



A Clear Conscience – Part 3

Aiming to Be a Blessing

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Wouldn't you like to be part of a really good church? I mean, like a great church, like it would be really good if you were a part of a phenomenal church, like an excellent church, an amazing, like crazy good church. That would be amazing. I'm not talking about this one. No, no, no. I'm talking about one that's way better than this one, I mean, the kind of church where every single person in the church, I mean every person, they're so helpful, they are so caring, they're so loving that even at the first hint of a need, like everyone's just jumping to meet that need. No matter what's going on, people are just so in tune with everyone else. They're just so kind. They're so loving, they're so caring. That would be great. Well, that church is hard to find. You haven't found it yet. And it's hard to construct it. I can say that from my perspective as a leader. It's hard to create that kind of church. And the reason is that we all tend to devolve without the regular kinds of calibration that we should have into the kind of John 6:26 experience where people were coming to Jesus, they were assembling there. Just like we've come to assemble, we know it's a church, it's about Christ, it's for Jesus and all that. But Jesus points out you're not coming for the right reasons. Because you're really coming for yourselves. That's why you came. This is all about what you can get. I mean, in his own words, he points out the consumer mentality of people coming to church, and he just says that's what you guys are doing.

And unfortunately, that is what happens, that in most places, that we, if we don't regularly work on our priorities and our character and our attitude, and if we're not consciously aware of a different way to approach church, we will come and we will just basically say, what can I get out of it? That's why that's a revolving door in so many churches, right? They come and, you know, it didn't really quite do it for me and I just didn't get out of it what I wanted and off they go to another, the consumer mentality. It's very prevalent today and it was going on in the first century and it still exists today. And I mean, no one puts it in the name of their church or in their welcome packet. But leeches are really what it's all about. Right? No one says the First, you know, Leech Church of Orange County. It's always about, you know, Christ and God and all that. But if in reality everybody comes to get, then we never have a taste of what was going on in Acts Chapter 2 or Acts Chapter 4 when there wasn't a needy person in the church. I mean, everyone was so attentive to everyone else. It was an amazing experience. I mean there wouldn't be a person who would be tempted if the technology were available to stream it. They wouldn't even think about that. No, I've got to go. I've got to be there. This is a great place to be.

What we need is really more of the attitude that Christ exemplified, of course, and that seems unattainable. But as Paul put it in First Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 1, you ought to become imitators of him as he imitated Christ. Which by the way, he said frequently, six or seven times in his letters he keeps reminding people, you know, I'm setting an example here of how to flesh out the principles of God's Word. You should look to my life if you want to know how this is supposed to be lived out. And so when we read passages, like the one we've been studying in Second Corinthians Chapter 1, we can look at what he does and we can say



there's a lot to learn here. And he's told us to look at how he fleshes out the principles and priorities of God's Word and he says you ought to do what I'm doing. It's a great word to imitate. It comes from the Greek word "Mimetai." I mean, it is the Greek word mimetai in the Greek New Testament. And we get the word "mimic" from it. And sometimes that's how we learn. We mimic it. And even if we don't feel it, we say, well, I should do what he's doing. And so we have great biblical authority to imitate what we're seeing here as we get into a section that seems like it's mistitled. And I promise you it's not.

But in the beginning above verse 12 of the Second Corinthians Chapter 1, you have our translators here, at least at the English Standard Version or any other translation, probably put a heading on there that gives us a description that he's going to talk about his travel plan changes. And that's true, but we really haven't gotten to it yet. We've anticipated it, but we've called this series "A Clear Conscience." We want you to have a clear conscience because it starts in verse 12 with him saying he has one. And really we've looked ahead to where he's going in explaining his change of plans, but we're not there yet. And we've been going through this slowly and I understand that and I get that, but we're going to need to go slowly again today in two verses, verses 15 and 16. And I want to learn the priorities of the Apostle Paul. The pattern of how he fleshes out biblical principles, how he imitates Christ, and how we, if we're smart, we would imitate what he's doing, not only because it's the right thing to do, but, man, it will create an amazing church if we were to start to do this. If we did this in mass this would just, I mean, it would take a good church, which I hope we are, to a great church. And we can get there if we look at this text and find what Paul was doing and saying, let's make that our commitment.

So let's look at this text, it's a short text. I'll read it from the English Standard Version, take a look at it beginning in verse 15, and let's understand what Paul is saying here when he begins with these words, "Because I was sure of this." Now you run into a demonstrative pronoun right here in the beginning of this phrase, "this." Well, that points to something. We'll get to that in a minute, but we've got to understand what he's talking about. "Because I was sure of this," well, we'll understand it. He says, "I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace." Whatever that means, right? That's a strange sentence that you haven't used. Like, whatever that means. We'll figure that one out. But he says, "I wanted to come to you first." What is he talking about? Well, you can't make sense at the bottom of verse 15 if you don't have the top of verse 16 when he says, "I wanted to visit you on my way TO Macedonia," that's new information, "and come back to you FROM Macedonia." Now that should make sense even if you don't know what went on between First Corinthians and Second Corinthians, because if you look carefully at First Corinthians, you know in Chapter 16, in the end of that letter, he does say to them, "I plan to come to you on my way back from Macedonia." So that was already his plan to visit, but he said I've got some things I've got to do first. I'm going to go to Macedonia, on my way back I want to spend some time with you guys. But he says here, I want to double up whatever I was going to do. We'll call it "a second experience of grace," whatever that means. We want to have that happen, not once, we want to have that happen twice because I want to come to your first. I want to come to you first on the way to Macedonia and on the way back.



Now all this does is further complicate it as outsiders looking in because he's going to end up saying, well, I didn't get to do either of those plans. And he's going to talk about his change of plans. And that's where we're going to get in earnest into the concern that the critics had about the Apostle Paul that he's not a man of his word. Now that's why we started in verse 12 with he's got a clear conscience because he is a man in his word. Now plans have changed and he's going to explain why at the end of the chapter, which we got a preview of I think last week or the week before. But right now, we're just looking at the fact that he had a good plan in First Corinthians 16, and he made a better plan somewhere between First Corinthians and Second Corinthians and he said, I'm going to come twice to you, because I want whatever this means, "a second experience of grace" for you guys. But then he ends with this little phrase, "and have you," when I come back to you the second time, "send me on my way to Judea." So I'm going to go to Macedonia, visit you on the way, spend some time with you, then go there and then come back, spend time with you and then you're going to help me on my way back to Judea, back in Israel. That's the plan across the Mediterranean.

