



BelPres Church

The Heart of Ministry

Speaker: Ian Cheng

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Well, BelPres, how are you? Amen, I'm going to bring Pastor Ian up. Pastor Ian Cheng is the pastor of our Mandarin-speaking church, who we partner with here, Seattle Chinese Covenant Church that meets on our campus every Sunday, and they're also here throughout the week. They're down in S-150, just down in the music wing at 11 a.m. every morning. So we partner together to minister to our Mandarin-speaking community.

And this past year, they have baptized a little over 20 people in their church this year. Praise the Lord. And they have some baptisms coming up on Easter as well. So very blessed to have Pastor Ian with us today, to preach with us today. And you're kind of getting a double dose. He's preaching similar to what Pastor Scott Dudley were preaching next week. So that way we do get the message. Some of us are hard-headed when we hear it twice.

And if you're following along in the journal, you can still do the journal even though it'll be different scripture than what he's preaching today. So with that, Pastor Ian, let me pray over you as you lead us in the Word.

God in heaven, may your Holy Spirit continue to flow, Lord. May your presence never wane. May Pastor Ian's words be your words, Lord. We are so blessed to be here together as a community. May we be convicted by the word, by lyrics, by deed, by conversations, by a hug in the lobby, whatever it may be, Lord. But may we open our eyes and our heart and our ears to hear you today. In your beautiful name, together we said, Amen.

Thank you, Pastor Sergio. Exciting, right? Today is the championship game day. Yeah. So before we begin, I just want to say this. Let's cheer for the Seattle Seahawks. You see the picture? I hope they do well in the game afternoon. And even more, I hope we all get to witness they are winning the Super Bowl next Sunday.

Okay, before we begin, I coordinate with Pastor Scott. So his message next Sunday will be mostly focused on verse 17. And I will skip verse 17 today. And I'm laying a groundwork for him for the next Sunday.

Okay, the theme for this season is unleashing the good news. According to this direction, my sermon title today is *The Heart of Ministry*. First, it refers to our attitude when we share the gospel, the heart and motivation behind our witness. Second, it refers to the core message of the gospel itself, what we are actually sharing.

Our scripture today comes from 2 Corinthians 5, 11 to 21. But let us begin by reading only verse 11 to 15 first.

Verse 11, since then we know what it is to fear the law, we try to persuade others. What we are is praying to God, and I hope it is also praying to your conscious. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart. If we are out of our mind, as some say, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one die for all and live for all die. And when he die for all, and those who live should longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

My first point is the first attitude of our sharing gospel is the fear of the law. Verse 11 begin with these words. Since we know what is to fear the law, we try to persuade others. This tells us that the first attitude in sharing the gospel is the fear of God. Why should we fear God? If we look at the previous verse, verse 10, it tells us that we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul is saying that when we share the gospel, we do so in awareness of God's coming judgment.

This attitude is especially important for Chinese believer. In Chinese culture, we are taught to deeply respect our parents, sometimes even fear our parents. So when we try to share the gospel with unbelieving parents, we are often afraid of their rejection, even anger. But when you think about God's judgment, when

you realize that if your parents do not believe, they may face judgment and perish, then the fear of the law give you the courage to speak.

Is that true for all of us? We worry about being rejected. We fear opposition from family members. But our fear of judgment should be greater than our fear of rejection. That is why we try to persuade others, because we know we are afraid those who will love will perish on the day of judgment if they do not believe.

The second attitude is the love of Christ. In verse 14, Paul says, for Christ's love compels us. This shows us the second attitude in sharing the gospel. We are motivated by Christ's love. Every Christian come to faith because we experience Christ's love. And because we have received the love, we want to share it with the people we love.

Do you love your family? Do you love your friends? If we truly love them, we will be willing to share the gospel with them. And even before we invite them to the church, we care for them, we check on them, and show them love. When people feel your genuine love, they want to be around you. And eventually, they may even want to come to church with you.

