

Resurrected Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:13–15

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Introduction

What a delight it is to gather together as the people of the Risen King! to come together and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus—our Lord, our Savior, the One who declares, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Because He lives, we will live also (John 14:19)! Because *He* rose from the grave, sin is conquered and death is defeated for all those who trust in Him! And so we gather every Sunday, but especially this Sunday, to declare that we do trust in Him, and that we taste in Him the blessed assurance of sins forgiven, of a cleansed conscience, and of eternal life! Praise God: Christ is Risen!

And the resurrection of Christ has consequences for us. It has the glorious consequences that we just celebrated: securing and certifying divine grace to us as sinners. The resurrection has consequences on the way we live our lives. It causes us to live a resurrected life of holiness. Romans 6:4 says that just as we were united with Christ in His death, so also are we united with Christ in His resurrection, “so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in *newness of life*.” We who trust in and follow a resurrected Savior must live resurrected lives of holiness! Because we’ve died to sin through the body of Christ!

But the resurrection affects our lives in another key way. And that is: the resurrection affects the way we minister to the world around us. And that’s what I want to talk about today. How does the resurrection fuel and drive our ministry to the lost world we have been called to serve? and to the church we have been called to serve?

You and I—every one of us who are Christians—have been called to minister the Gospel to a world that has totally lost its mind. Our society hates God. They’re very religious! But they hate God. In fact, the sacraments of the secular religion demonstrate that the members of our society want to *be* God. We live in a culture whose members are absolutely intoxicated with the prospect of self-deification.

They are obsessed with transgenderism. Our culture has been given over to such a reprobate mind that they insist that a man can be woman if he feels like it. Scripture says God creates male and female in His image. But our culture says, “No! God is not the determiner of your gender and identity. You are! *You* create male and female, in *your* image!” The Creator of marriage

defines marriage to be between one man and one woman for life. And yet the vehement homosexuality of our society rebelliously declares, “No! God will not dictate to *us* what marriage is or is not! *We* will define marriage any way we see fit! And if you don’t call marriage what we say it is, we will destroy your business, we will get you fired, and we will marginalize you from society in every way we possibly can!”

And then, the preeminent social injustice of our day, the chief sacrament of the culture of death: abortion. God declares that because all human life is uniquely created in His image, it is sacred. And so, Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed.” But the culture of death, prostituting the cause of women’s rights to satisfy their own bloodlust, dogmatically declares, that the life in the womb is not a living human person unless the mother *wants* it to be. If the mother wants the child, her friends will throw her a *baby* shower. If she doesn’t want the child, they’ll castigate you for calling him anything other than a *fetus*, or a clump of cells.

Do you see? *You* are the determiner of your identity, not God your Creator! *You* define marriage, not God the Creator of marriage! *You* determine life and personhood, not God the Creator of all life! These are our society’s fledgling attempts at self-deification—man’s rebellious hallucination that *he* is Creator and Lord. And even if they’re not transgender, even if they’re not homosexual, and even if they have no interest in killing their children, the rest of our society must support these attempts at self-deification, lest they be confronted with the futility and fantasy of their own designs to flee the Lordship of Christ. “If there is an absolute standard by which transgender perversion is judged to be immoral, then there is an absolute standard by which *my* perversion (whatever it is) is judged to be immoral. I’m accountable to the God whose law sets that standard! That can’t be! Sure! Men can be women! *Anything*, so long as I can sin in peace!”

Add to that utter chaos the reality that if you resist the cultural totalitarianism of the secular religion, the rulers and governors of this society will come after your church. We’re still in the middle of a lawsuit for gathering as the church. James Coates, up in Canada, was only just released from prison after being held for 35 days for assembling as the Lord’s people on the Lord’s Day. Our culture has never been so hostile to the gathering of God’s people.

And on top of all of *that*—that goes on in the *world*—the *church* also faces unique threats from within its own walls. Satan not only attacks the church from the outside; he aims to corrupt the church from the inside. The influences of Critical Race Theory, and what the world falsely calls “Social Justice” have been tearing the church apart. It is stirring up dissension by teaching Christians to regard one another according to the flesh, to find their identity in their victimhood rather than in Christ, to nurse bitterness over the grievances they’ve suffered, and to demand that other Christians repent for their complicity in sins they haven’t committed, but for which they’re

ostensibly guilty of because of the ethnic, economic, or gender class they belong to. It is a worldview that is absolutely antithetical to Christianity, antithetical to the Gospel, and antithetical to Scripture. It is a worldview that teaches Christians to rebuild the dividing wall that Christ tore down (Eph 2:14–17)!