All right, very simple text, but we've got to start with a lot that's being assumed here with the demonstrative pronoun in verse 15. He says, "because I was sure of this." Now that's pointing back to where we've been. And really, we can go all the way back, if you want to, to verse 12, because that's where it started. "Our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience." Me and Timothy, we're not messing around. We had good intentions, and our conscience is clear. We weren't deceiving, we weren't tricking you. "We behaved in this world with simplicity and godly sincerity." We did the right thing, "not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you." We did the right thing, our conscience is clear, "For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and what you understand." All of that, we meant it all. "And I hope that you will fully understand," in essence where we're headed and that is why there was a change of plans. I want you to fully understand that, "just as you did partially understand us," you did understand some things about what we did and what we intended to do. So that, look at it, here's the real key here. This is the apex of it all, "that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you."

Now, last week we looked at that and we understood he's looking beyond the horizon of this life to "the day of the Lord," the time they stand before God. And then everything's going to be clear. All the secret events have all surfaced and now we have all the motives made clear. And he says, we know this. Paul's confident with a clear conscience, you're going to look at what we did and you're going to go, yep, good Paul, you did the right thing. There's misunderstanding now, but there won't be then. And you're not going to be able to say, ah, see, I told you that you were tricking us. I told you that you didn't mean it. I see that you weren't sincere. No, none of that. He's going to say you're going to say my motives were right. OK. Because his motives were right, he's about to say I was going to come to you twice. I wanted, whatever this means, the experience of grace to happen twice because my motives were right. My motives were always right in this. Now he'll get to the difficulty in verse 17 trying to explain why it didn't all happen. But let's just deal with the motive. If we're going to talk about a clear conscience, we're just going to think all of this hangs on Paul's clear conscience, then what we can talk about here is that his plans to double up his blessing to the church at Corinth really was that his motives were pure, they were right. This is all about



coming to them to be a blessing to them, to serve them, to care for them, to love on them in the way that the Apostle Paul was best suited to do. And he's saying my motive was clear in serving you. If we're going to learn something from the Apostle Paul, that's the thing we've been focusing on.

Let's just hit it one more time. When it comes to service now, number one, I want you to "Always Serve with Pure Motives." That's what Paul is boasting about. A clear conscience with good motives that everyone will one day see before God that his motives were right. And what we want to do is make sure that we don't serve with the wrong motives. Because I'll bet if I said to you, do you think anyone ever in the context of the church ever serves with a bad motive, with the wrong motive? How much does Jesus point out the wrong motives? We couldn't help but on the Sermon on the Mount last week go to Chapter 6 and talk about the Pharisees who were known for having bad motives. And then I said, yes, Jesus really leans in to castigating those Pharisees in Chapter 23. The scribes and Pharisees, they are bad because their motives are always wrong. Let's just take a look at that again to make sure that we don't do what others do, and that is serve for the wrong reasons. Because I've already tipped my hand here. I'm letting you know we're going to talk about you serving and committing yourselves to being a blessing to other people in this church. That would make a great church. Now, that's what we should all be called to do. Jesus did it, Paul did it. But before we do, let's make sure none of these motives are part of what's pushing you to do it.

Go to Matthew Chapter 23. Let's look at the first few verses in this passage. "Jesus said," verse 1, "to the crowds and to his disciples." Now this is a learning experience. Hey crowd, hey disciples, I don't want you to be like the scribes and Pharisees. Now scribes, just think of what a scribe is. A scribe is there professionally, as an educated person, not only literate, but someone who's very literate. Very clear, knows what the languages are all about and knows how to copy the manuscripts of the Bible. And they're doing that as the apex of their job. That is the big... they're trafficking in their daily work in making copies of the Scripture. That at least was the height of their jobs. And it was a very sacred thing, fastidiously done, carefully done, meticulously done. They were dealing with God's things, the oracles of God on paper. And the Pharisees, of course, those were the leaders. Those were the leaders, they were power brokers, but they were in charge and they were serving because they were trying to do what God had called them to do, at least that's what you would hope, but they were serving as leaders among the people of Israel. The scribes and Pharisees. Jesus said, you know, they sit in Moses' seat and literally that was the case.

Now this is metaphorically and literally true. There was a seat in the front of the synagogue so they would have, like if you've been to the old churches, remember the old Baptist churches and a lot of churches had those thrones behind the pulpit. Do you remember that? Did you grow up with that? I always thought what would it be like to sit in those thrones? But the time I became a pastor they really got rid of them. So I never got to sit in the thrones behind the pulpit. But in the early synagogues, not that I want to, but when I was a kid, I thought that'd be cool. Then everyone gets to see you up there the whole time. And then they would sit there even through the sermon. I guess that was kind of the cheering, you know, the peanut gallery cheering. I don't know what they were doing back there, but we all watched them, right? Did



you grow up in church? Some of you, no? Not like that. You're so young. You are so young, so youthful. You look so young. Nobody? (audience laughing) You did have those, right? Did you have those? Okay. The Presbyterians had them too, I think. Okay, listen. Way off the track. Ah, the seat of Moses. That's what I was trying to figure out where I was. The Seat of Moses, there was literally at the front of the synagogue, a seat, right? The Seat of Moses that's where the leader of the synagogue, the rabbi would be and open up the scrolls and they would read from the law of Moses. So they were the teachers, they would read, they would explicate and explain the Scriptures, and they were there as leaders, authoritative leaders of Scripture. Not much different in some ways from the preachers today, taking the Word of God and trying to explain it.

Now, he says, they sit in the Seat of Moses, they're reading the scrolls of Moses. "So do and observe whatever they tell you," they're telling you the right things if it comes from the law of Moses do it, "but not the works that they do," because you know what? They're a bunch of hypocrites. "They preach, but don't practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear," and they really made it hard because they went beyond what the Scriptures said, the law of Moses, and they put all these traditions on top of it and they just loaded people up with that but they saw themselves as exempt. "They lay on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger." I don't want to do any hard work, I want to do the easy work. "They do all," here's the real problem, we saw this in Matthew 6 and here it is again, "They do all their deeds to be seen by others." Now is that a good motive to lead in the synagogues? Do you want people to applaud you? No. They really want to make sure everyone sees their phylacteries. The phylactery is that little box they wear on the back of their hand, leather straps, a little box, they put a little scroll in it. They even put them on their foreheads. This all comes from Deuteronomy, which I think is a misinterpretation of the text. But they would do that, and that was the custom and the pattern of how they understood Deuteronomy. And they would do that to make sure you could see they were holy people. And not only that, the fringes on their robes, which of course were also commanded in the law of Moses, but they want to make sure they were long. Did you see my fringes? You didn't see them, did you? I'm going to make them a little bit longer. Honey, make them longer on my robes. I want to make sure everyone sees the fringes.