After these two attitudes, we need to know we are called to be a man and woman of God. My third point is being genuine before God and people. In second half of the verse 11, Paul says, what we are is praying to God. I hope it also praying to you conscious. When Paul talk about being genuine before God and before people, this means a person who share the gospel must be a person and nothing to hide from God.

Paul say he is sincere and he is transparent before both God and people. This reminds us to live a life of integrity. Keep going into people who belong to God, men and women of God. When we live upright lives, we will not be ashamed to share the gospel.

Let me share your personal story with you. 35 years ago, when I was still a seminary student, I had the opportunity to go on a mission trip to China with about 10 American seminary students, college students. You see that picture? I had a second one from the right. That's 1991, okay?

After that trip, my supervisor in the States asked my field supervisor in China for an evaluation report of me. And I remember there's only one question on that evaluation. Is this person a man of God? I was shocked. That was the only

criteria used to evaluate my ministry. They didn't ask what I did there in China. I was discouraged.

At that time, I was just a seminar student, still learning how to share the gospel. I certainly didn't think I was a man of God. To be honest, even today, I still don't think I fully qualify. When you walk into a church lobby and you see me, chances are I don't have a big smile on my face. But if you see my wife, she will be smiling warmly at you because she grew up in a lovely, gentle family. I grew up in a broken home.

My parents divorced and my father was always busy. When I was in elementary school, I often came home to an empty house with only my elderly grandma. I spent a lot of time alone, wandering outside before going home. Over time, I became introverted. I learned to endure loneliness and even enjoy it. I like being alone. Even in class, I prefer to stay in the corner.

How could someone like me be a man of God? If you see my serious face, why would you come to the church with me? But thank be to God. Even though I'm not perfect, God is still willing to use me like, man like me. Look at me now. I'm standing here, pushing to you. And I have been a pastor for decades.

So if you feel you are not a man of God, or a woman of God, that's okay. If God can use someone as unlovable as me, He can certainly use you. Amen?

Number four, we still have one thing to do. We need to do something crazy for God. In Paul 13, Paul says, if we are out of our mind, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you.

Paul contrasts out of our mind with being our right mind. Some people thought Paul was crazy. But in scripture, this word, out of our mind, often describes people who are overwhelmed by God's power, by miracle, by the work of Holy Spirit, by vision from God.

Paul explains that sometimes his actions are driven by passionate devotion to God, driven by vision, suffering of the gospel. Other times, he speaks with reason and clarity, so that carefully explaining the truth of God. So Paul teaches us that we must be willing to do actual, ordinary things for God, even if people think we are crazy. But at the same time, we must faithfully teach sound doctrine and clearly explain the gospel, not just sharing emotional or supernatural experience.

On that mission to China, I mentioned, at first, no one believed. But later, we went to Xinjiang, a remote western region in the vast desert. 35 years ago,

yeah, look at that. 35 years ago, it was extremely underdeveloped and very difficult to reach. There is no paved street. That was a donkey taxi. That's our transportation, okay?

One Chinese man traveling with us to Xinjiang, and he saw how much this American loved Chinese people. Willing to go to a place even many Chinese tried to avoid. And there, in the westernmost city of Kashgar, he accepted Christ. That was a crazy thing, but a beautiful, extraordinary thing.

Another time, I led a short-term mission team to Kamenis, a former East Germany mountain city. We stood outside a university building, like that, and our coworker is passing our flyer. We're waiting to hang our flyer to invite student to a Bible study that evening. Hundreds of students poured out at once. We were busy handing out flyers, and we didn't notice a Chinese student watching us from the side.

When everybody left, he approached us, angry and said, I heard you from America. I heard you come here four times a year. I heard you raise your own support. I heard you use your personal vacation time to come here. And he said, In Europe, we got two months of vacation every year. And you American are workaholic. You got only two weeks. Why didn't you use that vacation to go on vacation with your family? Why come to this remote mountain city for us international students?