And it's into *this* church—drowning in the sea of syncretism—and it's into *this* corrupt culture—hellbent on its own self-deification—that the Lord Jesus Christ has sent you and me to minister the Word of God. And I wonder if there aren't some of us who survey this bleak landscape and who are tempted to discouragement—if there aren't some who say, “Lord, couldn't I have served you in some other circumstances—when culture stood less opposed to the Gospel, when the church had stronger leaders to guard against idolatry, when Western governments weren't arresting pastors?”

And I want to plead with you today, brothers and sisters: Don't think like that! We can look at the chaos and be tempted to discouragement, but I would say to you that God is and has always been absolutely sovereign. Your all-wise Father, who knows how to give good gifts to His children, has ordained this very moment in history. And He has ordained that you be the Christians in the world *at* this time in history. He has not only ordained this dark hour, but He has ordained the *men* and women for the hour. And you who follow Jesus Christ in faith, hope, and love: you're it. If only you'll rise to the occasion! Not *retreat* from this depraved culture, but to go *into* this depraved culture and tell a world drunk on its own arrogance that *God* is God, and they are not; that *Christ* is Lord, and Caesar is not; and to declare to the professing church that the *Gospel* is sufficient, and that pagan sociology is not.

Now, where are you going to find the **motivation** to be faithful to that calling? Where will you find the **strength** to endure the hardships that will only increase for those who faithfully follow Christ and preach His Gospel? Where are you going to get the **resources** to withstand the overwhelming pressures that will come upon those who refuse to bow the knee to Caesar's demands to call Richard “Rachel,” or to close church when “transphobia” becomes a “public health crisis”? What spiritual weapons will you wield to battle the temptation of cowardice, despair, and shipwreck?

Answer: You have the same weapons that the Apostle Paul had. Paul described the hardships of his own ministry by saying, 2 Corinthians 4:8 and 9: “We are *in all things* afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down.” Verse 10: “We are *always* carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus.” Verse 11: “We who live are *constantly* being delivered over to *death* for Jesus' sake.” And yet he says, “Though we are afflicted, we are *not* crushed; perplexed but *not* despairing, struck down but *not* destroyed? Where did *he* get the **motivation** to continue enduring all the “afflictions, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, sleeplessness, and hunger”?

He gives an answer in our text this morning: 2 Corinthians 4, verses 13 to 15. “But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”

We have been called to ministry, GraceLife. Inside the church, we have been called to lay down our lives in sacrificial service of one another—to minister compassion to our brothers and sisters, and to labor alongside them as their servants for the sake of their growth and sanctification. Outside the church, we have been called to be Christ’s ambassadors, heralding terms of peace from our Sovereign to His avowed enemies.

And so when those enemies resist to the point that the ambassadors are in danger—whether that’s the threat of job loss, lawsuits, imprisonment, or slander, ostracism, and the threat of being “canceled”—the natural temptation is to fail to speak the message. But, Paul says, the faithful Christian doesn’t do that. And he gives **three motivations** for why the faithful Christian continues to proclaim the message even in the midst of hostility. And the resurrection of Christ, which we celebrate today, is at the very heart of that.

I. A Sincere Faith in the Gospel (v. 13)

That **first motivation** for continuing to speak is **a sincere faith in the Gospel**. Look with me at verse 13. Paul writes: “But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak.”

And Paul models something here that is just so instructive for us. In the midst of great affliction—of external persecution and the internal daily pressure of concern for the spiritual health of all the churches (cf. 2 Cor 11:28), the Apostle Paul turned to Scripture. He fixed His mind on truth. He turned the eyes of his heart to the Word of God to behold the character of God, to be comforted and strengthened by who God has revealed Himself to be—even in the lives of the saints that have gone before him.

He turned his mind to Psalm 116, where David writes a song of praise and thanksgiving to God for delivering him from death. In Psalm 116:3, David says, “The cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of Yahweh: ‘O Yahweh, I beseech You, save my life!’” Verse 6: “I was brought low, and He saved me.” Verse 8: “For You have rescued my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.” And so there is much for Paul to relate with here. He himself had been

delivered from death. He says in 2 Corinthians 1:8–9 that there were times in Asia when he despaired of life and had the sentence of death within himself; he was struck down, but he was not destroyed. He had tasted Yahweh’s deliverance. And as he got back up for more, and marched right back into the storm, he took comfort in the fact that he was not alone, but that he stood in a long line of saints who had suffered for righteousness’ sake. And he took comfort in the demonstration of God’s deliverance in David’s life as well as his own.