And by the way, when I come to a banquet, man, I better get a seat of honor at the feast and the best seats in the synagogues, and you better greet me in the marketplace, Reverend Dr. Fabarez, you better say it, right? Call me rabbi by everyone else, Now, if people are supposed to be great in the kingdom, Jesus said you're supposed to be the servant of all. Now, on paper the scribes and Pharisees they were the leaders. And if you're the leaders, you are the servants, you're supposed to serve the people. They served the people with the wrong motives because it was about them. And I just want to make sure there's nothing that you have in your heart at all in any way that would say, yeah, I'll do that because of something that somehow will make you be noticed, be seen as more important, have a pat on the back, have the applause, give you some kind of recognition. We don't serve for that. The Bible says that's the epitome of what's wrong with the scribes and the Pharisees. They're hypocrites. We serve, we should serve with a completely different motive. And we'll get to that. But here's the idea. I want to make sure it's not about us. That didn't just happen in the Old Testament and



the rabbis and the synagogues and the Seats of Moses. When John was writing, late in his ministry, he talked about a man named Diotrephes. Do you remember Diotrephes? Yeah, he says he's going to read this letter, but he's not going to recognize our authority because he didn't listen to anybody but himself. And here's how he diagnosed that, he wants to be first. It's amazing how much trouble is still done in the Church of Jesus Christ because people they want to serve, but really it's about themselves. And they want to make sure they have a position. They want some kind of recognition. They want a platform. They want to be recognized. They want to do their service, their deeds, to be noticed.

I just want you to leave this sermon today and say that if I do ramp up my ministry, if I seek to serve, if I want to care a little bit more extremely than I did before, if I want move into a place where I'm a blessing to people like I haven't been in the past, there's not a single shred of motive in your heart that it's for you. It just can't be about you. It can't be about you. And you need to find out in your own heart if any of that and it exists a lot when you have to tell people everything you do. You know, wow, you know, did you know I was doing that? It doesn't matter. That's why Jesus says the antithesis of that is praying in the closet, as opposed to praying out in the corner or sounding the trumpet before I give my big coins in the coin pot, right? No, no, no. Don't give your offering, give in secret. "Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing." You should have this kind of ability to serve and to give without needing any recognition or any applause or you being motivated to some high place. And by the way, a lot of the conflict in the church that makes a church not a great church, but a bad church or a difficult church, at least for the leaders, is people that want positions that they really don't have any business wanting because they're really not equipped to do that work. And in Romans Chapter 12 verse 3 it reminds us of that. There are many people who think too highly of themselves. It says you shouldn't think too highly of yourselves. Think so as to have sound judgment, to think reasonably. You've got a certain, like, investment of God's gifts and the faith and the grace that God gives you and you shouldn't be having grandiose thoughts. And so many of us do, if only, if only, and we start getting involved in service because we have some sense of our own importance to the body of Christ that goes beyond what it should. Now to think with sound judgments is not to think less either of what you are equipped to do or how you can care or how can love or how you can serve. But it's finding the right balance of thinking rightly about yourself and making sure that whatever service you do to other people in the body of Christ, it's done with the right motive, for the right reason.

There are plenty of bad examples. Let's look at some good examples. Go with me to Philippians, please. So many great passages and just to show you it's everywhere and I just can't help but think of this, Philippians Chapter 3 verse 17 is another example of Paul making sure you know it's not just look at the apostles. Look at this in verse 17 of Philippians 3, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example that you have in us." So we know this goes on to every generation, that you ought to be looking at people even in this church who are serving, not for recognition, they're serving rightly, rightly motivated, they have the right perspective. And you ought to say, it doesn't matter if they're an apostle, it doesn't matter if they're a pastor, it doesn't matter if they work for the church, that's a good example of fleshing out the biblical principles and doing it rightly. Imitate that, right? Scripture needs to be put into practice. And how it's done, if it's done well,



you ought to take note, get your notebook out and say, I need to be that. I need, here's our word again, verse 17, mimic it. Mimic it, imitate it. "Join in imitating me," do what I do, "and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the pattern of the example you have in us." Take notes on them and follow their example.

Now he's going to give an example of a man whom he's pointing out here in Chapter 2, but he's going to contrast it to verse 21. So go to Philippians 2 verse 21. Here's the problem of John 6:26 and everyone else will devolve into the problem of coming and assembling even in the banner of Christ, but we'll do it for the wrong reasons because of this. This is our natural fleshly tendency. Verse 21, it says, speaking of the masses, "They all seek their own interests, and not those of Jesus Christ." They all seek their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ. By the way, there are some people who think that they are serving Christ because they go to church and they say all I'm worried about is Christ. Well, that's great, right? Fantastic. And you even say, well, you're going to talk about serving, I'll serve Christ. And you can see that somehow in some weird way, often esoterically thinking about it, and it really never involves service to people. Well, it's the people I don't really much care for, that's why I stream church, right? That's why I get my church on the Internet. You just need to be careful. But you need to understand you can't serve Christ because Christ doesn't need any service. What? You can't serve Christ. He's being served and waited on hand and foot. And by the way, ontologically, he is of himself, fully self-perpetuating, self-sustaining. He needs nothing from any of us, not even the archangels. There's no one who can serve Christ, right? All we can do is serve Christ by serving people who have needs. We can only serve Christ by serving his body, and the body is not the head. It just happens to be inexorably attached. Organically attached. That's why Jesus says, if you serve one of my disciples, you're serving me. That's why when Paul got knocked off his horse when his name was Saul, God says, "Why are you persecuting me?" No one was persecuting Christ directly. No, no, but you're persecuting him indirectly and all service to Christ, the interests of Christ are all indirect only insofar as my mind is focused on serving Christ but to serve Christ is to do what Timothy is doing and that's the example he holds up in the verses preceding.

