We need money, Lord.

We need a miracle. Every conversion is a miracle. Lord, that man, that woman, looks like they could, they hate God, or they don't need God, or that man or woman, look, they're far more educated than I am.

They're far more powerful. They're far more successful. How can they ever possibly need the gospel? You know, we look at the world and we see all these big things, and we don't realize that they're small and that God is bigger and we've got to call out to God in prayer, and God does do miracles sometimes.

Some of us can testify to different miracles that God has done in our lives, but we accomplish them by prayer. And so what the challenge here is for us to pray the scriptures is this. Could you pray this with me, please?

[33 : 41] Lord, please help me to bear witness to the gospel with words, to live a life that is gripped by the gospel, and to pray with persistence and hope for the lost.

And I put down the word the lost. I know that's very politically incorrect, but it's a Bible word. Not right here, but it's a Bible word in the book of Romans. And that's what this, this is a challenge for us.

Is, you don't have to explain the whole, I got into a conversation yesterday with two Jehovah Witnesses in one of my Starbucks. 20 minutes. one of them is the mom, a very, very active witnesser in Ottawa, and her daughter just come back on furlough as a missionary to another part of the world who's a Jehovah Witness.

And, you know, at the end of the day, I just shared with her, with them, you know, you don't normally get to have a longer conversation like this.

Most of the time, you don't. Most of the time, just bearing witness. I'm a pastor. I go to church on Sunday. Will I actually pray? I actually believe the Bible. It's just a small word of witness. That's most of the time all that we have to do. You never know when it will be like the Jehovah Witnesses that had seen me there with the Bible many times and they finally initiate a conversation.

[34 : 58] We have a 20-minute conversation about how unless you understand the Trinity, there's no understanding of God's true love and unless Jesus is actually God and man, there's no way he could possibly be your Savior.

And that you need God to do everything to make you right with him. If you're depending upon your own efforts and that's how our conversation went. A Jewish man at the same Starbucks that I've talked to for several years now, just after Easter, he said to me, these are these times when you get these opportunities.

I don't know what happens to them. All I can do is pray. And I'd had lots of very small conversations. It just began with the fact that I was reading a Bible in public. It just began with very simple things about the fact that I'm a Christian.

And he came up to me about three weeks after Easter and he said, he's from Israel, he said, George, I've been asking many Canadians this question and none of them can give me a good answer but I think maybe you can.

He said, you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? Yes. You believe that he came from God? Yes. And you believe he died on the cross?

[36 : 09] Yes. Why do you call it Good Friday? So I said to him, well listen, I'm working on my sermon, I don't have time to talk.

No, I didn't say that. I got this 20 minute opportunity just to talk to him about the Old Testament law, about Passover, about the whole thing, about Jesus. You know, I fail many, many opportunities.

There's, I share with you some of the times I walk away wishing I'd said something and, but sometimes all you're asked for is to bear witness with words. And all you're asked for as well is as much as possible to try to, by deeds, to live a life that reflects the glory of God.

And to not say people's no for them but to not only pray for your loved ones that they would come to a saving faith in Jesus but to pray for hard people. Pray for the Orthodox Jew that you know.

Pray for the devout Muslim. that you know. Pray for the transsexual activist that you know. Pray for people who are hard as well.

[37 : 21] God has put them on your heart or in your path for a reason. It might be that you are the only one on the planet who will pray for them. verses, let's continue reading verse, where am I?

Verse 22. How are we doing? Yeah, we're doing fine. Verse 22. For this reason, sorry, this is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.

But now, because he's been hindered because he's been working in all these other areas. Okay? But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain and to be helped on my journey there by you once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. Now just sort of pause there. It's beyond the scope of this text, but for internal reasons in the book, this book was probably written when Paul was in Corinth and he's writing it to Rome and he says he wants to go there and he says, but first I'm going to go to Jerusalem.

That's the opposite direction. And the reason he's going the opposite direction is because the poor need help. Because he's been raising money for the poor.

[38 : 48] Could you put up the next point, please? Oh, sorry, I've missed a point. Never mind. Let's, that's the two points down. Lord, there we go.

That's the one. Could you say this with me? Lord, please help me to remember the poor. That's a good prayer to pray. Lord, please help me to remember the poor.

I don't know what's going to happen when you pray these prayers, but you see how all of a sudden this is all connected to the missionary endeavor. You see how so many things in this text are connected to being a vital Christian life is to have this heart that God has the heart for the world and if we lose our heart for the world, then we, other things go too.

Could you go back to the earlier point that I skipped over? This was the, this is the thing from the fact that Paul had gone to Alaricum and he's gone here and he's gone there and he's gone there and he's gone there and this for Paul is just the normal Christian life.

Could you pray this with me please? Lord, please help me to be a local Christian and a world Christian. Like we not only have to have a heart for Ottawa, we have to have a heart for the world.

[40 : 01] It should excite us to hear what's going on in the world. We don't want to just be caught up in our own little thing. Let's just continue reading. We're almost done. Verse 26.

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it and indeed they owe it to them.

For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. Could you put up the, I think it's prayer number six, please?

Could you pray this with me? Lord, please help me to grow in generosity. That's what happened here. As the gospel touched their hearts, generosity grew.

Generosity in terms of their finances. And so they willingly gave not only for Paul to be able to preach the gospel without charge, but they gave so that the poor would be helped.

[41 : 03] And so that's why this prayer, this Paul is just teaching us that if we want to pray the scriptures, this text is asking us, asking us, asking God to help us to become more generous with our financial resources.

Verse 28, when therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.

I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Now just pause, second to last, almost done. a church father who wrote around the year a little bit after this, a letter of his has been found and he claims that Paul did go to Spain.

After his Roman imprisonment, he did go to Spain. But Paul, in desiring to go to Spain, wanted to go to a hard place. Why is that a hard place? They didn't speak the language that Paul spoke.

There's no record at that time of any Jewish settlements in Spain. So that meant that Paul would have to go to a place where he couldn't first go to his Jewish brothers and sisters and speak the gospel and use maybe having the first converts be Jewish people.

[42 : 25] But he was going to go to a place, obviously some of them would have known Latin and Greek, Paul would have known that, but they had their own local indigenous languages that he wouldn't have known. Paul wanted to go to a hard place.

That's where he wanted to go. Now this text isn't telling all of us to individually go to hard places, but what it's telling us is that we should have a heart that God is always raising up people from our midst who will go to hard people and share the gospel with them and go to hard places.

That's part of healthy Christianity. Could you put up the prayer, please? Could you pray this with me? Lord, please raise up people to go to hard places and hard people groups, and please help us to support them with our prayers and time and resources.

Because Paul says when he's going to Spain, to Rome first, he's hoping that they'll financially support him, he's hoping for logistic advice, and he's probably hoping and praying that maybe one person there was originally from Spain, and that he could talk him out of being a lawyer or something, to go and do a hard thing.

Final bit, verses 30 to the end. I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God. The word strive can also mean struggle, to struggle, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

[44 : 08] May the God of peace be with you all. Amen. Last prayer. Could you put it up, please? Could you all stand for this bit? We're going to close with, we'll pray this prayer together, and then I'll just close with a prayer, because this is how Paul ends this bit.

Romans 16, he's going to be now saying, you know, next week we look at it, Romans will be finished next week, he's thanking this person, commending this, and like a final benediction, but this is this final thing.

Paul's asking them to commit to struggle in prayer, to strive in prayer, not just say a quick prayer, nothing wrong with quick prayers, love quick prayers, pray that we can say more quick prayers, but sometimes God calls us to a season of life where we strive and struggle in prayer.

We commit to not just pray, it doesn't come easily that we're called to a deeper season of prayer, and that's the challenge of this scripture text to us. Can we pray it with me?

Lord, please make me a person of prayer, and make us a praying church. Let's just bow our heads. Father, we thank you for the many missionaries that have arisen out of this congregation, and the many different places they're serving.

[45 : 23] We thank you, Father, for the two in our midst that are just on the edge of going to, one to a very hard place, one to just a distant place, all with hardness and hardship, but we thank you, Father, for them.

We ask, Father, that you make us not just a local church with a concern for our neighborhood and concern for our city, but you help us to always be world Christians, Father, with a heart for the poor across the planet and a heart for the great need for the gospel across the planet.

Father, make us local Christians and world Christians, and make us a praying people, Father. Make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, living for your glory, who are pouring our hearts out in prayer and living generous lives.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.