And as he was reflecting on God’s deliverance as recorded in Psalm 116, he quotes verse 10, where David said, “I believed, therefore I spoke.” Paul seizes on this statement, and he says, “In the same way that the psalmist faced great affliction, even to the point of staring death in the face, and yet nevertheless went on speaking truth, anchored by his faith in God, so also does that same spirit of robust, enduring faith animate my own soul! David believed, and therefore he spoke! So also, I will not cease to go on speaking and testifying of the truth of the Gospel—even in the severity of my affliction—because, most fundamentally, I *believe* this Gospel!”

And I love the simplicity of that. “Paul, you’re being put to death all day long; you’re like a sheep led to the slaughter every day because of your testimony concerning Jesus! Where do you find the endurance to go on preaching the Gospel amidst that kind of opposition?” And he says, “Because I believe it! Because it’s true! God Himself really *has* become man in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! The Lord Jesus really *did* bear the fullness of God’s wrath on the cross as a propitiation for sins! He really *did* rise from the grave three days later! And He really *is* willing to freely forgive all those who repent and trust Him alone for righteousness! I believe that message! What else can I do but proclaim the grace of God in Christ?”

You see, **a sincere faith in the Gospel** cannot help but issue in proclamation. We see this illustrated all over Scripture. When John the Baptist came proclaiming that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Andrew, one of John’s disciples, began following Jesus. And after spending the rest of the day with Jesus and hearing Him teach, Andrew believed that they had found the Messiah. And what was Andrew’s immediate reaction the next day? It was to tell someone. John 1:41 says, “He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah!’” Andrew believed, and therefore he spoke! And then in verse 43, it says that the next day Jesus went into Galilee, and found Philip, and called upon Philip to follow Him. And Philip believed as well. And what was Philip’s immediate reaction? John 1:45 says, “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses . . . wrote—Jesus of Nazareth!’” You see? The reflex-action of saving faith is proclamation.

And the prophet Jeremiah understood this principle perhaps better than anyone. Jeremiah was commissioned with a message of destruction against his nation, and *no one* would listen to him. He says in Jeremiah 20 verse 7, “I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me.” Verse 8: “For each time I speak, I cry aloud; I proclaim violence and destruction, because

for me the word of Yahweh has resulted in reproach and derision all day long.” Jeremiah knew what it was to suffer persecution for speaking the Word of God in the midst of a culture who wanted nothing to do with God. But what was his response? To stop speaking? No. In the very next verse, Jeremiah 20 verse 9, he says, “But if I say, ‘I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,’ then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.”

This is the picture of the faithful believer. It is someone who has been so overcome by the message of the Gospel—so ravished by the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God—that you couldn’t stop speaking it if you tried. It would be like a fire shut up in your bones, that you simply can’t hold in. No wonder Paul said, “Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16). And that is the cry of every true believer in Christ: “Woe is me”—*let me be damned*—“if I don’t preach this message!”

Dear friends, do you believe that in and of himself man is so hopelessly sinful, that his very *best* deeds will earn him eternal punishment at the hand of God’s perfect justice? Do you believe that if left to himself, man is utterly helpless to escape the wrath of God? And do you believe that God the Son left His throne in heaven, and took on the frailty and the indignity of human flesh, to pay for the sins and provide the righteousness for sinners who were doomed to die in their sins? And do you believe that He absorbed every ounce of divine wrath, satisfied the Father’s justice, and rose from the grave so that now hell itself is conquered and heaven itself is opened to all those who would cease striving and simply trust in Christ for righteousness? Dear people, do you believe this message? Do you trust in this Gospel for your own eternal salvation?

Then do you speak it?

Paul says, “We believe, *therefore* we speak.”

What **motivated** Paul to go on ministering the Gospel even amidst severe persecution and affliction? It was his **sincere faith in the Gospel** that compelled him to proclaim it. And that means that when you face the temptation to shy away from the task of proclaiming the Gospel to the unbelievers God has placed in your life, when you’re tempted to compromise your convictions in the face of pressures from the juggernaut of cultural totalitarianism, you can strengthen your resolve to press on in faithfulness by feeding your faith—by feasting your souls on the truth of the Gospel, by bathing and saturating your minds with Scripture, and by acting faith upon the truth of God revealed in its pages.

The steel in your spine that will keep you faithful and cause you to press on in enduring ministry is that you believe this message, and so you’ve got to preach it. You see the beauty of the Gospel

of the glory of God revealed in the face of Christ, and there is a fire in your bones. You believe, and therefore you speak.

II. A Sure Confidence in the Resurrection (v. 14)

And so the faithful Christian is motivated to endure in ministry even in the midst of hostility, first by a sincere faith in the Gospel. A **second motivation** to continue ministering the Gospel is, number two, **a sure confidence in the resurrection**. And we see this in verse 14. Paul writes, “We also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us with Jesus and will present us with you.”

Now right away I want you to notice that word “knowing” at the beginning of verse 14. “We also believe, therefore we also speak, *knowing*.” That’s what grammarians call a “causal participle.” You could translate that: “We believe, therefore we speak, *because we know*.” Now, we learned in verse 13 that the ground for speaking is believing: “I speak because I believe.” But here we learn that the ground for believing is knowing something. “I speak because I believe,” and, “I believe because I know.”

I want you to notice this connection between faith and knowledge. Faith is not *opposed* to knowledge. Faith is not what takes over when we run out of knowledge, like: “Well I don’t know that, I just believe it.” No! That is not the biblical notion of faith. That is a pagan, secular-humanist redefinition that conceives of faith as some sort of leap in the dark, or wish upon a star. So far from being an alternative to knowledge, true faith is based on knowledge. It has its sure and solid foundation in the knowledge of the truth. And this is so key, because if the way to fuel your speaking is to feed your faith, you have to understand that faith is fed by knowledge of the truth as it is revealed in Scripture. Knowing the truth is the foundation for believing the truth, and believing the truth is the foundation for speaking the truth.

So what particular truth does Paul know that strengthens his faith, which in turn strengthens his resolve to go on ministering in the midst of affliction? Answer: He knows he will be **resurrected from the dead**. Paul faced death every day of his life. He says in 2 Corinthians 1:8 that he was convinced his affliction in Asia was going to result in his death. He says in Romans 8:36, “We are being killed all day long, we are like sheep led to the slaughter.” 1 Corinthians 15:30–32: “We are in danger every hour. We die daily. I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus.” And so you say, “Paul, how do you deal with it? Why in the world do you keep risking your life and putting yourself in danger?” And he says, “Well, first of all, I *believe* the Gospel, so I’ve got to speak it. But two: I know that even if death should come—even if I lose my life for the sake of ministering the Gospel—I know that God will raise me from the dead. The very worst that they can do to me is take my life. But I have a Savior, who looked at Martha, weeping for her brother’s death, and said, ‘*I am* the resurrection *and* the life; he who believes in Me will live

even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.’ And then He raised Lazarus from the dead by the power of His own voice!”

Oh, how precious is the doctrine of the believer’s bodily resurrection! When your heart grabs a hold of this precious truth that no matter how your life on this earth ends, that you will live *again*—that on the last day the One who raised Jesus from the dead will raise your decaying body to life again, will glorify it, and will reunite it with your soul for you to live again in the integrity of body and spirit on the New Earth—when your heart grabs a hold of that reality: you become invincible! You live above the fear and power of death! And you become free to lose your life for Christ, to pour your life out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of Christ’s bride, to endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

And when that happens, the world has absolutely no idea what to do with you. “We told you to stop speaking in the name of Jesus!” (cf. Acts 5:28). “We can’t! We are *witnesses* to these things! The God of heaven raised Jesus from the dead! We *have* to speak this Gospel!” (Acts 5:32). And then they *beat* them (Acts 5:40). And the Apostles go away, Acts 5:41 says, “*rejoicing* that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Later, in Philippi, they throw Paul and Silas into jail. And what happens? They’re up at midnight singing hymns (Acts 16:25). You could imagine these people going to their leaders and saying, “We beat them, and they rejoice! We put them in jail, and they praise their God! What do you want us to do next?”

“Tell them we’ll *kill* them!” And what’s the response? “You mean like you killed Jesus? The One who *rose* from the dead?”

O, how the resurrection of Christ ought to make us fearless!

What do you do with someone whose joy is entirely untouchable? You see, friends, this is the life of victory in the Christian life. Victory isn’t what the name-it-and-claim-it charlatans tell you it is—the ability to change the circumstances of your life through positive confession. Victory is not the charismatic church’s idea of some heightened state of ecstatic spiritual consciousness. No! Victory in the Christian life is having such a **sure confidence in your future resurrection** that you are free from the bondage of the fear of death, and therefore willingly and eagerly lay down your life in sacrificial service in the cause of Gospel ministry.

“How did Paul know that he would be raised from the dead?” Answer: Easter Sunday. Notice the first part of verse 14: “. . . knowing that He who *raised the Lord Jesus* will raise us with Jesus.” God has already proven that He has the power to raise the dead by raising Jesus from the dead! Turn to 1 Corinthians 15. And look, starting in verse 20: “But now Christ has been raised from

the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming." Paul calls Christ "the first fruits" of those who are raised from the dead. And he says that in Christ all who belong to Christ will be made alive. You see, those who belong to Jesus are not just associated with Jesus; they are united to Jesus—just as members of the body are united to the head of the body. And just as surely as the harvest follows the firstfruits, the resurrection of the members of Christ's body will follow the resurrection of the Head.

Romans 6:8 says, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." In Romans 8:11, Paul says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to *your* mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in *you*, believer, and so He will raise you as well! First Corinthians 6:14: "Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power." Do you see it, friends? The resurrection of Christ is God's own pledge of the resurrection of His people! *Our* resurrection is as sure and certain as *Christ's* resurrection!

Brothers and sisters, the worst that this insane world can do to us is kill us. And we serve a God who will raise us from the dead! Oh, may we live in such a way that only makes sense if we're going to be raised from the dead! Let us live so boldly in our proclamation and ministry of the Gospel that we need a God who can raise the dead! Let's be willing to hold our lives loosely! Let's look for ways to lay our lives down in the name of love for God and neighbor rather than seeking only what's safe and comfortable!

In Luke 21, Jesus looked at His disciples and told them: You'll be betrayed by family. You'll be hated by everyone because of My name. They'll even put some of you to death. *And not a hair on your head shall perish.* Oh, how fearless we ought to be!

Now, some of you say, "Mike, that's inspiring stuff and everything, but I'm not the Apostle Paul. And I don't live in the first-century Roman Empire. I mean, things *are* getting bad, but the fact is I don't face death every day. How does this apply to me?" Well, it's true that the doctrine of the resurrection galvanizes us for dangerous evangelistic ministry to the world. But the resurrection is *also* the ground of risky, sacrificial, tireless ministry to one another in the body of Christ! You may not be called to be killed for Christ's sake, but you have been called to lay down your life—to die to self every day—to give your life away for the sake of serving the people of God.

I'm talking about real life ministry, now. I'm talking about living life together, and serving one another as family. See, it's so easy to be tempted to think, "Pastor, you are asking me to give up my life! Is that all I'm going to do with my life? I break my back at work every day so I can

provide for my family (or, in the case of the mom: I break my back raising the kids every day so I can nurture and edify my family unto the glory of God); I go to fellowship group, main service, and evening service every Sunday; I go to Bible study, and I even meet with the people in my Bible study outside of Bible study every once and while.

“And with the little bit of free time that I have left, you want me to go visit people in the hospital? You want me to go to clean someone’s house? You want me to do one-on-one counseling and discipleship and talk about my sins? You want me to try to convince other people to deal with sin in their own lives? You want me to open my home? So that people see my mess? So that people see my kids aren’t perfect? So that people see that my marriage isn’t perfect? You want me to go door-to-door evangelizing? You want me to stand outside an abortion clinic? You want me to bring the Gospel to the homeless? That’s what you want me to do with my *free* time? My whole life is going to pass me by!”

And the Holy Spirit of God, through this text, as it were looks you dead in the eye and says: You will live again! And so you can be free to give your life away, in serving the church and in evangelizing the world, so that you will know the joy of the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings!

“Lord! Behold, we have left everything and followed You!” “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake”—there is no one who has ever made any sacrifice for the cause of Gospel ministry—“who will not receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, . . . and *in the age to come, eternal life*” (Mark 10:28–30). What motivates you to persevere in difficult ministry? Number one: a sincere faith in the Gospel; and number two: **a sure confidence in the resurrection**.

III. A Deep Satisfaction in the Glory of God (v. 15)

We find a **third motivation** in verse 15. Number three: **a deep satisfaction in the glory of God**. Paul says, “For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”

“All things are for your sakes.” That is to say, everything that Paul goes through—all the hardship that he endures—all the beatings and imprisonments and stoning, all the sufferings and afflictions that come with constantly being delivered over to death, all of his labors in preaching and teaching—all of that is for the benefit of the church! Romans 8:36: “*For your sake* we are being put to death all day long.” 2 Timothy 2:10: “I endure all things *for the sake of the elect*, that *they* may obtain salvation.” 2 Corinthians 12:15: “I will most gladly spend and be spent *for your souls*.” Paul’s life of ministry was entirely oriented toward the benefit of the people of God. He was motivated by love for the church! And both: the church that had already been saved, and

those who would become part of the church by being saved out of the world through the preaching of the Gospel.

But notice the precious truth that this text teaches us. Paul's love for the Church was not the ultimate motivation for his service of the Church. His love for the Church stood upon a more ultimate foundation. "All things are for your sakes, *so that*." That means that there is a more ultimate purpose that undergirds his enduring ministry to the people of God! And that is: "so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to" what? "The **glory of God**."

Follow Paul's reasoning here. The more he labors for the salvation and sanctification of the people of God, the more God's grace spreads to more people. And the more people experience God's grace in salvation and sanctification, the more people rejoice in and give thanks to God for His grace. And the more that God is praised and rejoiced in, the more He is honored and glorified. And *that* is at the bottom of Paul's affections! There is nothing he desires more than for the glory of Almighty God to be exalted, and treasured, and magnified.

And that is the case for every true believer in Christ. If you're a Christian—if God has regenerated you, if He has shone in your heart to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, so that you have come to hate sin and to love Jesus—the glory of God in Christ is your greatest treasure and delight. That's what it means to be saved! To be a Christian is to be freed from the bondage of seeking satisfaction and fulfillment in your sin and in yourself, and to find all your satisfaction in the magnification of His glory. And so you love when God's glory is treasured and worshiped by others in a way that He is worthy of! You love when other people come to see and know God's glory, so that they esteem Him rightly and worship Him in the way that He deserves!

And Paul says, as people hear the Gospel preached and are saved, worshipers are created! More voices are added to the chorus of praise to God! And as Christians continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, their worship is strengthened! The voices in that chorus of praise are raised as it were unto sweeter and sweeter song.

"Why do I go on preaching the Gospel in the midst of a hostile culture that promises me certain death? How can I be content to humble myself as the slave of God's people—to give my life away for the sake of the health and growth of the church of God? Because there is something that I treasure more deeply than comfort! more deeply than ease! more deeply than my own personal hobbies and interests and ambitions! I can lay down my life because I treasure something more deeply than my life! And that is the glory of God shining in the face of Christ!" What does Paul say in Acts 20:24? "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of

the gospel of the grace of God.” “I don’t consider this life as *dear* to myself! because I consider the *next* life as dear! *This* life is for giving away! The *next* life—the *resurrection* life—is for rest and for reward.”

Oh GraceLife, are these things true of you? Can you heart speak these declarations with integrity? Do you long for the glory of God? Is His honor and praise the very foundation of your joy? If it is, you will preach this Gospel. If your **deepest satisfaction** is in the glory of God, you will go on joyfully ministering even in the midst of affliction—because God deserves the praise of saved sinners and sanctified saints! And your labors in Gospel ministry are the instrument through which God gets what He deserves from His people! Can there be any greater motivation to spend and be spent for the souls of God’s people than to know that the laying down of your life magnifies and multiplies the glory of God? That your sacrifice works to exalt God as supreme in the affections of His people?

Dear friends, this is what sustains you in ministry. The glory of God is the fuel of the fire that burns in your bones! Gospel ministry exists because worship doesn’t. There are people in the world and in the church whose praise God is worthy of, but which He does not yet have. You and I have been commissioned to proclaim the Gospel and to serve the saints in order to see that God gets what He is worthy of. We evangelize—we preach the Gospel of forgiveness of sins in Christ—to turn people into worshipers of the God who is worthy of all worship. We serve the church, and we live life together, and we fight sin in one another to add higher strains to the chorus of God’s praise.

There is literally nothing more significant that you could be involved in. There is nothing more worthy of your time than being instrumental in seeing that God be worshiped as He is worthy of. And when that glorious vision has gripped your heart, it doesn’t matter what Satan and this world throws at you—you are *in*. You are ready to die. And you are ready to die *daily*—to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of the people of God, to spend and be spent for souls, to be the slave of all.

And if that vision of the glory of Jesus Christ hasn’t gripped you, friend, you still labor in the bondage of sin and unbelief. {Refer to audio for Gospel presentation. }