Look at verse 19, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy," this is Philippians Chapter 2 verse 19, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you." Just like Titus, just like the whole example of people coming and couring the letters to these cities and coming back with news, right? They didn't have the technology we have. So you had a courier who would come and tell you, yes, they received your letter. I read it in the church. Everything was good. They received it well. He says, I want to hear that from the Philippians, just like he wanted to hear it about the Corinthians through Titus. Verse 20, "For I have no one like him," like Timothy, "who will be," a great line, "genuinely concerned for" Christ's welfare. Underline the word Christ here. Is that what it says? No, no, no. Not Christ. "Your welfare." Well, wait a minute, I want Timothy to be caring about Christ's interests. Well, these are Christ's interests. Christ's interests are the interests of the body of Christ. So Timothy has a, I love this line, "genuine concern for your welfare." Because guess what? The welfare of Jesus today, it's totally good. Jesus is doing just fine, only insofar as he's looking at his body, saying, my body has needs. And there are people in this church who have needs, right? And the needs need to be met by a body that cares very much about



coming to church, not as consumers, just what can I get out of church, but how can I be a blessing to the people in that church?

Which, by the way, isn't going to happen in this meeting very well because we're all sitting here side by side facing the front. You're not learning anything about the welfare of the people around you. All you're hearing is the preacher saying you should know the welfare of the people around and knowing how they're getting along. And the only way to do that, I suppose, is to stand up, go in the lobby, face one another and have conversations about your welfare. Or actually much better to have a time in a controlled environment, someone's living room, some building here on the campus, some room sitting face to face in circles, chairs facing each other saying, how are you guys doing? How are you doing? How are you doing? Here's how I'm doing. We have got to know the welfare of where we are so we can find the deficiencies and the needs and say, I can do that. I want to meet that need. You need encouragement. Let me encourage you. You need care. Let me care. You need to be loved in a way that's very specific, not with word and tongue, but in deed and in truth. What can I do to help? And to be a blessing to people means you know the welfare of people. You need to always serve with pure motives. And the pure motive here is the motive of serving Christ, but only in that I know that I can help Christ by helping his people. We're serving the people, but actually we're serving Christ.

And that's why you don't get very selective about the people. Because if it's just about the people, then I like serving these people, I don't like serving those people. Well, those people are the body of Christ as well. This is why the book of First John keeps saying, if you love God, you're going to love his people, right? Don't tell me you love God and don't love your brother, because that's not how this works. Because the brother is inexorably connected to and organically tied to the head, to Christ. So you must love the body of Christ. That's your calling. And if you say, I want to serve Christ, there's nothing wrong with that high language. Yeah, let's serve Christ. How do I serve Christ? Bring him a sandwich? You can't help Christ, right? All you can do is serve his people and maybe some of his people need a sandwich. Maybe some of these people need some encouragement. And you can do that. Always serve with pure motives. It's always ultimately motivated in service to Christ, but it's always aimed at people.

Go back up earlier in this chapter. You remember this great line starting in verse 5, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who," verse 6, "though he exists in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death." Oh, that's terrible. No, no, no. Think about the death. That he had "even death on" a Roman execution rack for torture, "a cross." Now how far did Christ go to try and serve? Well he came and left heaven to be among us. And then he was willing to die and not only that, to be tortured and killed. Well that's how this starts in verse 4, "Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of," Christ's, well, yeah, that's true, but it says, "others," because that's the point. Others. And the others that you're going to deal with are going to be the people that you rub shoulders with at your church. Those are the others in view, the body



of Christ. And he says in this passage, that is what Christ did. He went to the extreme to serve. And so I'm imitating Christ by serving people. I'm imitating Paul by serving people. And that's how I need to view this. I'm serving Christ by serving people. If I stay the extra hour, spend the extra dollar, or go the extra mile to be a blessing to someone in this church that names the name of Christ, I'm serving Christ, and that's how I ought to view it.

The whole context here in the first three verses, I hate to keep reading backwards, but verse 3, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." Well, what's that? That's all about the context of being encouraged in the body of Christ. Verse 1, having comfort from the love of the people in the body of Christ, "participation in the Spirit." That's the word "Koinonia," the fellowship of the church. If there's any "affection or sympathy," well, then you've got to "be of the same mind, having the same love, ... full accord and of one mind." Don't be selfish. Serve. Put their interests before your own, just like Christ put our interests before his own. You want to be godly then you better be a servant, and if you're going to serve, you better serve with no shred of interest for yourself in your service. You give, it's not about you. You serve, it's not about you. You stay the extra hour, it's not about you.

All right, back to our text. Purifying our motives is the only way you can serve with a clear conscience. Verse 15, "Because I was sure of this," that my conscience was clear, that I know that you're going to boast because you're going to see it all. One day you'll know my heart, my heart was pure. I only wanted to serve Christ by serving you. That's the ultimate theology of the Apostle Paul. "I wanted to come to you first," on my way to Macedonia, "so that you might receive a second experience of grace. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia," on my way back from Macedonia also. I'm going to go there, I'm going to stop in Corinth, on the way to Macedonia and on my way back. Maybe I should have put a map on the worksheet. But the point is, he's going to make a second visit. Now it was a great thing for you to do, to go out of your way to visit the Corinthians on your way to Macedonia. Make sure you get there to the port, make sure that you spend some time there, you figure out where you're going to stay, make sure you've got supplies and all you need. Go there and be a blessing to them. But now you want a second experience of grace.

Now, Paul uses that word "grace" in so many different ways. Let's look at one from the chapter previous. Now, a couple of chapters previous. First Corinthians 15. I think I read this to you last time, but let's look at it afresh. Paul uses this word "grace." What does it mean, second experience of grace? That means everything that Paul has in mind when he enlists the word "grace," and look at how it's put here. He starts in verse 9, "I'm the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle." Why would I be the top bracket of leader in the church he says? That's crazy. "I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God." So I got the word "grace" here three times, and it starts with, I became a leader by God's grace. And you can go to Paul writing to Timothy, and he says, I'm even a Christian because of God's grace. And if you know anything about grace, you know we all are Christians by God's grace. And that means that you're getting this thing that you did not deserve. It's not by works, not because you're good, not



because you're smarter than other people, not because more spiritually sensitive. You're a Christian because God, by his grace, has reached down and saved you. And so I am a recipient of this unearned, that's a good way to put it, it's nothing wrong with that definition, an unearned gift of being, Paul says here, a leader. And so, I have the equipment that God has given me graciously given me. It's not about me, it's about God. And he's given me this. Now that I know that I have this opportunity, I have, by his grace here now, worked harder than everybody else. I have said I'm going to lean into this. I'm going to go hard to try and be an agent of this grace.

