

For Now We Live!

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[0 : 00] 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 verses 6 through 13 today. But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you.

For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord.

For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you? For all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Amen. Well, all of us have passions in our lives, don't we? I don't mean just mere interest, but passions, priorities that shape the way that we live our lives.

[1 : 38] They shape who we are. They shape what we do. They are identity shaping in some sense. They are those things that give us purpose, that arrest our thoughts and capture our affections and drive the initiatives of our lives.

For you, they may be your kids. It may be your relationships. It might be your career.

It might be certain hobbies. It could be charitable endeavors or causes. It could be a combination of those things. It could be passions, things that help you get up in the morning, things that are on your mind, things that you're driving out, things that you will shape your schedule in order to pursue and in order to do and participate in.

This passage shows us Paul's greatest passion. We've been studying about it now for several weeks, going all the way back to chapter 2 and verse 17.

It's really one big unit starting in 2.17, working all the way through the end of chapter 3. What it is is essentially Paul's memoirs of his passion, the thing that helps him get up in the morning, the thing that's on his mind, the thing that shapes his prayer, the thing that shapes everything that he does, his affections and arrests his attention.

[3 : 08] And what is that passion? It is the salvation of others. It's the salvation of others. Let's take a moment and just rehearse that context so that we can fully appreciate this passage and all that Paul indicates for us here.

Remember that since being forced to leave Thessalonica, Paul and his team in verse, in chapter 2 said that they were endeavoring more eagerly and with great desire to do what?

To get back to Thessalonica. And he was keen on doing that because he feared that Satan might have tempted them to abandon the faith.

And that in abandoning the faith, there would be no fruitfulness in this gospel labor there. And he kept trying to get back, but he couldn't get back. He says, Satan keeps hindering us and I can't get back to you, but I keep trying to get back to you.

And I want to get back to you because I'm afraid that the afflictions that you are enduring right now, that Satan's going to use them, he's going to tempt you, and you're going to abandon Christ. That's his passion.

[4 : 23] With an eye fixed on Jesus' return. Have you noticed, just as a side note here, have you noticed how many times Paul has referenced the return of Christ in this letter?

Over and over and over. It's probably the strongest theme in the letter. His mind is fixed on the return of Christ. When it comes to affliction, he's thinking about the comfort that will come at Christ's return.

Even as he thinks about his ministry to the people in Thessalonica, what is it that is on his mind? It's the return of Christ. He knows Christ is coming. And he knows that when he comes again, he's coming in judgment.

And that no one who is unbelieving at the judgment will be saved. And that's what's driving his passion. He wants to get back. He's concerned that this affliction is going to tempt them to abandon Christ, and that he will not have the joy of presenting them faithful to Christ at Christ's return, that they would be lost.

And since he was unable to get there himself, we learned last week that Paul sent Timothy in his stead. And he sent him really for two reasons. First thing Timothy was to do was to investigate.

[5 : 43] Timothy, go. Check on them. See how they are. And come back and let me know. Tell me, are they persevering? Are they being faithful? Are they staying true to Christ?

And then Timothy was to strengthen their faith as he was there. But he was to do it in a particular way. Remember, last week, how were they to persevere? It was through gospel exhortation.

It would come not through Timothy patting them on the shoulder and saying, now, there, there, everything will be okay. No, it wouldn't be that. It would be Timothy coming and establishing and exhorting their faith by preaching the gospel again and again and again and again.

Biblical exhortation, biblical exposition is the path to a persevering faith. Paul knew that. So he sends Timothy in his place and he says, I want you to investigate and report back.

And while you're there, strengthen them. Preach the gospel to them. Strengthen them with it. And then when we get to verse six, which we read just a moment ago, Paul recounts the moment that Timothy returns and offers his report.

[6 : 49] And as it turns out, the Thessalonian Christians were persevering in faith and love and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only that, but they remembered Paul kindly, longing to see him as much as he had longed to see them.

That would have been such an encouragement to him, wouldn't it? It would seem that some of his comments in chapter two were coming from a fear that maybe the enemies in Thessalonica were accusing Paul of being an unfaithful minister.