I said to him, If you really want to know why, come to our meeting tonight. And see that picture? He came. He's the person in the middle. He not just came, he brought along his two friends. At that night, all three of them trust themselves in Christ. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

That is what Bible teaches by going extra mile. What seems crazy to them become the very thing God used to touch his heart.

Finally, we must ask these questions. What is the core message of the Gospel that we are sharing? Let's continue to read from verse 16 to 21, verse 16.

So, from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view, though we once regard Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone in Christ, the new creation has come, the old has gone, the new is here. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself, to Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people sinning against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appearance through us. We implore you on Christ's behavior. We reconcile to God. God made him who had no sin to be sinful for us, so that in him we might become righteous of God.

So what exactly is the message that we are sharing? Paul explained this to us in a very clear and logical way. He tells us the gospel is a message of reconciliation. Verse 19 says, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ. It is very core, the gospel is about broken relationship being restored, people being brought back into a right relationship with Christ.

In verse 16, Paul tells us, a new era has begun. From this point on, simply knowing more information about Christ cannot change a person. Knowledge alone does not transform lives. Only faith in Christ can truly change a person.

When someone is moved by Christ and believes in him, the person is in Christ and become a new creation. As verse 17 tells us, the old lie enslaved to self and sin has passed away. A brand new lie has begun.

In verse 18, the word reconciliation points to something God has already done in the past. It tells us that God has fully accomplished his work. That means our role is not to earn reconciliation. Our role is to simply believe and to receive what God has already accomplished.

In verse 18 and 19, it reminds us that all of these come from God. It was God who took the initiate. Through Christ's death on the cross, reconciliation between humanity and God become possible. The cross is where our sins no longer count against us. The cross is the peace we God was made available to us.

Finally, in verse 20 and 21, Paul makes something very clear. Every Christian is called to share the gospel. We are not just churchgoers. We are not just believers. We are Christ's ambassadors. Christ is making his appear to the world, to us, and our message is simple and urgent. Be reconciled to God. This is the core of message. This is the heart of ministry.

So let me ask you, do you now know that you are called to share the gospel? Do you fear God? Do you worry about the judgment of those you love? Have you experienced God's love? Do you love the people around you? I believe so.

If so, are you willing to do something that others might think crazy for God? I just want to challenge you with one simple but actually ordinary thing, okay?

Starting from this week, every Saturday, okay, every Saturday, call one family member or one friend that you care about, and invite them to come to church with you on Sunday. Can you do that? You might say, grandma miss you, you want to come to me with tomorrow? We can have lunch or tea afterward. And let's just do that.

Do that for eight consecutive Saturdays, inviting the same person, okay? The first Saturday, they may feel very happy that you call them. The second Saturday, they may sound annoyed. The third Saturday, you may get voicemail. The fourth Saturday, they may just hang up. The fifth Saturday in Live After, while past going to tell you, just don't give up. My love might be the very reason God used to bring them to the church.

If you are waiting, I want to pray for you now. The next time you see my serious face on the church lobby, you can tell me what God has done, and how you were crazy for God, and how he used you to share the gospel.

Are you waiting? If you are waiting, please raise your hand, okay? And I will pray for you. I saw many friends and hands. Can I have more?

Okay, let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for allowing me to believe in you and to receive new life in Christ. You know how deeply I love my family and my friends. Lord, I'm waiting to invite them to come to church. I ask that you give me courage, and I pray the Holy Spirit will go before me and prepare their hearts.

When I extend this invitation, may their heart be moved by your spirit. Not only may they come to the church, but may they also come to believe in you as their personal savior. I pray all this in the victorious name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Thank you for your commitment and prayer. God bless you.

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God's story in this passage?
- What do we learn about our story in this passage?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What are our two core motivations for sharing the gospel?
- What is the one extraordinary thing Paul teaches us that we must be willing to do for God in sharing the gospel?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.