Now he says in Second Corinthians 1, I want to come and give you an experience of grace. The concept of grace always is the idea of you didn't earn this. And it is about the idea, it's a gift. God gives us the gift of having the opportunity to serve and he says, when you work really, really hard at it, you're deriving what you need from God's gift, right? God is giving you what is needed and then you're moving into experiences and interactions with people, and you're giving experiences to people that are a gift of God. The gift of God, the grace of God, the way that God works through us is about brokering that goodness, that grace, the gift. And sometimes we use the word, and I codified it in the subtitle, that it's about being a blessing, God's blessing to other people through us, a gift, a blessing that we don't deserve. The whole gist of this in the middle of verse 15 and the beginning of verse 16, second visit, is about him doubling up on his plan. He's got a good plan in First Corinthians 16, he's got an even better plan. Man, if one is good, two is better. Because I want to be a blessing to them twice over. Now, there are people in this church who don't serve at all. There are some of you who serve. Now, don't lean back, cross your legs, and feel like this sermon is not for me because I already serve. I got a serving post, I serve.

Paul was great as an apostle, planning to stop by Corinth once to be a blessing to them. But to double it up, man, that's a pattern of God's grace at work in him and him working hard as God provides through his efforts to do great things and be a blessing in other people's lives. So I'm going to ask you to double it up or put it this way. Number two, you need to push your service, whatever it is. If it doesn't exist, let's go from zero to 60, but if it does exist, then it goes from 60 to 120. Let's go to the extreme. "Push Your Service to the Extreme." And I want to explain this based on the concept of grace. So go with me once you write that down to the prayer in the middle of the book of Ephesians. At the end of Chapter 3 in Ephesians, Paul prays a prayer, and it's a great prayer, but I want you to see it in context. Ephesians Chapter 3. In Ephesians Chapter 3 he bows his knees, so to speak, in verse 14, to the Father. He probably literally does as he prays. And he says in verse 16, "According to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being." Now, you want a good definition of the way grace is used in First Corinthians 15, that's not a bad one right there. That "he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner being." Now he's going to lead in verse 17 into, I want God to give you the power to understand the love of God. But clearly, it's that strength that God is granting him that is a gift from God to serve, even in this case, to explain the love of God. And to be a blessing to the Corinthians.



Now remember, this is the idea, strength in the inner man to do something, in their case to comprehend good biblical doctrine, in his case to have the wherewithal, the internal strength and power to do what he's doing as a broker of something good, explaining, teaching, visiting, exhorting, encouraging, caring for the Corinthians. When Paul says in Second Corinthians 12 that he's got a chronic illness, a thorn in the flesh, what's the answer when he prays for it to go away? I pray that way. I try to logic my way through my prayers with God. Hey, God, it'd be much better. I mean, just for all of us if you just take this pain away. I mean figured it out. Can you not figure it out? So just please do this for me. And Paul had it figured out. I'd do much better as an apostle if I didn't have this chronic illness. And God says, no, my "blank" is sufficient for you. What? Grace. In other words, I can strengthen you in your inner man, as he explains later in the book of Second Corinthians, later than where we're at in Chapter 1, right? "Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." I can give you, as it says here, to be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner being," for in his case to be the teacher, to be leader, to be a caring person, in the immediate context for them to understand something so they can get up and do something.

Drop down to verse 20, the end of this. It's called the doxology. It comes from the Greek word "Doxa." Doxa means "glory." He's going to bring glory to God in this final prayer. We often talk about it, a prayer that ends with a doxology, like the old song we'd sing at the end of the old services when the thrones were on the stage. OK? Anybody? Verse 20, "Now to him who is able to do more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power that is at work within us." Now you want a good definition of how Paul is using grace, at least as he serves to bring a gift of grace to the people, an experience of grace, a blessing to them, well this is it. The "power" that is "at work within us," when he says, "I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God," God's internal power and motivation, "according to power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus." Because they go together, body and head, Christ is honored when the body is honored. Christ is served when the body is served. Christ is somehow brought great glory when something glorious takes place in his church. "To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations." Every time I read this, I always say to you, I love passages where we can find ourselves right there in the grammar. Who knows what Paul thought about how long the church enterprise would go on? Here he is in the first century. He knew that we weren't going to know the day or the hour, but I just wonder if he ever thought this thing would go on until the 21st century. But he's thinking, well, however long this enterprise goes on, the church, may the church be glorious. Go back to my opening line. A church that's amazing, a church that is meeting the needs, a church that's filled with the kinds of people who aren't consumers, right? Not the John 6:26 people. People who come and it's just a great place for me. "There be glory in the church ... throughout all generations, forever and ever." That's a great, great picture.

Now, you read that, you probably, when you've read this before or quoted it before, you often lean into verse 20 and the beginning of that for the thing you remember. And that is, hey, the amazing thing is, God can do "far more abundantly than all we ask or think." That's true. And that's what I'm here to say. If you're willing to have the operation of the grace of God be the strength within you to go further than you thought you could go, you're going to look back and



see that God did more through you than you ever thought could happen. The church, I'm sitting in the study thinking about, okay, I'm going to exegete this passage, I'm going to explain this passage, explain the truth of the passage, try and motivate us all to step it up and double up our service. But in that, if in this church that doesn't fall on deaf ears, it falls on good soil and people start doing that, the glory within the church can do something through Compass Bible Church of Aliso Viejo, something bigger, something greater than any of us could ever imagine. And we can look back from heaven's perspective and say that's crazy. A bunch of normal people from Orange County and look what God did through them all. That's going to be something that we're going to say, wow, that is more than we could ever... because God is at work within us. That's called the grace of God empowering us. Just like he says up there in verse 16, and "strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being." That you keep going, that I keep going, that we keep going and God does something extraordinary. That's the picture of us saying God can do a lot if we're willing to lean in and like Paul said, the grace of God didn't prove to be in vain for me. He gave us the gift. And the gift and the kindness of him calling us to himself and then giving us whatever we have. He's an apostle, we're not, we're doing whatever God has called us to do, but we're going to lean into that and double it, work harder than all the rest. I would love you to say, we're going to work harder than all of us.

