

Serving God in the Gospel

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[0 : 00] Amen. Let's pray. Father, open our hearts this evening so that we might hear your word.

In Christ's name, Amen. Grab a seat, team. Grab a seat. Let me ask you a question.

It's not a very nice question. It's a good question. The question is this.

What's your vision for evangelism in your life? What's your strategy for God's kingdom expanding?

What's your game plan for that? It's not a nice question, eh? It's like me asking you, hey, how's your rash?

[1 : 01] You know, like, how's your rash? Is it all, is it still all up in here? It's not very nice. Don't scratch it. It'll just make it worse.

It's that kind of question, you know, it kind of puts you on the spot, makes you feel a bit awkward, makes you feel a bit embarrassed. But I think I have to ask this question because in the passage, Paul's vision for evangelism and gospelizing and reaching out and mission is just, it's just mountainous.

It's enormous. It's huge. And when I read it, when I've been studying this passage, it makes me look at my own vision. So Paul is writing this letter to Rome, as you know.

And Rome's a really, you know, important city. About a million people. The cultural sort of military center of the known world at that point. And it was one of those places back in the days that apparently you kind of, you had to visit once, once in your life.

And in terms of reaching the rest of the world, which is what Paul wants to do, you know, getting a vibrant, growing, happening to the church here in Rome is really pretty central to his strategy.

[2 : 19] And he's been trying to get there. We see that in verse 13. I planned many times to come to you. But I want you to hear his passion for reaching this city, okay?

Verse 8. I thank God for you guys. I thank God for you guys. You guys are awesome. He goes on to say, you know, everyone's talking about you. We're all talking about you.

This is great. You've got this great thing going here in Rome. And verse 9. I'm praying for you.

We're all praying for you. Which makes sense because scholars say there was probably about a hundred Christians in that city of a million.

A city in which the law demanded that you bow your knee to Caesar as Lord. And here we have this small group of a hundred people. Who are bowing their knee to Jesus.

So it's like, I'm praying for you guys. I love you guys. This is awesome. Verse 15. I'm so eager. I just want to get there. I'm just eager to preach in Rome.

[3 : 21] Verse 13. I want to see a harvest. Which means that kind of language there. He wants to see people changed by the gospel. I want to see some stuff happen there. Verse 14. I'll preach to anyone. Greeks, non-Greeks, the foolish, the wise.

Now let's just get there and let's be preaching. I mean, do you hear this guy's passion? It's awesome. I thank God for you.

I want to be there. I want to preach to everybody. I want to see a harvest. I'm eager. I'm very eager. So here's the question, right?

Here's the big question. What's the source of this eagerness? What makes him so keen? Where does that come from?

What's behind all that? Well, in order to get to that, I want you to have a look at verse 14 there. He says this very interesting thing in verse 14.

[4 : 19] He uses this word obligation. I want you to know, brothers, here we go.

Verse 14. I am under obligation. I'm under obligation. That's an unusual thing to say. I'm under obligation. It's not usually a word that would associate with kind of mission.

I'm under obligation. Other translations say I'm bound or I am in debt to you guys. That's what's behind his passion here.

See, that language of debt and obligation and boundedness, that's contractual language. We're reading the English translation of a Greek document here.

The Greek word, it's like a finance word. It's like a law word. And I think this idea of debt, I think that particular translation is probably the most helpful for getting at Paul's motivation.

[5 : 23] His incredible motivation for mission and evangelism. Now there are two ways to get into debt. Two ways. First way, let's say someone gives you \$100.

You are in debt to them for \$100. The second way to get into debt is if someone gives you \$100 to give to somebody else.

You are in debt to that someone else for that \$100. And it's in that second way that Paul is using this language of debt and of obligation.

See, Paul hasn't borrowed anything from Rome, but he has been given something. He's been given the gospel. He's been entrusted with it to pass it on.

And until he passes it on, he sees himself in debt to these people. So Paul's motivation, his keenness, his massive global vision for preaching and evangelism is not something that he had to ramp up internally.

