

July 5th, 2026

Mission: A Value More Precious Than Life

Acts 20:17-24 Rev. Daniel Chong



"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace." — Acts 20:24

There is a question I always ask when providing mental and spiritual training to soldiers: What is the purpose of your life? What is the motivation that keeps you living day by day?

It is said that if a person is strong, their lifespan is eighty years. Living this short life, what do we yearn for, and what purpose do we live for? As Solomon confessed in the Book of Ecclesiastes:

"Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever... All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again... What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." — from Ecclesiastes 1

In a world like this, what is the reason for our existence, and what is our purpose? As redeemed Christians, we must live with a precise purpose and meaning for our lives. That is exactly what a mission is.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.") — 1 Peter 2:9-10

God has a plan and a purpose for choosing us, calling us out of darkness, and leading us into life. That purpose is to have us witness to the Gospel and live for His glory. As children of Christ and as a royal priesthood, He has called us into this mission to give us true life.

The background of today's scripture is the tail end of Paul's third missionary journey. Paul had made up his mind to go to Rome by way of Jerusalem. However, at every stop along the way to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit warned him through prophets: "Paul, when you go to Jerusalem, prison and hardships await you. You might die if you

go there." If a path is clearly filled with hardships and predictable death, common sense dictates that one should stop.

Yet, Paul gathered the spiritual leaders of the Ephesian church at Miletus and left them with a tearful confession. That is today's text from verse 24: "I am not afraid of prison or hardships. If it is for the mission I received from the Lord Jesus, I do not consider my life worth anything to me."

Today, through Paul, we want to learn more deeply about what a mission truly is.

First, every Christian is a missionary who has their own "race to run."

If we are born-again Christians, we are all people of mission who have a "race to run." Paul states in the text, "the race I must run." The Greek word for "race" or "course" used here is *dromos*, which means a 'fixed race track.' In other words, a Christian's life is not that of a 'wanderer' roaming around aimlessly without a destination, but that of a 'runner' sprinting powerfully toward a destination set by God Himself.

We did not come into existence by accident, just to live carelessly and fade away. We were created within God's grand design before the creation of the world, redeemed by the price of Jesus Christ's blood, and sent to this earth as 'beings with a purpose.' God has entrusted each of us with a unique running course that fits us—our mission.

To some, He gave the mission of raising children in faith within the home; to others, the mission of setting an example as an honest Christian in the workplace; and to others, the mission of serving members in the church without name or recognition. It is not just pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders who receive a mission. Every single born-again Christian has received God's holy mission.

Brothers and sisters, do not listen to the voice of the world and look enviously at other people's courses. Do not lose heart by comparing your pace to someone else's. What matters is completing the race to the very end without abandoning the course God has entrusted to you. This is not the world's race. It is not a race for worldly success. I pray that you will run the race of faith entrusted to you with faith until the end.

Second, the essence of a mission is to proclaim "the Gospel of God's grace."

Then, what is the specific content of the mission received from the Lord Jesus? Paul defines it clearly: "the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."

Why did Paul risk his life for this mission? It was because he knew acutely, in his very bones, how great the grace he received truly was. Paul was originally a persecutor who captured, imprisoned, and killed believers. Spiritually speaking, he

was the chief of sinners who deserved to be eternally cursed. Yet, the risen Jesus sought him out on the road to Damascus, embraced him, and appointed him as an apostle. It was an unconditional, unilateral grace.

Once he experienced that grace, a holy fire was ignited in Paul's heart—a fire that made it impossible for him to contain himself without preaching this Gospel. The Gospel is the power that saves people. It gives hope to the despairing, freedom to those enslaved by sin, and eternal life to the dying. It is the only solution.

The reason we get discouraged and lethargic today is not because life is difficult. Of course, there can be lethargy that comes from financial struggles, relationship issues, and health problems. However, the root cause is that we have lost the burning passion for our mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have lost the fervor and passion we had when we first met Jesus.

Our mission is not grand or complicated. It is testifying with our lips and our lives—right where we are—about the Jesus we met and the grace of God that saved us. I hope and pray that you will recover this mission of witnessing to the Gospel.

Third, a mission is more valuable than one's own life.

Finally, Paul delivers the greatest confession a person of mission can make: "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish this task."

This confession does not mean he viewed life as trivial. Life is incredibly precious, but it means he 'discovered a purpose (a mission) so valuable that it was worth dedicating that precious life to achieve.'

The German philosopher Nietzsche said, "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." The most pitiable person in the world is one who is healthy and lives a long life but doesn't know why they are living. Conversely, the happiest and most powerful person is one who—even if they live a short life—has discovered a clear mission for why they must live.

In the history of missions, there is a missionary named Jim Elliot, who went to preach the Gospel to the Auca tribe—a fierce, unreached tribe in Ecuador—and was speared to death as a martyr in his mid-20s. He left a famous journal entry during his college years:

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

He lost his physical life, but through his martyrdom, a miracle occurred: the entire fierce Auca tribe came to believe in Jesus Christ and was transformed. When life was exchanged for mission, the fruit of eternal life was borne.

Brothers and sisters, we always worry, "How can I be safer? How can I live longer?" But today, the Lord asks us: "With the life I have given you, what are you running for? Do you have a heavenly mission that you cannot give up, even when hardships and chains come?"

[Conclusion: Stand Up as a Person of Mission]

Beloved saints, the night of life comes to everyone. Our physical bodies will decay day by day, and one day we will all stand before the Lord. On that day, the Lord will not ask us, "How rich did you live on earth? How comfortably did you live?" Instead, He will ask, "How did you run the course of the mission I gave you?"

Could it be that you are trapped in a deep spiritual sleep in the armchair of comfort, having forgotten your mission? Are you caught up in your own problems and anxieties, deviating from the path of mission?

I desire that Paul's great declaration today becomes your confession and mine:

I have a course to run, set by God.

I have the Gospel of grace, which is more precious than life.

Therefore, even if hardships come or losses are incurred, I will never stop walking this path of mission.

Holding fast to a mission more precious than life itself, I earnestly pray in the name of the Lord that you will become holy people of mission who proudly finish the race of faith until the day the Lord calls you home.

Pastor's Column

[Part 1]

“I have four different personalities.”

It was my first time hearing about multiple personalities — something I had only ever seen in dramas — directly from the person themselves. An inmate wanted to speak with me. He referred to himself as "trans" (a shortened term for transgender) and told me that there were three other distinct personas living inside him.

This young man had been imprisoned for stabbing someone with the intent to kill. Though one could argue that everyone in prison has a dark story, listening to his account revealed that he hadn't actually wanted to commit the act. He explained that someone had approached him and told him that he needed to go to "college" to prevent his cousins from being killed. Here, "college" is slang for prison. Driven by this, he targeted an elderly person and stabbed them. Now inside, he expressed deep regret for what he had done.

He shared that he had developed one of his alternate personalities after being raped during his childhood, and yet another after enduring another sexual assault in his early twenties. As a result, he now claims to host a total of four personalities within himself and also hears voices due to symptoms of paranoia. Despite all this, he identified himself as a believer in Jesus. He mentioned that because of his transgender status, he would become a target for attacks if he were transferred to a different facility. Currently, however, the Department of Corrections is planning to move him to a general population prison.

The main issue is that his practical, immediate fear is this very transfer. Moving to a general prison means facing the presence of cartels, which poses a genuine threat to his life. As we conversed about this dilemma, I realized that until the deeply entangled, complex issues within him are resolved, it will be incredibly difficult for him to lead a normal life.

First, the multiple personalities residing within him must be cast out, leaving only one single identity in his body. (By this, I do not mean that I will perform this act myself, but rather that his own perspective and deeply held

beliefs about his condition need to be transformed.) This first step is immensely challenging because he firmly believes in the reality of these separate personas. Second, once he comes to believe that only one identity exists within his body, the next step is to guide him to accept that he is a man, not a woman. If this fundamental mindset does not change, it will be hard for him to find true peace. Third, after aligning his gender identity with his physical body, he will need a process to build a healthy self-image and to alleviate or reframe the severe trauma of past sexual violence. Fourth, if he experiences healing through all these stages, he must then be helped to view himself as an independent individual capable of living a normal life and starting a family. Finally, once he can sustain an independent life, he must be supported in growing into a mature person who reflects the character of Christ.

As I spoke with him for nearly an hour and a half, I felt utterly at a loss. I did not know where to begin peeling away the layers of false beliefs he held about himself. I knew I needed to help him strip away those layers one by one until he reached his raw, original state as a gemstone, and then help him clothe himself anew in Christ. Because of this, a profound sense of helplessness and frustration washed over my heart. Could this young man truly be transformed into a mature individual filled with Jesus? To make that possible, the false outer shells enveloping him must be removed one by one, but the truth is, peeling back even a single layer is by no means an easy task.

He is truly a wonderful young man. He is tall and handsome, and he possesses a genuine musical talent. Yet, because his heart is diseased and his mind has become twisted, his life is being ruined. If only he could think and judge with a healthy mind, he would be able to live a beautiful life once again. However, there is nothing I can do on my own.