Now that's not a competitive thought, even though it sounds competitive. Paul said, "I worked harder than" all of the rest of the apostles. I wouldn't mind with that spirit, as long as it's rightly understood to say I hope this congregation works harder than any other congregation. We work harder than them all to say we are going to be a blessing. God is going to use us. We will stay the extra hour, two, three, or four hours if we have to. We'll spend another night out of the week. We'll go the extra mile, whatever it takes, however hard it is. We'll spend the extra dollar. We'll give, we'll give in crazy ways. We'll do things that God will call us to do, and then we're going to look back and see that God took the loaves and the fishes of what we provided and God's going to do some amazing things. That you have to believe is possible because we just read it, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to his power that's at work within us to be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations," even into the 21st on the other side of the planet in Orange County, California. You've got to push your service to the extreme.

Now I'm going to take you to a passage in your small groups and as long as I have time here, let me take you the Second Corinthians 8. Second Corinthians 8, I'm going to force you in your small groups, as much as I can force you with a piece of paper, I'm going to have you read this passage and discuss it in your small groups. Because it really is crazy. There's an illogical, unreasonable sentence here in this passage, and I need you to see it, and I need you to say I want to live that. Okay, now this is just one aspect. Talk about extra mile, extra hour, extra dollar, right? This is about the dollars. And the dollar is, I'm going to go back to Judea, I got famine relief for those Jewish Christians there who are suffering. And I went to Macedonia and I collected there and they gave like crazy, I'm going to collect from you, I want to go back and be a blessing to them. So this is all about a discussion we're going to have much later, if God wills, when we get to this passage and discuss the historical backdrop to it. But in verse 1, he's talking about his time in Macedonia, because of course, he didn't visit



them on the way there or the way back yet. But here he says this, verse 1, "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia." There's our word again, the grace of God. God enabled them to do maximum stuff, and he's about to explain it. In one area of the extra mile, extra hour, and extra dollar, this is the extra dollar part. This is crazy.

"The grace of God has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty." Let's just stop with those three things. You want to talk about a sandwich that doesn't make any sense, affliction is at the top, that's the top bun, right? Okay, extreme poverty, that's the bottom bun. And what's stuck in the middle of this sandwich? Joy. Do you know what that takes, by the way? Grace. God's gift of giving you joy when none of your circumstances make you think you could have that. Inexplicable, unexplainable, not tethered to circumstances kind of joy. If I'm in extreme affliction, a test of affliction, and I'm in extreme poverty, I got no money, I don't think I'm going to be a happy person. And yet here were Christians being joyful. This is just a crazy sentence. "In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed." I'm thinking what? Nothing overflows there unless joy is really the meat of this sandwich. "Overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part." Really? They were going through hard times, and they didn't have any money, and they gave really well. How does that work? "For they gave according to their means." Okay, check. I can lean back now. I get it. I put my feet up on that. I get that. Paul has explained that in his discussions about giving. You can only give according to what you have. It's all you can do, right? If we give a percentage, which is a good way to go, and God gave us a sense of a good place to start with 10%, we all gave 10%, we'd all be giving different amounts because we all make different amounts of money. If I said, you know what? I need you to write a check right now for \$10 million, right? Only five of you could do that. I don't know, I'm just guessing. Give us \$10 billion. Not many of you can do that. Oh, I could write it, but it's just a piece of paper. Nothing's going to happen, my bank's going to laugh and I'm going to get charged 10 bucks or whatever they charge now for overdrafts.

But some of you might have that check clear if you wrote it from the right account because you can't give what you don't have. That's just how it works. Paul says you give according to your means. That's how it works and you should. Now it's an extra offering. This isn't even the offering that he said you should be making to the people who serve you in the church. You should be giving to your church. But he says I'm coming passing the plate for something going on across the Mediterranean and that is there's a famine, there's drought, there's persecution and I need you to give something so we can bring relief to those saints in Judea. And as they passed the plate they gave, they were in affliction and poverty. They gave according to their means. Well, that makes sense. Not a very big gift then, right? "As I can testify," now here's the part that makes no grammatical sense, "and beyond their means," beyond their means. You can't give beyond your means, Paul. You want to talk about a non-sequitur? You want to talk about an illogical statement? Hey, this doesn't work. I'm going to throw a flag on it. You can give what you don't have. I can't give \$10 million. I can't. I don't have it. So I can't give it. But they gave beyond their means. You know what that means? This is a rhetorical way to discuss something that you just need to put in it, and I almost put it in



the point, codified it in the point, that means they gave in an unreasonable way. It'd be reasonable for us all to give 10% of our income to the church unless you're overextended and you're living beyond your means. You should be able to give 10% to your church. And if we now pass the plate for some special giving project, yeah, hopefully we can put something in there and maybe God has blessed you and you can give a second offering. Well, that's something going on here. Paul's passing the plate for a project of bringing relief to those in Judea. But here's one thing you can't do. You can't give beyond your means, but you could give unreasonably. And that's what they did. They gave in a way that didn't even make sense. Just like the joy between the affliction and the test of extreme poverty. The test of affliction and extreme poverty, they had joy in the middle of that and also they gave when they really didn't have it to spare, but they gave it anyway.

Well, what kind of capital fundraising consultant were you, you know, using? Well, here's what he says, none. Bottom of verse 3, "of their own accord." We didn't manipulate anybody, we didn't have any campaigns, there wasn't, you know, a flashy thing that we did, consultants, we didn't twist anybody's arm on this. And here's something crazy, verse 4, this has never happened to me in ministry, "begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints." Please, please let me give, Pastor Mike, I want to give more. That has never happened to me. That's why we may be a good church, but we're not a great church yet. Because a great church, you know what people are coming to do? Be a blessing. And when they're blessed financially, they want to bless financially. Even when they are not blessed financially they want to bless. Even when they're not blessed with a lot of leisure time. I had someone say to me this week, I got extra time, I just retired, I want to serve. That's great. You're giving according to your means. But it's the guy who's working his butt off in some Orange County job who says, I want to do another night of service. I want to serve in another way. That's giving beyond your means, that's giving unreasonably. It's someone staying the extra hour and they don't have an hour to spare. It's someone going the extra mile when they're fatigued and tired from all they have got. They've got five kids at home and they're exhausted and yet they're going to pick up the phone and stay on the phone for hours ministering to some gal, right? Because she may be tired. She just put her last kid to bed. All she wants to do is relax, but I'm going to go the extra mile.