[6 : 30] It's not like he's like, you know, oh man, I've really got to get into evangelism. I'm not really that into it, so I'm going to write out some cool quotes and I'm going to put them on the bathroom mirror and I'm going to subscribe to Chicken Soup for the Soul email just to get a bit of inspiration.

Like he didn't have to dredge it up. His motivation came because he had this incredible encounter with Jesus.

Jesus gave him salvation and he had to tell people about it. You might have been listening so far to the introduction to this when I asked you that really awful question about your vision for evangelism and you probably thought to yourself, right, okay, Aaron's going to try and motivate us here this evening and he's probably right.

I should probably be more into this kind of stuff. I should be more into kind of telling my friends about Jesus. I should have a bit of a strategy for my school, my friends, my family or whatever. I want you to stop thinking that, okay.

I want you to stop thinking like that because I just believe any internal motivation you kind of dredge up is just far too flighty to have any real lasting effect.

[8 : 01] I mean, I think the Bible teaches us that our desire to tell people about Jesus comes as we understand how beautiful the gospel is.

I mean, it's like faith, you know, it's like faith, isn't it? How do we get more faith? By just kind of reading some great books, you know, like by having motivational CDs to listen to?

No, no, the Bible says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of the Lord. Faith is something that is given to you. It's given to you.

And this desire to proclaim Jesus is one of those things that's given to you as you understand how wonderful the gospel is. That's why Paul never says when we go through Romans, you see, Paul never says, you know, do mission.

He just tells us the gospel because that's what we need to hear over and over again. Now, I want you to be more evangelistic.

[9 : 12] I want you to tell your friends and your family about Jesus. I want that to happen but I can't guilt trip you into that or, you know, you know, when I was in New Zealand I was really into like motivating people and stuff and I had all these great stories, eh?

And you know the stories because I've said these stories, not here but in other places and they're the stories that always start off with, you know, like, you know, I don't know, like something like, you know, there was an old cobbler, you know, an old cobbler and he would go out and he'd tell people about Jesus every day of his life and in 80 years only one person ever came to Jesus, a little boy and do you know who that little boy was?

Condoleezza Rice. I don't know. I don't even know who that is but it's somebody famous, right? It always, do you know those stories and they're trying to like, kind of like, get us ramped up and stuff. She's a, it's a he, it's a girl isn't it? Yeah, okay, there you go. I mean, no amount of kind of cute stories is going to keep you motivated about evangelism long term but the gospel will, the gospel will as you keep hearing it and you keep reading it as you keep recognising how you're in such

desperate need and how lost you were and how God just plucked you out of your situation and brought you into his family.

So the best thing I can do to spur you on submission is to remind you about what the gospel is which is when you read Romans you'll see that's what he does.

[11 : 05] He makes sure we understand what the gospel is and what it isn't. So can I just read to you some scripture about what Jesus has done for us?

I want to read to you a chapter at the end of Jesus' life reading from Mark 15 16 and forgive me if I if I show emotion I find I just find I get emotional sometimes and the soldiers led him away inside the palace and they clothed him in a purple cloak and plating a crown of thorns they put on him and they began to salute him hail king of the Jews and they struck his head with a reed and spat on him and they knelt down in homage to him and when they had mocked him they stripped him of his purple cloak and put his own clothes on and they led him out to crucify him and they compelled a passerby

Simon who was coming from the country to carry his cross and they brought him to a place called Golgotha which means the place of the skull and they offered him wine mingled with myrrh but he did not take it and they crucified him and divided his garments among them casting lots for them to decide which each should take and it was the third hour when they crucified him and the inscription of the charge against him read the king of the Jews and with him they crucified two robbers one on his right and one on his left and those who passed by derided him wagging their heads and saying aha you who would destroy the temple and build it in three days save yourself and come down from the cross so also the chief priest mocked him and to one another and the scribes saying he saved others he cannot save himself let the Christ the king of Israel come down now from the cross and we may see and believe those who were crucified with him also reviled him when the sixth hour had come and the darkness was over the whole land until the ninth hour and at the ninth hour

Jesus cried with a loud voice which means my God my God why has you forsaken me and some of the bystanders hearing it said behold he is calling Elijah and one ran and filling a sponge full of vinegar put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink saying wait let us see whether Elijah will come down to come and take him down and Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last and the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and when the centurion who stood facing him saw that he thus breathed his last he said truly this man was the son of God there were also two women looking from afar among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and the younger of Joseph and Salome who when he was in Galilee followed him and ministered to him and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem and when evening came and since it was a day of preparation that is the day before the Sabbath

Joseph of Arimathea a respected member of the council who was himself looking for the kingdom of God took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus and Pilate wondered if he was already dead and summoning the centurion asked him whether he was already dead and when they learned from the centurion that he was dead he granted the body to Joseph and he brought a linen shroud and taking him down wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother saw where he was laid and when the Sabbath was passed Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices so that they might go out and anoint him and very early the first day of the week they went to the tomb where he had risen the sun had risen and they were saying to one another who will roll away the stone for us to the door of the tomb and looking up they saw the large stone had been rolled away it was very large and entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right dressed in a white robe and they were amazed and he said to them do not be amazed you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified he has risen he has risen he has risen let me remind you again of what that means first of all it blows away any idea that Christianity is about being a good person you know

[16 : 26] I'm a staff evangelist and I talk to people about who Jesus is and invite them to become Christians and I often have to spend time telling them what the gospel is not most often people think that I'm inviting them into a code for moral living you know I've had people say to me you know I don't think I can become a Christian I really love Jesus I don't think I can become a Christian because I'm just you know I can't be good enough and I have to say to them it's because you're not good enough that you can become a Christian you know because it's not your goodness that we're relying on here it's Christ's goodness he lived the life that you could not live and he died the death

that you deserved unlike any other religion that's out there Christianity is not about what you do it is about what somebody else has done on your behalf and I'm sure most of you know that but it's not all of the gospel because some of you might have heard okay well

Jesus died on the cross and that's great but it's that's great I'm forgiven but it's not just forgiveness forgiveness is a big part of it and it's great to know we're forgiven and it's wonderful to know that when we do wrong God forgives us but there's more to that let me read 2nd Corinthians 5:21 to you for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God let me read that to you one more time because this is a big part of the gospel here and just to remind you why I'm telling you this stuff because we forget because our hearts make it about us and we try and be good people and we forget the message of Christ and when we forget that we don't want to evangelize for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God

God made him sin God made Jesus sin what does that mean what does it mean that God made Jesus sin well it's not like Jesus became evil it's not like do you know the movie 21 days later you know the zombie movie 21 days later people are infected by the rage virus and they become really enraged you know that's not Jesus Jesus didn't become evil he was you know forgiving people on the cross Jesus was treated how we should have been treated when you become a Christian the price for your sins is put on Jesus but that's not that's not all the gospel is listen to the second part of the scripture so that in him we might become the righteousness of God what does that mean the second part well it doesn't mean we become righteous but all of a sudden we become perfect people no more than Jesus becomes really evil when he's on the cross rather we are given the righteousness of

Christ we are given this gift we are given a gift of righteousness and that's awesome that is awesome if I ask somebody are you a Christian and they say I'm trying means you don't know the gospel because Christianity because we have been given the righteousness of Jesus we are clothed in his righteousness Christianity is a standing it's you stand before God righteous you stand before God okay in right relationship because of Christ it's why Paul at the beginning of the verses we looked at he can call the Roman church saints because you saints they're not saints they're not perfect people but God sees them as saints salvation salvation is a change in a relationship as opposed to more so than a change in the object itself okay and that is wonderful news that is awesome that is great and you'll never come to the end of the goodness of that

Romans reminds us over and over and over again of this fact so this is the good news and as we go through Romans and get into the meaty theological stuff of it re-grasp re-learn this gospel re-learn what it is and repent from what you thought it was ask God pray to God get it into my heart and let it bubble over let it overflow and become so overwhelmed by it that you just can't keep it to yourself and this is how mission is going to happen amen amen Colin would you come and pray for us man