That somehow they had turned the hearts of the Thessalonians away from Paul, as had happened in other places. Timothy comes back and he says, not only are they faithful to Christ, but they love you, Paul.

They remember good things about you, Paul. They want you to be there as much as you want to be there, Paul. What an encouragement. All of Paul's tension that is building in the previous verses suddenly in this passage burst into joyful expressions of relief.

Relief due to the good news brought by Timothy. And all of this revealing the nature of Paul's deep passion for helping others follow Jesus.

[8 : 08] The key statement comes to us in verse eight. Would you just set your eyes on it again? Notice what Paul says here. For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord.

Oh, Thessalonians, now I'm really living if you are steadfast in Christ. What does he mean?

Well, it's clear, isn't it? Paul's life was bound up in magnifying Christ by making disciples. It's a passion that superseded all other passions for him.

And the idea of the Thessalonians falling away from Christ was like death to him. But Timothy's report was life-giving. It was like he could breathe again.

In fact, the word, live, it could be translated breath or breathing. It's as if all that tension, all that anxiety in the verses leading up, all of this concern that he had for the Thessalonians, finally Timothy comes and it's like he can finally, like he can breathe again.

[9 : 22] Oh, now I live. Now that I know you are standing firm in Christ. It's what he lived for. Seeing other people follow Jesus.

Helping other people follow Jesus. And of course, that begs the question, what are we living for? What are we living for? There's four facets of Paul's reaction and response here that I want to point out.

I want to show you his comfort. I want to show you his worship. His persistence. And then of course, his prayer at the end. And my hope is to move through the first three fairly quickly so we can camp just a little while on the last one.

First, I want you to notice the report brought him comfort. It brought him comfort. Verses seven and eight again. For this reason. What reason? For the report that Timothy's just brought back in verse six.

He says, for this reason, because of the report, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted. Comforted. Now that makes a lot of sense because we've just been looking at anxiety on Paul's part, haven't we?

[10 : 34] Just set your eye back up on verse five. When he's explaining what he was feeling at the time that he sent Timothy to them, he says, for this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I can hardly bear this.

I sent to learn about your faith for fear. He's afraid. He's anxious. That somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

That's the pinnacle of his anxiety. And now that Timothy has come back, the first thing he says, oh, I just can't tell you enough that just hearing from Timothy in all of the distress that we have and all of our anxiety, in all of the affliction that we've experienced in other cities like Berea, oh, we have been comforted by God about you through your faith.

For now we live. If you're standing fast in the Lord. Making disciples is hard work in many respects. It's not an easy task, is it?

One of the more difficult parts, as you know, any of you who have labored in gospel ministry in any way, understand that one of the more difficult things is the burden that you carry for the spiritual lives of others.

[11 : 52] It really is a burden. It's a burden that you feel for the lost in your life. It should be at least. It's a burden that you feel for those who have professed faith but are not living as a Christian not to live.

It's a burden. It's distressing. It brings anxiety. No one demonstrated this more clearly than Jesus did.

Matthew chapter nine, when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them. The word compassion, it literally means, if you translate it literally, it's a moving of the bowels. There was a physical response to Jesus when he considered the lostness of the people in Israel.

Made his stomach hurt. He had compassion on them. Why? Because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. And then he turns to his disciples and he says, the harvest is plentiful.

But the laborers are few. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest. What is that compassion if it isn't an intense burden for the souls of those who are lost?

- [13 : 09] What is that compassion that Jesus has if it is not a burden for the souls of those who are wandering away from him because of affliction or the appeal of sin or whatever it may be that may be leading them away?

And here we find Paul walking in Christ on footsteps. Paul's distress and affliction, it refers to that anxiety being torn away, hindered by Satan, fearing that affliction caused them to leave the faith they first professed.

It's an emotional burden felt by those who labor in the field of souls, isn't it? A burden surely that you have felt before. A burden hopefully you haven't gone callous towards.

The important thing to recognize here is that the source of Paul's comfort is the report of the Thessalonians' faith. Notice that.

It's not the only thing in the report. Timothy's report said, yes, they're faithfully following Jesus. Also, Paul, they love you and they want to see you. That would have been an encouragement, wouldn't it?

- [14 : 20] It's not just their faith that Timothy reports about, but it's just their faith that Paul responds to in comfort. He says, oh, now we live if you're standing in the Lord.

In all our distress and affliction, we've been comforted about you through your faith. Now, have you noticed the language that he's using here? We've seen this before.

Look back at verse six. Timothy has come to us from you. He's brought us good news of your faith and love. Then we get down to verse seven. We've been comforted about you through your faith.

For now we live if you are standing fast. Remember those three dynamics? Faith, love, steadfastness of hope.

We've seen that before, haven't we? Set your eyes on chapter one, verse two. We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

- [15 : 24] What is that about? It's about their salvation. What is it that Paul's comforted about? That they belong to God, that they're standing firm in the faith.

That's what he's most comforted about here. It's amazing. The level of our passion for magnifying Christ through making disciples will be seen in how we respond to the reports of fruitfulness in the lives of others.

And what is his report? Oh, he feels comfort, joy at the report that they are indeed continuing in the faith.

His focus was their salvation. So the report gave him comfort, right? Number two, I want you to see his worship. The report produced authentic worship.

Verse nine, Paul says, for what thanksgiving can we return to God for you? For all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, worship, praise.

- [16 : 29] I think we need to grasp the theological underpinning of Paul's worship here. Though the ministerial effort belonged to him, Timothy and Silas, and the perseverance of faith belonged to the Thessalonian Christians, his thanksgiving is not directed to Timothy, neither is it directed to the Thessalonians.

His thanksgiving is wholly given to God. Why? Because he understands God to be the one ultimately responsible for the salvation of those to whom he and Timothy and Silas have proclaimed the gospel.

So that when he hears reports of their continued faith, he does not elaborate in thanksgiving to them or to Timothy. He turns and he worships God. What thanksgiving can I possibly offer to him for this?

How wonderful that he's done this. My thanksgiving cannot even match the joy that God has given me through the faith that he's given you. Worship.

Worship. This is now the third time Paul has thanked God for the Thessalonians' faith in this letter. The first one's in chapter one, two, and three.

[17 : 51] We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering before our God and Father your faith, love, and hope in Christ Jesus. In chapter two and verse 13, we also thank God constantly for this, that when you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

Three times now, he's acknowledged their faith and the work of God's grace in their life, and he's turned and he's said, oh, thank you, Lord, for doing this.

Praise God that you have saved them and that you're holding them fast. Not only that, Paul wrote explicitly in chapter one that the Thessalonian Christians' conversion and perseverance resulted from God's election and the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

Again at chapter one, four through six. We know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not in word, but in power and in the Holy Spirit.

And it filled you with the joy of the Holy Spirit. What is he acknowledging? There's a pattern here, isn't there? There's a pattern that he recognizes that ultimately, at the end of the day, this is a work of grace.

[19 : 15] So what part does Paul and Timothy and the others play in this work of grace? Well, a significant part actually, as it turns out. We must also take account of the various ways Paul has written of himself and his team functioning as God's instruments of grace in this work.

Chapter two, verses three and four. Paul said, that our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive. So then why is he preaching the gospel in Thessalonica?

He says, we have been approved by God and entrusted by God with the gospel. So we're preaching to you, not to please you, but to please God because he's the one who has called us to this and he's the one who tests our hearts.

And then we saw last week in chapter three in verse two, we sent Timothy, our brother and God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ to establish and exhort you in your faith.

What does he mean? This is God's work and he's using Paul and Timothy and Silas to do it. But it's ultimately God's work. So when he gets the report of their faithfulness, what does he do?

[20 : 25] He worships God. What else would he do? This is God's saving work. Now in all of these passages taken together with chapter three in verse nine, they reveal Paul's understanding of grace.

That is the fruitfulness of all gospel ministry results from God's work of grace in and through his people. Even as he sent Timothy to establish and exhort them, he knew Timothy was only acting merely as an instrument in the hands of God.

And because he believed grace to be the cause of their conversion and perseverance, the report he received produced praise. So what am I saying? That Paul's efforts and the fruitfulness he experienced weren't about him.

They weren't about him. His boast wasn't in his ability to turn a phrase in just the right way so that he could grab the attention of the people that heard him preach and change their affections for God.

He knew that wasn't true. His boast was only in the grace of God. He didn't desire their salvation for some personal gain.

[21 : 48] He wanted Christ to be magnified. and understanding the reality of their situation, he was immediately moved to worship. So we see his comfort.

We see his worship. Third, I want you to see his persistence. The report prompted further ministry. It's interesting, isn't it? Verse 10, As we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

This verse seems strange, doesn't it? Paul's worship is offered to God in the context of earnest prayer that God would allow him to go back to Thessalonica.

So he prays here the same prayer and with the same urgency as he had in chapter 2 and verse 17. Just set your eyes on it again. Since we were torn away from you brothers for a short time in person, not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face.

He's praying the same thing again. What's weird about that is that he's gotten the report back that they're being faithful. They're doing everything that he hoped that they would be doing.

[23 : 05] The question is why does he still feel such an urgency for this? Why that he now knows of their persevering faith, why does he still want to go back?

Well, it's just another sign that this is what he lived for. His whole life was bound up in this. Seeing other people through, not in the moment, but to the end.

It's also a reminder that the task of discipling is never really finished, is it? It's never really finished.

He wanted to keep discipling them in the gospel, supplying, he says, whatever may be lacking in their faith and understanding of the truth. Remember what his aim was.

His goal. His aim was to present them faithful to Christ at Christ's return. And since Christ had not yet returned, Paul's task was not complete.

[24 : 10] And there again, we must note this desire to see them face to face. While the letter would have been sufficient for the moment, he knows nothing was as effective as personal, embodied ministry to others.

So, what do we see here? We see that in Paul's desire and purpose to make disciples and magnify Christ, that when Timothy reports of fruitfulness, he's comforted because his anxiety is for their souls.

He worships because he recognizes that this is a work of God's grace and he's just privileged to be a part of it in God's grace.

And then, it just makes him want to do it more and more. Truly, if you've ever led somebody to Christ or if you've ever had one of those moments where the Lord just allows you just a brief moment to see some fruitfulness in the life of somebody else because of your efforts in gospel ministry, either in evangelism or just discipling them, it makes you want to do it more, doesn't it?

You get a glimpse of God's grace in that way. It's so joyful. It makes you want more. And of course, we see that in Paul. And then we get to the final thing. I want you to see his prayer.

[25 : 38] His prayer. The report shaped the way that he prayed thereafter. Verse 11. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Oh, there it is again. The coming of the Lord. Where is his mind fixed? On the return of Christ. And what is his desire at the return of Christ?

To see these people and more faithful, believing, holy. Now we've already read that Paul was earnestly praying.

But in these verses, he actually writes his prayer for us. This is a prayer. And there's so much we can learn about the prayers of the Bible. In the case of this one, we learn that our work in gospel ministry shapes our prayer.

[26 : 52] Shapes the way we pray to God. Again, relying on him to do his work of grace in others. The very fact that Paul committed these things to prayer reflects that understanding of grace.

He knows that he's engaging in God's work. So he asks for God's blessings. And he submits to Christ's lordship over his request. And unsurprisingly, he includes a request for Christ to direct his way back to Thessalonica.

I don't know if he ever made it back. Perhaps somebody has determined that. I just don't know. But he's still praying for it. Lord, let me go back.

But it's not his prayer to go back that really grabs my attention here. It's his prayer for the church. Do you notice what he prayed for them? From Paul's intensity of desire to get to Thessalonica, we might conclude that certain persons, maybe vocational ministers or those who are especially mature believers, we might conclude that those kinds of people are necessary for our spiritual progress.

It would be tempting to say that the responsibility and effectiveness of gospel ministry applies only to those whom God especially called and gifted for that task.

[28 : 20] However, in Paul's prayer, we actually discover that isn't true. While we're thankful for how God uses and gifts us with certain spiritual leaders, the work of gospel ministry belongs to the entire church.

it belongs to you, not just to me. It belongs to us together. I want to unpack that. First, notice the comparison that Paul uses in verse 12.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you. As we do for you. There's a comparison he's making there. He prays that God will so work in the Thessalonians' hearts that they will increase and abound, that they will grow and maintain the same love that he has for them.

Think about the magnitude of that. How has Paul's love for them been displayed throughout this letter? He risked his life to preach the gospel to them in the beginning.

He showed up to Thessalonica with fresh wounds from being beaten nearly to death in Philippi. And he persevered in gospel preaching. Why? That was out of love for their souls.

[29 : 47] That's how he loved them. How else did he love them? He viewed them as a spiritual family constantly. He's referring to them as brothers. He even uses the analogy in chapter 2 of a spiritual father and as a spiritual mother in the way that he ministered the gospel to them.

Then he wrote that being forced to leave them was like being orphaned, torn away from his family and that his eager desire was to minister to them face to face to be with them.

That's the way he loved them. Most importantly, his purpose in ministering to them, the thing that really drove his relationship with them was to do everything he could to see them persevere to the return of Christ by establishing and exhorting them in the faith.

In other words, Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was that they would have the same heart for gospel ministry to one another as he had for them. That's what he prays.

Lord, help them love one another in this way, the way that you have helped me to love them. Help them sacrifice of themselves in order to share the gospel.

[31 : 06] Help them view themselves as a spiritual family, not as mere acquaintances that happen to show up at the same place on Sunday morning for a worship service. Oh, Lord, help them love each other enough that the passion of their heart is that they could see one another persevere to the end, that they wouldn't just let one another drift off into no man's land and spiritual things or that they would just drift off into sinful behaviors.

No, but that they would love you enough, that they would love one another enough, that they would constantly minister the gospel to one another. That's his prayer. Notice, secondly, the scope of the ministry he wanted them to pursue.

He prayed that their love would increase and abound toward two different groups of people. To one another, that would be professing believers in the church. And then he adds in there, and for all.

Oh, who is that? Those who are not professing believers in the church. Refers to the two distinct facets of making disciples.

Evangelism and discipling. Isn't that what Jesus tells us in the Great Commission? Go and make disciples.

[32 : 28] How? Baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. That's evangelism. Teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

That's discipling. And now Paul prays for the Thessalonians and he says, Oh God, I just want them, I want them to keep preaching the gospel to the people in their city that hate them and want to kill them.

God, give them a heart to disciple one another so they don't feel like they have to rely on me and Timothy to come there because we don't know if we'll get back. Another way to say it is that our efforts to minister to one another and to unbelievers in our lives are directly proportionate to the love that we have and maintain for them.

To love one another in the church necessarily is to help one another progress in the faith, even on the hardest days with the hardest people.

To love the world the way that Christ loved it is to break through the offenses and the discouragements and minister the gospel to the people that are all around us who need it.

[33 : 54] Finally, notice the purpose of his prayer. there's a purpose statement here in the last verse. Paul asked that God would do this work in the hearts of the Thessalonians so that, that's the purpose statement, so that he may establish their hearts in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

He says, all I can think about is the fact that Christ is going to return and he's going to return in judgment and I want to be used of him in the meantime to present people faithful in that moment so they'll escape that judgment and then he says, Lord, would you do this work in their hearts so that they'll have that same passion?

This is the way, Lord, that people will be presented to you faithful at the coming of Christ. It's going to take them loving and ministering to one another and for all.

Again, Paul recognizes that all gospel ministry is God's work of grace but God uses human instruments to accomplish his saving work. Listen, if people are going to be saved, they're not going to be saved by epiphany.

They're not just going to wake up one day and say, you know what, I think I'll be a Christian. That's not how God saves people. That would be irregular if he did it that way and of course it's in his power to do it.

[35 : 17] What is the normative way that people come to Christ? Somebody loves them enough to share the gospel and to love them through their questions and through their rejections and to pray for them and to care for them and to show Christ's love for them and to be patient with them and God uses the work of the word as an opportunity to instill his grace in their lives and he saves them.

If people are going to be saved, it's going to be because we are faithful to love them with the gospel and if we're all going to continue to the end in the grace of God, the best chances are that we understand that we need one another and that we're going to help one another along to the very end.

The bottom line is the Thessalonian church, they didn't really need Paul. Of course, they were thankful for him. Of course, somebody had to preach the gospel to begin with but it's not as if the only way that they were going to make it to the end faithful to Christ is if Paul did indeed make it back to the city to minister to them.

No, his prayer shows that's not the case. God's ongoing work in their lives would come primarily through their ministry to one another. So we should pray as Paul prayed and we should endeavor to live out Paul's prayer in God's grace.

We need one another and we need to learn how to love one another in such a way that God will use our ministry to persevere us at Christ's return. Now, I think we should finish with a question.

[37 : 03] Why was Paul so consumed with this? That's how he opened, right? This is his passion. The key verse is verse 8. Now we live if you're standing fast in the Lord.

This is what my life is all about. I live for this, Paul says. I'm so happy about it. But why? What reason could he possibly give for being so consumed with this particular thing?

After all, most people in our day would say that faith is a personal matter. You just need to let people work it out for themselves and leave them alone. Paul would have disagreed wholeheartedly. I think we should too.

Why should we care about that? Just three quick things. One, because the gospel's true. We should care because the gospel's true.

And as Paul wrote to the church in Rome, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. If they are to be saved, it will be because they believe the gospel.

[38 : 03] Because God in his grace saves them through the preaching of the gospel. That should motivate us. If nothing else does, just the fact that it's true. And we know it.

Why wouldn't we want to share that? Jesus is coming back. And he is coming back in judgment. Does that burden you for the people who are lost in your life?

That at his return, if they are unbelieving, they will perish. They'll perish. That should motivate us to preach the gospel.

It's true. And the Lord's coming back and we want them to be saved. Secondly, we should care about this because Jesus calls us to it. Jesus calls us to it.

It's not an option. It's a mandate. Paul understood that uniquely as an apostle of Christ. But it is not unique to him only as an apostle, but as a Christian.

[39 : 12] And we know that because of what Jesus said. Go. Make disciples of every nation. Teach them to observe all things. And by the way, I'm going with you.

As you go in faithfulness, I'm going in fruitfulness, Jesus says. What an encouragement that is. We should go because this is what God has called us to do. Jesus, our Lord, has said, this is what I want you to do.

Share the gospel and help one another persevere. Third, because we're compelled by love. We're compelled by love. First by Christ's love.

You can't manufacture love, right? You know that. The thought of an arranged marriage would cause us to be aghast, even though I think Ashlyn and Harper and Charlie would do well in an arranged marriage.

And I'm taking applications. Ashlyn's first. A couple more years. If any of you are interested. The thought of that is terrible, isn't it?

[40 : 18] Why? Because you can't manufacture love or at least the element of affection in love. You can't just pray a prayer today and suddenly you're just going to love people.

It doesn't work like that. We're by nature, we're just like, we're kind of mean people, aren't we? Like we're sinners. And we don't by nature really love people that much. Well, where does this start?

We're compelled by Christ's love, aren't we? That's what Paul says to the Corinthians. He says, the love of Christ constrains me, it compels me, it grips me.

As I look at the cross, I can't help but see Christ's love and want to share that love with other people. The love of Christ compels us to have that same love for others.

It's a work of grace in our own lives. Why did Paul care about this? Why should we? We should be compelled by Christ's love to disciple one another and to evangelize the unbelievers around us.

[41 : 24] Not because we want to win an argument. Not because we want to have a bigger church so we can have a bigger facility or pay our bills.

No. Because we want to love them the way that Christ loves them and has shown his love to them by dying on the cross for sin. The more we look at the cross, I think the more we'll be motivated to share the love of the cross with others, even when it's hard.