And this is the extremity that we see in Scriptures. And Paul even says, I didn't read this passage, but in the middle of the two passages we read in Philippians Chapter 2, Paul says this, "Even if I'm being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith..." That's just crazy. Have you been reading Leviticus with us in the Daily Bible Reading? Drink offering. One thing for us to bring our animal to worship and say, okay, here's a bull, here's a goat, here's a lamb, whatever. And I know part of it's going to be burnt and part of it with most sacrifices is going to be given to the priest's family so they can eat, because they don't have property, they don't have farms, right? This is their job. So yeah, I'm a farmer, I'm going to bring my cattle and at least I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that it's being eaten by the families of those religious people who lead us. But it's one thing when you have a burnt offering or a drink offering. A burnt offering, it all gets burnt. Totally burnt up. But at least it smells like, you know, In-N-Out Burger or whatever, Outback. I mean, at least there's a little something. But taking some valuable something and pouring it out, what a waste. I don't even



get to taste it, I don't get to smell it. There it is. There's an expensive oil. Here's something valuable and I'm pouring it out. I'm like David pouring out the water. And he's thirsty, but he pours it out. What a waste! And Paul says, even if I'm just spending my life on the "offering of your faith, I'll rejoice and be glad with you all." That's just a great line.

I don't know if you feel like you're pouring yourself out yet in service. Some of you don't have a ministry post. Some of you aren't working hard to be a blessing. It's time for you to start. But if you're already running at 60 miles an hour, all I'm saying is push the gas pedal down and I dare you to see what happens because what God has constantly said about that is he loves it. And he is the one who meets people like the Apostle Paul, even with a chronic illness, who should be ratcheting back his ministry, he leans into it even more. He says in this book, "I will most gladly spend," and be expended or as our translation says, I'll spend "and be spent for your souls." I don't know what you're saving your energy for, your strength for, your money for. But the Bible says there are people who have needs and you need to know the welfare of the people around you in your church. And you need to say, God, how can I be a blessing to them? Going the extra mile, staying the extra hour, spending the extra dollar. Not talking about offering plates or budgets for the church. We're talking right now about you just being a generous person with your effort and your time and your money and seeing how you can bless people. Do you want to be a part of a church like that? Well, then it looks a lot like Acts 2 and Acts 4. There wasn't a needy person among them. Nothing. Everyone was just fat and happy when it came to their spiritual lives and their personal lives and their economic lives. We meet Barnabas. He's got a piece of property. All he's doing is paying property tax on it or whatever, weed abatement every year. And he says you know what? I'm going to liquidate that. People in the church, I'm going to give it to these people. That's the kind of church you want to be a part of, a church that goes the extra mile.

First Thessalonians Chapter 2. (someone clapping) That is affirming that one person liked what I just said. (audience laughing) First Thessalonians Chapter 2. No, no, no. (audience clapping and cheering) This is all for you, you understand. I want YOU to have a great church. And First Thessalonians 2:8, he says, I was willing not only to give you the gospel but to share with you not only the gospel but my life as well. I just hope you're not holding back. Especially if Christ comes back tomorrow, you're going to go, why didn't I make Sunday a greater day of service to people? To spend and be expended. Go to our passage, one last statement, and I made this statement, but I want to lean into this because there's one thing I want to protect you from. It's subtle, but I think if I preach about this for five minutes, some of you may see yourself in it. At the end of this wanting to double it up, I'm going to come twice to you guys on my way there and my way back. He says, "And have you send me on my way to Judea." Now if you take that phrase and logically think about it and then look for it elsewhere when Paul's talking about his travel plans to all the other churches where he talks about his travel plans, it's very common. It is what he says almost every time. Sometimes he leans into it even further. Like, I know I'm going to be a blessing to you, but you're going to be a blessing to me. I just like the reciprocity of the Apostle Paul. He's not like some people, because when I sat there in my study and I was praying and thinking about how to preach this passage, that particular part to me, I thought I know people who don't live that way. They



pride themselves on serving others, but you dare not try to serve them, because you know how they respond. Oh, no, no, no, no.

And a lot of those people are the kinds of people who someone might even label, they've got a martyr's complex. Are you familiar with that phrase? They groan, "Oh, I'm just serving all the time." You didn't sign up for leading in Awana? "Yeah, I did, I signed up, I know. Another night out this week, it's really hard what I'm doing." Did you give to that 2020 campaign? "Oh, yeah, yeah I gave, I got a bonus, but I gave all of it, it's so hard. Now, I can't take a vacation this summer. I worked so hard. Every time I come to church, I end up staying an extra hour helping people. You know, Brenda again, oh man, Brenda is so much work. I helped her for so long. You know how much I worked? Oh!" The martyr's complex. Paul does not have a martyr's complex. People with martyr complexes, when you try to serve them, they "Go, oh no, no, no. I don't need it. I'm okay. The Lord will sustain me." Martyr's complex is not a part of Paul's thinking. Oh, he does talk about spending and be expended, but that passage that I just quoted, Second Corinthians 12:15, he starts with this, "I will most gladly spend and be expended." I quoted for you Philippians 2:17, where he says, you know what? If I'm "poured out like a drink offering on a sacrificial offering of your faith ... I will rejoice." I'll have great joy in that and I'll rejoice with you in that. He is happy to serve. And then he's even willing to say, you can serve me on my way to Judea. I'm going to need a lot before I get on a boat and head across the Mediterranean. You guys can help me. He says to the Roman Christians, you're going to be a blessing to me. We'll encourage each other.

He's not afraid of receiving. And there are a lot of people when I try to serve them, just talking about my personal circles of relationships, and I say let me serve you. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Just try to pick up lunch for some people and watch what happens. They just can't take it. And I just think you have to, at some point, recognize that people who see service as only a one-way thing then we've got a problem. It speaks to some defect in the way they understand this. So you'd better have a concept of reciprocity that you're willing to be on the receiving end of generosity. Think about that. If I say, well, I'm going to be in my office all day for 10 hours. If you need my car, take it. I know your car is in the shop. Just take it if you want to go to lunch. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Just think about that. Often my come back, my retort to that is this, I say, so if my car were in the shop, could I borrow your car? Oh, well, certainly you could, of course. Well, then I don't get it. You get to be a blessing to me and all the reward that goes with that but I don't get to be a blessing to you. I don't want to steal someone's joy in service by being the kind of person who doesn't need anything because I'm too busy serving and that's just what I like. I like to be the persecuted servant. Stop.

Think about what I've just said at the beginning. If everyone in this church came to be a blessing and no one was ready to receive a blessing, what kind of church would we have? A weird church, right? We're all just sitting there offering our phone numbers. So if you need anything, I'll be happy to help. But I don't need any help, but I'll be happy to help you. Here's my number. What are we doing? You'd better go to your small group and people ought to know the welfare of your life. And if they say, well, I could help you with that. You ought to be willing to say, yes, I'm willing to accept the blessing of you giving your life or your time or your effort or whatever it takes or even your money. Think about how that works with people's



pride. Are you willing to receive, Paul was willing to receive? He's even telegraphing it. You're going to help me on my way to Judea. And I know you will, you'll send me. And in the first century culture when you don't have the Hyatt, you don't have the Hilton, this is what it was about. It was about, I know, you're going to put me up. You're going to send me on my way. I know you're going to provide for my needs. I know that. When he says to the Roman Christians, I know we're going to mutually benefit each other. We'll encourage each other, we'll be a mutual blessing. Number three, "Drop Any Hint of a Martyr's Complex." Drop any hint, number three, of a martyr's complex. If you think that any of what I just said sometimes applies to you, I just need us not to have any of that in our minds. It says something bad about your motive if you can't receive the blessing from other people. Paul's willing to do that. That's what's tied up in the line, and I'll have you send me on my way.

Let me say this, three quick things. There's no one who is going to give without an abundance of a provision from God. And I mean that. And we'll get into this in Second Corinthians, but there's nobody that if they're wanting to sow, God doesn't give them what they need. Those who make it, as the Proverbs say, their mission to bless or refresh other people, they're going to be refreshed themselves. God does this. He gives to someone who can never give back, which Jesus says that's a great way to give. He says you're giving to me. You're lending to their Maker. Lending? No, I can't get anything back from them, no, but you're lending to the Maker. God is going to provide seed for the sower. That's the way it works. Not just with money, but with time. You take a busy person who is investing in your life because you need some time spent on you for something, I guarantee you, God's going to take care of that person. That's part of the grace of God at work within you. And some of you think, well, I didn't have time for that, but I did it anyway and look what God did. It worked. I made it through the 168 hours a week and all the bases got touched one way or another. Life didn't end. God will provide. So let me say this, you don't need a martyr's complex because God is so ready to be generous to the generous. If you're generous with your time or your effort or your money, God is ready to be generous to the generous.

And just know this, God loves it not only when we give, he loves it when we receive, right? I know it's more blessed to give than to receive, but it's a good thing to receive. Your whole Christian life, from God's perspective, is you being the recipient of his kindness. And that's a good thing. And to be the recipient of people's kindness, good thing! So create a culture in your home and in your life where you're graciously accepting from people when you need something, even when you don't need it, even when it's a layer of blessing that maybe you don't need. And lastly, let me just give you this principle. Let's just turn you to this one, Hebrews Chapter 6, Hebrews Chapter 6. Again, it ends in verse 12, the passage I want us to look at in verse 12, Hebrews 6:12. He says, I don't want you to become sluggish, the word "Nōthrós," to be lazy. I don't want you to be a sluggard, a lazy man. But, here's our word again, *mimetai*, "but be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Now, there's a lot about the promises. You do this and God promises to do that. That's all throughout the Bible. And in the book of Hebrews, really, there's a lot of eschatological thinking about the promises. You do this and God is going to reward you. And he says there are some people, they're not lazy. They go the extra mile, they stay the extra hour, they spend the extra dollar, and you need to imitate their faith. They trust and they're



patient with God. And all that God's economy is about, but in the end, they inherit the promises, just be like that.

Now, that all started in verse 10, "For God is not unjust as to overlook your work and the love you've shown," now here's our first point, "for his name in serving the saints." Now I'm doing it because I'm serving God, right? I'm serving Christ. My interests are in Christ's interest, but his interests are on his people. So I'm serving the saints. And here's the point, God's not going to overlook that. If he overlooked that he'd be unjust, he would not be just or righteous according to his promises. And his promises are stuff like this that the writer of Hebrews knew his readers knew. Jesus went around saying this, if you give "a cup of cold water to someone because he's my disciple, you will not lose your reward." And if you think about that, what a small thing. I'm going to give a bottle of water to this guy. He needs it, fellow body of Christ, member of the church. You do that, you're not going to lose your award. And the Bible says that because of his promise he would be unjust if he didn't keep track of that. He's keeping track of that. And we want all of you, the writer of Hebrews says, verse 11, we desire each of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end. What? That God keeps his promises so you may not be sluggish.

The great thing is that a lot of us don't do what we know we could do in going the extra mile and serving and caring and loving each other in practical ways, not with word and tongue, but in deed and in truth, because we get lazy. And this passage says the solution to that is believing God's promises. And they're not always seen here. You need patience. You need to have faith to know God keeps his promises. You will not regret, even if it puts you, dare I say, in an early grave, if you spend or are expended for the souls of your brothers and sisters in Christ. And even those potential ones, as Paul said, do all things "for the sake of the elect," even those who have yet to become Christians. Serve, give. Go the extra mile, double it up. Don't be a martyr. So you're not a martyr when you're storing up treasure in heaven, right? It's a win for you, as well it is for everyone else where you spend the extra hour, the extra dollar, the extra mile. You are going to be blessed by God, provided in this life to do even more and rewarded in the next.

Let's break. God, there's more I wanted to say, but good for us to end with that great line from your word. You're not unjust to overlook the love that we've shown for your name. We love you. Sometimes people are hard to love. They're hard to be generous toward. They're hard to give to, I get that, but a great church powers through all of that by for your namesake serving the Saints. God we serve many of us in this church, but we don't serve like we could. When the inner man is strengthened by your grace, by your Spirit, by the gift of your empowerment to do what you've called us to do. Let us think so as to have sound judgment. We don't want to think more highly of ourselves than we should, but we know that we can be a blessing to people. Whether we think it's our personality or we think it's our limitation in time or effort or strength or energy or money, may we get past all of that by taking you on your promises that you'll provide seed for the sower. Let's get us excited about sowing. We want to give, we want help, we want care, we want to love, we want to be tangibly helpful to everyone else in this church. We have to care genuinely for their welfare. Help us to know what the welfare of the people around us is. Let us all get involved in small groups and sub-congregations, and then



God, just let us lean into that this week, doubly so, extremely so, even unreasonably so. Let us believe what you'll do in making a great church, glory in the church throughout all generations. Do great things through this church and every person who's heard this sermon.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen