



Pointing People to Christ-Part 8

Praying for Courage

Pastor Mike Fabarez

I need to tell you a bit about my struggles. I'm going to break all the rules here this morning, and I mean that as I teach in different seminaries about preaching, I always make it very clear you keep the congregant's mind on the text and on their lives, the application of the text and understanding of the text. They don't need to know what's going on in your life. They don't need to know your thoughts or your angst or your struggles. But I have to break those rules this morning and just forget all the hemolytic strategies and all the public speaking tips and all the approaches to rhetoric and just really be honest with you as your pastor that I'm struggling to preach this sermon. I'm struggling to preach this sermon and I struggled to preach the last sermon and it's been a compounding problem for me in the last few weeks.

If you don't know, you might be new, we're working through Acts, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, we've gotten to Chapter 4. We took Chapter 3 and 4 because it really is one telic unit, one section of Scripture that starts with this healing and then all this evangelism and all this boldness about evangelism and, you know, Christ is the only way. You're going to tell us to shut up and we're not going to shut up, we're going to keep speaking and all this stuff's going on. Then we get to this section in Chapter 4 verse 23, where they're going to start praying for boldness and you see the subtitle and all that. But I really struggle to preach this to you because... and I'm not trying to castigate our congregation, I'm not trying to shame you, I don't want to hurt your feelings.

But I sense that I am preaching a series of sermons that many of us are just... we don't need them. You don't need these messages, you don't need them because there's no use for them because the whole premise of this has been about our responsibility to share the gospel. And if you come in here today and you have not been sharing the message of Christ, and I'm not saying just dropping out a "Jesus loves you," I mean, talking about the things we've been studying in the book of Acts, that there's a sin problem and that there is a savior, that we got to submit our lives to him, those are the things that people find offensive. I just feel like... it's like seeing a guy come out of his house and he's got a helmet on and he's got knee pads on and he's got a mouthpiece and he's got shin guards on and he's got, you know, shoulder pads and he walks down the street out of this neighbor's house and you stop him, you say, "What are you doing, where are you going?" And he said, "I was just going for a walk, going to lunch." You'd be like, "I don't get it. It's absurd. Why would you dress like that to go to McDonald's? That makes no sense."

I feel like this is another one of those sermons and I felt it every single week. I didn't feel at the beginning. I didn't sense that at the beginning when we started. This is, what, part eight of nine as we work through these two chapters. But every week, as I try to lay on another piece of equipment on your life, I think to myself, this is just not necessary. I mean, look at the subtitle, "Praying for Boldness." This is not boldness about your next project at work or, you know, I don't know, dealing with a surgery you're going to face or being courageous about various things. This is about one thing. This is about one single thing. If you are not out there on the field, if you're not



moving the ball down the road, down the gridiron, then all of this is just... it's useless. It's hearing another message that does nothing.

It, I think, homiletically, as a pastor, I've sat down every time, and again, this is breaking all the rules. I would never advise this. But my struggle in looking increasingly as one layer upon the next in these progressive chapters, or paragraphs within these two chapters, has been, well, I guess I got to start the sermon by making sure that we're adequately motivated to share the gospel. I guess I should do something again about the necessity of being evangelists. I guess I should somehow get them to the place where we're thinking about the fact that, yes, of course, we need to be evangelistic, because if not, the rest of this message doesn't make sense. Now I'm back again at my study, praying through the passage, studying the text and saying, well, here we are again.

If you come in this room and if I could take a computer program of some kind and scan all your faces in it, have a database in heaven and above your head right now as I look out at all of you, I saw a number pop up over your head, which represented how many times you talked to people this week about sin and salvation and submission to the savior, I just wonder how many would be zero. And again, I'm not here to bag on my own church. I love you guys. Do you understand that? It's just I wonder if we just bear the name evangelical, but, I mean, we're really not evangelistic.

I mean, I don't have much contact with non-Christians. I get that. I try to hire Christians here at Compass Bible Church. So I'm surrounded by Christians all the time. And yet, you know, this is weighing so heavily on my heart. I love the fact that our pastors, we always on our text thread, we're always talking about people we're sharing the gospel with. It's a very healthy thing. I remember a Friday, I had a something out of the office, and I sat down and I saw the waiter at this breakfast place I was having a meeting in, I was like, oh, a non-Christian. It was like, there you go. So I thought, you know, I got to share the gospel. And of course, today, of course, anything you talk about, you can get away with. Corona virus. "Oh yeah, Corona virus. Yeah. Corona virus. You know, it could kill you, you could die. You're going to face God. Let's talk about eternity and salvation and sin." I mean, it's not hard to do in terms of taking any conversation, whether it's politics or diseases or earthquakes or whatever, your kid's soccer team, we can turn the attention to the problem of sin, the solution in Christ and our need to submit to Christ, to put our trust in him. That can happen.

If I can find opportunities in my life and I'm not trying again, it's not about me, but if I can find then you can too. I bet you're around more non-Christians than I am. You have an opportunity every single week. If you are not sharing the gospel, I'm just saying again, here we go, another sermon about, hey, you need to pray for boldness in your evangelism. If you walk in and walk out and we go seven days and next week you come back and again, we got to zero over your head, you haven't shared a single time, then what are we doing here? I mean, seriously. Let's just go get brunch and you can play golf on Sunday. It just doesn't... it won't work. It doesn't matter. I mean, let's preach on another part of Scripture that has nothing to do with our task, which is to be witnesses of Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Orange County, California, America, 21st



century. That's our task. This is our job. This is our mission field. God is asking you and I to share the gospel.

We share the gospel, I hope you know, because heaven and hell hang in the balance. I mean, you cannot study what we've studied in Chapter 4 already when it says "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Now, either you believe that or you don't. If that's the truth, that's the thing that's hanging in the balance. Whatever might stand between you and the conversation about eternal things, none of that matters in relationship to what's going to happen to that person a hundred years from now. They're going to meet their maker. You have the words of life. Don't tell me you believe that and you can't open your mouth about the gospel. You open your mouth about the gospel and you talk about it. I'm not talking about "Jesus loves you and you should come to church." Right? Those are true things. But the issue and message of the gospel is we are sinners before God. We need salvation and it's only found in Christ. You got to put your trust and repent. You got to submit your life to this king, the lordship of Christ. That has to be shared.

You need to realize that that is the eternally important thing that you have. The message of life is in your mouth. It's got to get out. It's got to get out because if it's not out of duty, would you do it out of love? I mean, you sing songs about the fact we love Christ. I hope if someone stopped you, you know, out at the Spectrum mall and said, hey, do you love Christ? I love Christ, too. If you love Christ, he said, "if you love me, you'll keep my commandments." And he said this, if you follow me, I'll make you a fisher of men. You are my ambassadors. I've entrusted you to strive side by side for the faith of the gospel. You have a message. I have a message we have to share. You HAVE to speak about Christ. It's duty. It's love. It's what you must do.

And you know why we don't? Right? You know why most of us don't, because we care more about what people think of us than what they think of Christ. You know, right now, the people who you rub shoulders with all week long think wrong thoughts about Christ. If they thought right thoughts about Christ, if they thought that he is our savior, he's the only way of salvation, he is the lord of the universe then they would be in Bible-teaching churches somewhere in Orange County today, and they would be serving the Lord and worshipping God and reading their Bibles. But they're not. The people that you encounter, most of them, they don't do that. If they don't do that, they're thinking wrongly about Christ. I've challenged you in this series to engage in the battle of ideas, to take weapons of warfare in right hand and left, and to take every thought captive, their thoughts, that's the context, every thought captive to be obedient to Christ. We are in a battle of ideas. We're taking everything that raises it's self up against the knowledge of God and we're correcting that. That is our job. You've got to say, I care more about what that person thinks of Christ, I care about his reputation more than I care about my reputation.

That sounds like a lot of "stick." Right? Smack, smack, smack, smack. Here's the carrot. You'll have no greater joy than if you share the gospel and make a disciple this week. The Bible says that heaven erupts when one sinner repents. Angels in heaven rejoice. When you do something that doesn't secure you a better vacation or better health or more money or, you know, a relaxing afternoon at the spa, when it's "I just helped give birth spiritually to someone whose name is now written in the Lamb's Book of Life and they will be in eternity in the Kingdom of Christ with me."



Trust me, there is no greater joy than that. You will have a much better Christian life this week, even if you strike out 32 times. If the 33rd person you speak to about Christ puts their trust in Christ and ends up joining us in our endeavor to love God, know his word and serve him in this world, you will have no greater joy than that.

Some of you just, you're not, you're not even joyful Christians. One of the reasons is... you never won anyone to Christ. I mean, that is certainly got to be a contributing factor to the dourness in your Christian life, the looking at the gray cloud. Here's the silver lining, you can be the means by which someone who comes to faith in Christ and then like the apostle Paul, you can say you are my joy and you are my crown, this is what my life's all about. That person right there came to faith in Christ because of me.

You need to share the gospel, because eternity hangs in the balance. Because he told us to, and you say you love him. Because his reputation matters more than my reputation. You should also do it because it is a joyful work. Jesus said, "I'd much rather engage in this work, this is the food I have to eat that you guys know nothing about." And I got to tell you, there are people in this room and I'm not saying none of us. Right? And again, I'm only guessing, but I'm fairly discerning and I know people pretty well and I've been in church work for decades now, I know that most of you probably did not talk to someone this week about sin and salvation and submission to Christ.

I'm just saying this. Those of you that are, I just want to say, isn't that the best thing about it? The best thing about our Christian life is being salt and light in this world, which is not setting a moral standard at work, although that involves that. It's about us opening up our mouths and talking about the fact that these people carrying the guilt of their sin can be right now forgiven. That their sin appended to Christ's cross can give them the relief of the fact that they are no longer alienated from Christ, but they are in the family of God. That is an amazing opportunity, and you need to get excited about the joy that can come from that.

Yesterday I was preaching at the men's breakfast. Many of you were there and the feedback I got from that, one of the best things, this is just a totally different topic. But one of the things we did at the end of that breakfast is we sat silently. In silence in prayer, you can ask the guys who were there, I think it's the most impactful part of it, we just sat and confessed our sins to God. We talked about the fact that there's a lot we need to confess and just to spend time with absolute silence and to think about the fact that we have fallen short of God's standard. You know, that's a pivotal, pivotal moment. Nothing's going to change about the fact that you and I are falling short of our responsibility as messengers of the gospel until we confess our sins.

We talked about it yesterday real briefly. But, you know, we've talked enough from this platform about the word "confession." Confession is a Greek word, a compound word, "homo," the same, "logia," to speak, to say a statement, to say the same statement that God is saying. God may be looking at your life with a zero over your head and saying you should have shared the gospel this week. You need to say, "God, I agree with you." That's confession. I agree that what I've done, I should not have done. In this case, it's a sin of omission, something I did not do that I should have done. And it's saying, "God, you're right, I did wrong."



Now, here's the thing we talked about yesterday, and it's true about whatever sin we're confessing. You cannot put an asterisk next to it and say, "Well, but here's why I didn't." To justify or rationalize my sin does not work. Real confession comes with a period at the end. "I agree with you that what I've done is wrong." And in this case, it's the fact that many of us in this room are not sharing our faith. We are not sharing the gospel. And that's not just, "Hey, great. I tried this Wham-O product and now it's better for me." No, you have a sin problem. You need a savior. You need to respond rightly to the only King of kings and Lord of lords. You put your trust in Christ, submit to his kingship. That's, I mean, we've got to share that message. The reason we're afraid is because all those things are not, they don't sit well with our world. It starts with confession.

Maybe right now in this room, there are some people gutsy enough between my sentences to say to God, "He's talking about me right now. I haven't. God, I agree with you. I mean, I know that Pastor Mike could share a lot of passages to show that the Scripture is very clear it's our responsibility." I don't know, guys, I don't know how in the world you're going to stand before God one day at the evaluation, the Bema Seat, and try and talk your way out of the fact that you did not share your faith with people. I don't know what you're going to say. I'm not trying to say I'm the smartest guy in the room, but you do pay me to read and study the Bible. That's a big part of my job. I can tell you this, I don't know how I could ever talk my way out of it. I don't know any excuse that would say, "God, you know what? Here's why I didn't share the gospel." And him go, "Oh, that's good. Well, you're right. You didn't have to." What? No. This is our perpetual, enduring calling. Every generation is to be his witnesses and to testify to the fact that Jesus is the only savior in this world.

Confession without rationalization, without any kind of justification. It's just simply saying I'm wrong for not sharing the faith. By the way, the next word that should come into our minds is "repentance." Repentance is looking at it and saying, "Not only did I do wrong, but I'm going to stop that. I know that it's wrong. I don't want next week to be like this week. And repentance, here's another good word that should go with that, "resolve." I'm resolving now to do right. When we're talking about sins of omission with the word repentance, you should add the word resolve, because if it's something I did not do last week that I should be doing and God has tasked me to do, well, then here's the thing. I know I have no excuse for not doing it. I'm going to resolve right now to open up my mind, to share the gospel, which is not just "Jesus loves you," it's we got a sin problem, there is salvation in Christ, you got to submit to the king. That's an oversimplification. But that's the concept. My question is, who are you sharing the gospel with? Are you ready to resolve right now and say, I confess that I haven't the way I should? I repent of that sin and now I am resolved to do it.

Now, if you get to that place, which I initially sat at my computer and tried to put together something in an introduction that will kind of get to that. But I thought, forget it. I don't know what to do other than to express my angst to you that I don't know how we could preach another message, in this case, about praying for courage to share the gospel, if we are not sharing the gospel. I just don't know what else to do. So, I'm saying I hope that to those of you that over your head there would be a number -- one, two, three, you share the gospel, then I have a message for you. Or perhaps you're saying I just confessed, I do repent and I've resolved to do all that. Then I have a message for you. The rest of you, we got free Wi-Fi. I guess you can just cruise through



your phone. But if you're here and you're ready to say I am resolved to do this, I did it last week and I'm going to do it this week. I didn't do it last week, but I'm repentant and I'm going to do it this week, then I got a sermon for you. A sermon when two fishermen stood before the intellectual elites of their day and had the courage to tell them that even though you don't want me doing this and I got every reason to be afraid of it, I am going to speak the word of God with boldness in my generation.

So if I got anybody left with me on this, I want you to turn to Acts Chapter 4 verse 23. I want to study 23 through 31 with whatever time I have left and say, here's what we need to learn. We need to learn to be like these guys. Verse 23, you know the context, after they are released, they spent the night in prison. They stood before the Sanhedrin and they said, listen, I don't care if you think we should stop speaking about the gospel. We're not going to stop. "When they were released," verse 23, "they went to their friends and reported with the chief priest and the elders had said to them." Remember, they threatened them. Don't do this anymore. "When they heard it," the crowd, the Church, the people that they came to report this to, translated in verse 23, "their friends," "they lifted their voices together to God and said," now they're going to start praying. Someone's obviously mouthing this, I assume it's Peter and their minds are engaging in it, which is, by the way, what group praying is. It's not just hearing someone praying. It's not a spectator sport. It's engaging my mind in those words.

So someone stands up, we assume it's Peter, to pray and everyone's thinking these thoughts. "Sovereign Lord," middle of verse 24, "who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father, David," King David of the Old Testament, "your servant, said by the Holy Spirit," now he's going to quote an Old Testament passage, here's David writing this Psalm 2, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were together gathered, against the Lord and against his Anointed," the Christ. "For truly in this city..." Now he's going to interpret this in his prayer. He's going to say, yeah, that passage that David wrote a thousand years before Christ, certainly it applies right now in this city in Jerusalem, "they were gathered together against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed," there is the word again, the Christ, "both Herod, you want to talk about kings and rulers, "Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and all the peoples of Israel," including the Sanhedrin, that they just walked out of, the elders of Israel, he said they were opposing him, they were doing all those things that it says there in Psalm 2, and it says "to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."

What is that? See him crucified? They opposed them. They hated him. They beat him. They stripped him. They hung them on the cross and they killed him. And he says all that was in the plan. The plan was, as we already saw in Chapter 2, here it is again in Chapter 4, "to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. Now, Lord," and the prayer continues, verse 29, "Look upon their threats," they're threatening us, "and grant to your servants..." that we can be more careful and more diplomatic and not get in trouble. Or maybe just share, you know, in less offensive ways. Highlight all that in verse 29. "And now Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants," which, by the way, what our intellectual elite is saying right now, and keep our Christianity in our pews, to use their words from that op-ed, that famous op-ed now, that really distills the thinking of our culture, keep their faith in their pews and in their homes.



Just leave it there. We don't want it in the marketplace. We don't want you talking about it at work. We don't want you sharing it at the Spectrum mall, we don't want you dealing with it with co-workers. Just keep it there. And so, Lord, grant us to keep quiet, grant us to be more shrewd, grant us to not have any more problems by opening of our big mouth. Keep us from jamming our Christianity down anybody's throat.

No, that's not their prayer, "Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness while you stretch out your hand to heal." Remember, that's how this all started. The apostles healed that paraplegic, "and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus," the authority of Christ. End of prayer. Verse 31, "And when they prayed, the place which they were gathered together in was shaken, and they were filled with Holy Spirit." I thought they already had the Holy Spirit. Well, they do. But every time we've seen in Chapters 1 through 4, the Spirit, the point of the Spirit's connection in their lives, not only the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the New Covenant promises of Jeremiah 31, was the fact that the Spirit was going to embolden them to speak, the Spirit of God's going to come upon you, and you're to be my witnesses. And so it is here. It says "they're filled with Holy Spirit and they continued to speak the word of God..." timidly. No, "with boldness."

This is a passage about praying for boldness. And again, you can see, maybe, if I'm sitting here saying, "Well, I got a feeling on the pulse of the church enough that I'm pastoring to know that I don't know, I don't even want to throw out a number, but this percentage of people might be actually sharing their faith every week. None of this makes sense unless we're doing it. But if you're doing it or you're repentant and ready to do it, then I'm going to take three simple observations from this passage and say this is the pattern. Here's how you ought to go about being emboldened to speak up on a Tuesday afternoon when you're afraid.

Obviously, it's all about prayer. But look at how it starts, verse 23, "They were released and they went to their friends." Now there is a Greek word for "friends." It's not here. Matter of fact, it's an interesting wording, and it's interesting that so many English translators translate this "friends" or "companions," but it's really the word "they went to their own." There's no clarification. Their own what? Their own people, their own group. Well, who are their own people and their own group? Well, it's the people who trust in Christ, it's the people who care about the gospel, the people who are submitted to the Lordship of Christ. They came to their people, their own, their friends, "and they reported what the chief priest and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted up their voices together to God and said..."

Now, I'm going to split verse 24 in half and just make an observation from 23 and 24a and I'm going to say here they found the people that had the same commitment to Christ that they had. They said, guys, let's get together and let's pray. Now we know the prayer is all about boldness. I'm saying this: there are so many advantages, if you are going to be bold enough to share your faith this week, which I think there's no excuse not to, then I'm going to say here's the pattern to follow. You need to, number one on your outline if you're taking notes, you need to "Pray With Others for Boldness." You need to pray with others. Is it good to pray by yourself? Sure it is. But you should be praying with others. They came unto their own, to their friends. They said, "Wow, there's a lot of pressure against us in sharing the gospel, but we're going to pray." And what are



they praying for? Boldness. You need to pray for boldness with other people. That's really what matters. That's the thing that really matters. If you are having people in the synergy of your circle of friends who have the same commitment to share the gospel. It doesn't mean you don't have people in your friends circle that don't. But there have to be people in your friends circle who do this and you say, "Hey, pray for me, I'll pray for you." We need to pray. Let's pray together. Let's pray for this task of evangelism. I want to pray that I'll do it, and I want to pray that you'll do it, and I want to pray that we'll have the guts to do it and I want to pray that we'll do it this week.

One of the great advantages of praying with other people, Christians, who are in their hearts wanting to be evangelistic and I'm wanting to be evangelistic, the thing that that's going to do, one of the best things to do is going to give us a sense of team. I talk about putting pads on you, putting a helmet on you, putting knee pads on you and sending you onto the gridiron. The great thing about playing football, the way it's designed to be played, is that you don't do it alone. It's not like I'm handing you a football, I'm saying I'll just go and run it into the end zone. I'm saying you've got a team. You've got a team that's going to help block for you, you got a team that's going to run with you, you've got a team that's going to work the ball down the field. So, I want you to know you're on a team, that you've got other people around you.

I hope it wasn't Mother's Day on the day that Jesus had his mom outside saying, "I want to talk to Jesus. Can you have him come out and talk to me?" His brothers were there. It said earlier in the passage they thought he was crazy, he had lost his mind. Jesus says, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" Think about that. What a slam. He said, "Is it not those who hear the word of God and do it?" You can tell my mom to wait. I mean, think of the gall, the audacity of that. The fact that he says, I know I got people that I might think, you know, are in my inner circle. Here's my familial genetic group. But you know what? Here are the people I'm tightest with. Here are the people that I really am willing to prioritize my time with. Right now, it's the people who hear the word of God and do it. I'm just telling you this without being a spiritual snob. Can you make sure that the people in your life that you pull the closest when it comes to this one aspect of your Christian life, which is a huge aspect of your Christian life, that you say, I want people who are evangelistic, I want them to be praying for me and with me, they're going to be the people who hear the word of God, "Come follow me. I'll make you fishers of men." And they do it. They're fishing for souls. They care about the gospel. They're ambassadors who actually represent Christ. It's time for you to get those people in your life.

Turn to Philippians Chapter 1 with me. Here's the first advantage of you praying with people about your evangelism that also want to do evangelism. Here's the first thing. That team aspect. It's found here in a great passage in Philippians Chapter 1. It starts with a phrase that probably makes you think about your integrity or your honesty or your morality. But you'll see, it's really not about that. It's about something much more than that. Philippians Chapter 1, dropped down to verse 27. Call this passage up and look at it, please. Philippians 1:27. "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." You're thinking, OK, I don't want to cheat, steal, don't do anything bad, immoral. I don't want people at work thinking I'm a bad guy, OK.

That is part of it, of course. You want to obey the Lord. But that's not what's in view here. "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel, so that whether I come and see you or am absent,



I may hear that you are," here's what he has in view, "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind," oh, here's a great word, "striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, not frightened in anything by your opponents."

Here's the thing about Christians in a culture that does not like Christianity. As long as you keep your faith in the pew and in your home, they're fine with that. It's when you try to do what Christ told us to do, and that is to be fishers of men, take the gospel into our communities and the gates of hell start now to rattle because you're trying to push those gates back. Jesus said the gates aren't going to prevail against you, but you got to push against those things. You got to get out. We are an evangelistic group. We are called evangelical Christians. That means that we are taking the message beyond the borders of our church. We're taking our message beyond the borders of our walls in our home. We're moving the gospel out there. He says, "I need to be striving," I love this, "side by side." You're fighting with your church, your people, your team "for the faith of the gospel." And you know what? The opponents, we're not afraid.

By the way, when you have opponents, just like Peter, we're assuming is leading the prayer there in Acts 4, and he says, you know, the nations are raging against Christ and certainly they just raged against us. But he says this. He says this is a clear sign to them of their destruction. Now, they don't see it that way, but they certainly are trying to rage against God. They're trying to plot in vain against God and the advancement of the gospel. They don't like what we're saying, but that is a sign that they are going to be destroyed, whether they realize it or not. But it's also a clear sign of your salvation and that from God. You know, that when you're getting knocked on the gridiron, that that team that's opposing you, it reminds you as you're getting knocked down, moving toward the end zone that you are on the team, advancing the ball. I love the way it says it's a clear sign of that.

Some of you are the analytical types among us and you come to me, I heard it as late as, I don't know, Thursday or Friday maybe, I don't know, someone saying this person struggling with their salvation. Are they saved? Listen, if you're that kind of analytical person, I've got a solution for you. Here's my prescription. Dr. Fabarez says this. You want clarity about whether or not you're saved? Go share the gospel this week. Matter of fact, share the gospel every day. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, six times this week, you get out there and talk to people about sin, salvation and submission to Christ. You go do that. And it will be a clear sign when you get knocked around that you are actually on Christ's team. It'll be a clear sign. You may not be able to draw the line clearly. How is that going to prove this? It will, it will. It will test your faith. It will show that your faith is real. It will give you clarity that you are saved and that those people are opposing the truth, and that you are of the truth and that you're moving the ball down the field. All that's from God.

Because "it's been granted to you," verse 29, if you still got that open, "it is granted to you that for the sake of Christ that you should not only believe in him," of course that's the case, and we could sit in our pews and in our home singing our worship songs and praying, "but also to suffer for his sake." "Engaged," why would I suffer? Because I'm "engaged in the same conflict that you saw I," Paul, "had and now here that I still have." He's writing, and he already told us this in Chapter 1, in prison. Why he's in prison? Because he didn't pay his taxes? No. Why? Because he's sharing the



gospel, and even in prison, he continues to share the gospel. The whole Praetorian Guard, the Imperial Guard, the jailers are getting the gospel, because he can't stop sharing the gospel. He must advance the ball down the field. He says you suffer because you're doing the same thing. You see the same conflict, the same opponents that I see. There's something comforting in that, there's something strengthening in that. Pray with others for boldness. It reminds us that we're on a team. You need to find some people in your life who are also purposing to be evangelistic and you need to be praying for each other.

Which, by the way, is a great godly example. Do you want another reason why we should be praying with others for boldness? Because every time I open the Bible, godly people who I think are way stronger than me are doing the same exact thing. The Apostle Paul, Ephesians 6:18, he says you ought to "make supplications for all the saints." Then he says in verse 19, "And pray for me that words might be given to me in the opening of my mouth to boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel." Paul says, would you pray for me that I could be bold in sharing the gospel? You wouldn't think Paul would ask for that kind of prayer. He's asking for that kind of prayer. It's hard. That's why many of us don't share the gospel is because it's hard. And all I'm saying is, if it's hard, here's what you need. You need a team of people around you to pray. Even Jesus, as the perfect person, the God-man. When he had something hard to do in the Garden, what did he do? "Peter, James, John, come with me. We're going to pray. Watch and pray with me for an hour." If Jesus is going to call people around him to pray when he's facing a hard thing and our hard thing on the table this week is sharing the gospel, I'm saying this. You need a team of people praying with you. Hey, American individual, rugged individual, stop leaving the auditorium thinking that all you need is yourself, the Bible and a sermon and you are just going out and do it. You need to gather a team around you and you need to pray with them. Get your donut, get your coffee, get in a circle. Pray for five minutes. Pray for a minute. Pray for 30 seconds together. Exchange phone numbers, get on the text and do things like this.

Here's one, Colossians Chapter 4 verses 3 and 4. Paul says this, "Pray for us, that God may open a door for the word, that we can declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I'm in prison, that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak." If I share that prayer request with you, and I say, "Hey, buddy, help me, pray for me. Pray that I can have an opportunity to share the gospel and pray that in that opportunity, I would make it clear. Next time you see me guess what's going to happen. I hope you're going to ask me about it. If you tell me to pray for, you know, Aunt Ethel, who's going in for surgery, and you text me, say, "Hey, friend, would you pray for my Aunt Ethel? She's got, you know, big toe surgery on Thursday." OK? Guess what I'm going to say on Friday? "How did it go?"

You want another reason? It's not just that we feel that sense of team camaraderie and the strengthening power in that. It's not just that it's the godly example that I'm following. Here's a third thing. Right? There's built-in accountability. If I start saying, would you pray for me that I can have a chance to share the gospel this week and that I can make it clear, when you see me there on Friday or you text me on a Friday you're going to say, "How's your week going? Oh, and by the way, how did it go sharing the gospel?" We need this. We need to pray together because there's built-in accountability.



Let me say this. All those things may seem, you know, psycho, sociological, it's great when I have a team praying together, got the same goals, verbalizing them in prayer. We're not talking to the sky. Do you understand? Let me make this the fourth reason when it comes to boldly praying with other Christians about boldness. Here's the thing, you need to know prayer works. Prayer helps. Let me quote a passage for you when it says in James Chapter 5 that you should be praying for one another. Verse 16 says, "Because the prayer of a righteous man has great power as it is working." Now, do you believe that there's anything to prayer? Do you believe that God powerfully responds to it? Well, then you should pray, because as it says in Second Corinthians Chapter 1, you can help people with that. And people can help you with that. Paul says, you have helped me by your prayers. And that's not just some sociological psychosomatic, you know, I just think it's great that you're thinking of me. It's not like the world when they say, "My thoughts are with you." Well, OK, that's nice, but I need some outside involvement from a power on high if I'm going to man-up and be bold and speak the gospel and make it clear and be bold enough to see someone come to faith in Christ. I know that's a God thing. Prayer actually works. You should be asking people to pray because God responds to prayer. The prayer of a righteous man has great power and it's working.

You ought to pray for boldness. They came to their friends, they came to their own and they lifted their voices together. I just want to make the statement, you got to have some people in your life. And again, here's another thing I'm preaching and I'm thinking I don't know how many people are going to do it? I mean, the pattern is praying in groups. Jesus did it. Paul did it. They did it here. Peter and the team did it. They were committed to it. They devoted themselves to prayer. We've seen that throughout the book of Acts, even in the short time we've had. Chapter 1 verse 14. We'll see in Chapter 12 verse 12. Chapter 16 verse 13. They came together often to pray. You need to get with other Christians and pray, in this case for boldness.

That's what they pray, middle verse 24. They start with an interesting word in their prayer, "Sovereign Lord," sovereign Lord. Nothing out of whack here, nothing random, nothing chaotic. "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit," a thousand years before Christ, we have a passage of Scripture, we know it is Psalm 2, and it says, "Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and," against his Christ, "against his Anointed."

Now that passage gives them some kind of assurance that everything that's happening with the Sanhedrin and all them telling them to be quiet and don't preach this anymore, is everything that is exactly what's supposed to happen. That it's all under the sovereign hand of God. That God, actually even in the opposition that took place in verses 27 and 28, he recalls the time when they opposed Christ himself, "For surely and truly in this city," in Jerusalem, "there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed," the Christ, "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." Just like they opposed Christ, just like they killed Christ, they are now opposing us, and everything is right on schedule. There is some weird kind of comfort in that. There's a weird sense of empowerment in that.



If I say to you, here's the thing, God has decreed that when you open your mouth and share the gospel this week, there's going to be some, as a matter of fact, the Bible would lead us to believe most people will respond negatively to that. Don't revel in that. Don't shoot for that. Don't want that. Don't even enjoy it. I'm just telling you to know it's going to happen. And know it's going to happen because the sovereignty of God has decreed it to happen. It is what God has decided should happen when the truth goes into darkness, the darkness is not going to like it. The Bible says you need to know that's happening because we have a sovereign God who's on the throne.

And speaking of light and darkness, let me quote some Bible verses for you that should help us to remember that nothing's going wrong when your non-Christian friends reject the gospel. It's not that there's some weird thing happening that I must be sharing the gospel wrong and I don't have the right apologetics, or maybe my tone was wrong. Isaiah 45:7, "I form light and I create darkness, I make well-being and I create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things." I know most of our really tepid elementary theology says the good things are from God and the bad things, well they're from somewhere else. "Well, they're from Satan. Isn't that what the Bible says?" Yeah, but it's God's Satan, you understand. The adversary is God's adversary, and the adversary has been appointed to oppose us. There should be some strange emboldeningness, some strength in that. Just like we're strengthened by other Christians coming together and praying for my boldness, I know this, something that strengthens me is the fact that the opposition against the gospel and against the church, whether it's in China now, whether it's in Rome in the first-century, or whether it's here in America as it's ramping up and heating up, it's all predestined under the hand and the watchful eye of God. It's all exactly what God predestined to take place.

That's hard for us to understand, but we need to accept it, that God is asking you to do something this week that is going to be hard and difficult and it will be opposed. If you somehow write that off, then you should remember the words of Job, who looked at his wife and said, "You speak as one of the foolish women. Why should we accept good from God's hand and not evil?" What God is going to dish into your life is not just peace, joy, peace, patience, kindness, all of that. He's going to say, oh, and by the way, you're going to have a conflict that you saw Paul had. You're going to have hard times and opposition and push back because you're sitting on the bleachers with those other parents and you're going to bring up Christianity and you're going to bring up Christ, you're going to bring up the problem of sin, you're going to bring up salvation and they aren't going to like that. When that happens, you lean back and say, "Oh, I didn't like that experience, but I know that unlikable, distasteful experience is exactly what God decreed to take place." The Bible said it's going to happen and the Bible itself tells us it's going to happen. As Jesus was opposed, we will be opposed. If that sounds familiar, we quote it probably more than we need to. John Chapter 15, "If they hated me, they're going to hate you. No servant is above his master."

"Yeah, but you said last week if they accepted his word, they'll accept my word." Well, of course. Of course. The focus I want occasionally for us to focus on the fact that someone is going to respond rightly to Christ. That's why we keep at it. But the people who respond wrongly to Christ, respond wrongly to Christ, those are people that God we understand in the struggle we have to present Christ, it's all right on schedule. The bumpy road and evangelism mean that we're on the right road. Some of you think if I'm going to do the Christian life right, it means that it's going to be smooth sailing. It's not going to be smooth sailing in your health, it's not going to be



smooth sailing in your relationships, it's not going to be smooth sailing in your finances, and it's not going to be smooth sailing in your evangelism, particularly in your evangelism.

One passage. Can I turn you to one passage? I'm going to take you to Acts 14. There are two great words in this passage, and I quote often verse 22, but I want to start in verse 21, and remember what Paul and Barnabas are doing here. The two strong words in verse 22 should help us remember that there's something encouraging about recognizing God's sovereignty and the difficulty we're having in evangelism. That's exactly what God predestined to happen. Matter of fact, before we even go any further and read this, jot it down on your outline. We need to "Find Strength in God's Sovereignty." The sovereignty I am thinking of in this regard is the fact that he said it's going to be a battle. There's going to be a defense. There's going to be demons. There's going to be Satan, there's going to be opposition. You want to run the ball into the endzone, there's going to be people knocking you down. "What God has made crooked, no one can make straight," to quote Ecclesiastes. Right? You're going to be knocked back and forth and you can't straighten it out because God said it's going to be. You're going to get knocked from one linebacker to the next. That's just how it's going to work.

Matter of fact, the next... I can't help it but quote these passages on God's sovereignty. Ecclesiastes 7:14, it says, "So when you have prosperity, it says rejoice. But when you have adversity, consider this: that God made both the one and the other." And the point is this. There are a lot of things that'll be smooth sailing in the Christian life and certainly in eternity. But right now, getting knocked about and knocked down on our butt when we try to share the gospel, that's something God made crooked that you cannot straighten out. It's just for you to run the pattern. It's for you to go after it. It's for you, and that's why we're preaching this sermon, to pad you up and get you equipped to do this work.

Acts 14 verse 21. "When they," that's Paul and Barnabas, "had preached the gospel in that city," you can glance back up, that's Derbe, that's in Galatia, that's the ancient Roman province, it now is called Turkey, southeast Turkey, "they had made many disciples," and how joyful would that be? That's the joy I talked about, I hope that you have soon in your Christian life. Converts, disciples, followers of Christ. "They returned to Lystra and Iconium." Now we read phrases like that and think, well, OK. That's 100 miles away from Derbe. Do you understand to travel in the ancient world, that is a huge sacrifice? Then it says he went on to Antioch, which is 50 more miles west. I mean, this is a long way from where they're at. They're going to go 100 miles and then 150 miles doing what?

Well, we have a goal. Isn't it great that there are disciples in those cities that you made? Yeah, but we want to strengthen those disciples, "strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them." Here's the word, by the way, "Parakaleo." Parakaleo. We've talked about this word so many times, "para" compound word, para means "next to," "alongside of." Kaleo "to call in." I talk about it like a knee brace. It comes in alongside it. People, by the way, are called perakaleos. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate parakletos, he comes in alongside of. But in Second Corinthians, Paul said, "God, who comforts the downcast." Do you know this verse? The verse in front of it you may even know. He says, "When we came into Macedonia," we had all these conflicts on the outside. Why? Because they're sharing the gospel and "all these fears within. But



God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us." Both words "comfort" there, parakaleo. God who brings things alongside of us to strengthen us like two poles on a sapling tree. The things that hold us up. God who comforts the downcast, God who parakaleo's the downcast parakaleo'd us with the coming of Titus. People help us. Your prayer group is going to help you stand strong. And you know what else is? A forecast? Same word. Translated here not comfort, but encouraging, parakaleo. "Encouraging them to continue in the faith." How did he encourage them? "Saying through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

"The forecast is somehow bringing me strength and comfort?" That's exactly right. For me to tell you right now "go share the gospel" and most of those experiences are going to be bad experiences. That's why you're saying, "Well, that's why I want that number zero over my head next Sunday, because I don't want to do it." Well, yeah, you know, but that's the point. You have to do it. You're supposed to. You must do it. If you love God, you're going to do. If you obey God, you're going to do it. This is your task. By the way, when someone responds rightly, it's the greatest joy in the world.

But I'm telling you this, when you think about this, you need to know it's that negative forecast that should bring you comfort. And comfort is the word "strength." It's the word parakaleo. It brings you that kind of strong support. Does that sound like Jesus when he said this? You remember that phrase we quote it a lot. John 16:33. "In this world you'll have tribulation." Do you know that verse? On both sides of it are two very strange juxtaposed words. One of them is "peace." "I've said these things to you so you can have peace." Then he says, "In this world you will have tribulation." Do you know the next words in English, "take heart?" Right? Take heart. So I got peace and taking heart because it's not going to always be that way. I've overcome the world, but between all that is a bad forecast, "In the world you're going to have tribulation," but hey, "have peace" and "take heart."

Which, by the way, is a Greek word for heart "Kardia." That's not the word there. Guess what the word is? This Greek word is the word that is generally translated in the New Testament, "courage." Have courage. Have courage. Have courage! You going to have tribulation, but have courage. That's what we need because we're going to engage in a conflict this week if you dare to confess and repent and resolve to do it, you will have conflict in your conversations. Do you back off? Sure you do. Right? You can be like the Apostle Paul. "Hey, if you don't count yourself worthy of eternal life, I'll move on to someone else." Is it going to damage your relationship? It might. Actually, it probably will. At some level it'll hurt. But you got to do it. And when you have that negative response, everything's right on schedule. Sovereign Lord. Right? Everything's going to happen according to the plan you've pre-destined take place. You told us Christ will be opposed. You told us the disciples would be opposed. Encouraging them to continue in the faith. Keep going, stay at it, saying through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.

How bad it would be for me to hand you a football and say, go run to the end zone and it'll be fine. Just get there. That's all you need to worry about. No. Worry about the linebackers who want to tackle you. Worry about the linemen who want to knock you down. You have to know there's going to be opposition. But we're going to get back up, we're going to reset and we're going to call another play, we're going to move forward. We got to move the ball down the field. The gates of



hell will not prevail. We're going to win. "Take heart. I've overcome the world." Find strength in God's sovereignty.

Verse 29. Back to our passage. It's printed on your worksheet, Acts 4:29. "And now, Lord, look upon their threats." Do you think God knew their threats? Of course. What does that do for the prayer? God, it's like, do you hear what they're saying? Do you hear what they're saying? Listen to what they're saying, "and grant that your servants will continue to speak your word with all boldness." Of course he knows what they're saying. He knows what our culture is saying against it. He knows what your co-workers are saying behind your back. All the things that make you not want to share the gospel, he knows all of that. But you should be praying that God would give you the wherewithal to continue to speak the word of God with all boldness.

"While you," in this first century context here, "you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." I know a lot of people get to this passage and say, "I don't know what to do. I guess we pray for more miracles here to happen." Listen, you can go in the Old Testament and look 1445 B.C. God brings Israel out of Egypt. Moses leads them. 100 years later, 200 years later, 400 years later, 700 years later, 1,000 years later, guess what they're still talking about? You know, we're following the right thing because when God gave us the law through Moses, it came surrounded by signs and wonders. We know that the truth that we proclaim, we could be standing before Shalmaneser IV or Nebuchadnezzar or whoever we're up against. We can say we know we have the God of Israel on our side. Why? Because look back at what happened. The establishment of this revelatory truth took place in the setting, it was confirmed by these signs and wonders.

Now we look back here and we see this in the first century where God was, through the apostles, that's why it's called the acts of the apostles, doing these amazing, miraculous things. That's why I can go and continue to preach boldly the message saying, you know what? I know that what I'm saying is true. I know that Jesus is risen from the dead and his apostles codified it in writing, were able with signs and wonders through the power of Christ to do miraculous signs, and now I preach that to you. If you don't get your healing and things don't change or you don't get a Beamer in your garage or whatever miracle you might want. That has nothing to do with what we're talking about. What we're talking about is the message of sin and salvation and submission to Christ has all the authority of heaven because it came with signs and wonders and they were performed and recorded, they're undeniable, including, most importantly, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Therefore we preach a message that we know is going to get opposition. But we can be confident that the God who does those powerful things has all power and he's told us to share this message.

So "when they prayed," the prayer was over in verse 31, "the place in which they gathered was shaken." If you said go shake the chairs. I could maybe move a couple of chairs at one time. If you said go shake the pole. Well, I probably can't do that. I could knock against it real hard. I couldn't shake it. I don't have any power to shake the room. Maybe in that room they could, you know, Peter could've tipped over some tables. Who can shake the room? Well, God has power to shake anything he wants. He shakes the room. This is a demonstration of his power, his omnipotence. "They were filled with the Spirit and they continued to speak the word of God in boldness." They



remembered the omnipotence of God and that emboldened them. You got to keep the omnipotence of God if you're ever going to endure in this.

Is it going to be more than a one-week event for you? You have to, number three, "Keep God's Omnipotence in View." You can't forget this. This is the message of the all-powerful God. This all-powerful God has told you to share a message that he confirmed with signs and wonders. Most importantly, the cornerstone miracle of the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Now, I can take that message and I can share it with my co-worker. It's not about him asking for a magic trick and me saying, "OK, let me do one for you." It's about me saying this message is once for all delivered to the saints. It is true. It is verified. It is codified. I'm asking you to respond to it because you have a sin problem, Christ is the savior, submit to the Lord and trust him. I can say all those things with full authority. It can empower me to keep boldly speaking that message. I'm telling you to keep his omnipotence in view. He has all power. Heaven is his throne. The earth is his footstool. There is not a book by Dawkins that, you know, God is somehow trembling over.

Matter of fact, let's turn to Psalm 2 real quick. We got the first two verses that are already quoted in this prayer. They said, "Why are the nations raging?" This is crazy, but I want you to read the rest of the psalm and what happens. They want to get out from any of the authority of this God of the Bible. Let us... well, let's read it all. First one, "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh," against the Lord, that's God, "and against his Anointed," the Christ, "saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast their cords from us.'" We don't want him in Matthew 14 defining gender for us or marriage. We certainly don't want to call sin sin. If he calls sin, I want to decide what sin is for me. I want to think that Hinduism and Buddhism and Islam are just as good as Christianity. I don't want his rules. No. You can't burst those bonds away because he's the all-powerful God. He gets to make the rules. He sits in heaven. The earth is his footstool.

And he sits in heaven," doing what, verse 4, "laughing." Like you might if some little toddler toddles into the hallway and picks a fight with you after the service. You think, "Oh, that's cute." I mean, what's he going to do? Right? Punch your chin. He's not even up to your knee. What is this? There's nothing here, it's a joke. And here is God in heaven saying you guys are against me? That's interesting. Right? Christ, who holds all things together. The synapse in the brain of every person. Hitchens, Dawkins. You name a militant person against Christ. The dictators of the world trying to stamp out Christianity. The most liberal lawmakers in our country that do not like biblical Christianity, the synapses in their brain are firing because Christ keeps it moving. The heart is beating in their chest because God sustains them. The oxygen is filling their lungs and oxygenating their blood because God has decreed it so. And the minute God were to turn his back and Christ were to remove his grace from those people, they would implode.

God has all power. When the breath that he gives to those people start mocking him or his children, he laughs. It's a joke. Matter of fact, an even stronger word coming up next. "The Lord holds them in derision." Do you know what that means? It's like he's just saying you're a joke. He mocks them. It's like this is ridiculous. But you know what? After the laughing and the derision, here's what's coming and here's why we're telling people to repent, because we don't want this



to happen to them. "Then he will speak to them in his wrath, he will terrify them in his fury, saying," here's what the Father says, "As for me, I've sent my king on Zion, my holy hill." So I have a king, and I've set him up in the holy place. Zion is often used not just for the earthly Jerusalem, but the heavenly Jerusalem. God has sent his king. He came into the temple courts, but now he's ascended on high, and he sits in the majesty of heaven. He is the king. "I've set my king on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decreed: The Lord said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you.'" This is not about creation. This is not about him starting to be when before he did not exist. This is about him being the inheritor of all things. In the ancient near east, all about the father decreeing all of his property to his son. Begotten. You are now the legal heir of all my stuff, which he goes on to say. "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage," you'll inherit it, "and the ends of the earth your possession."

We quoted Isaiah 9 at Christmas. Right? "The government shall rest on his shoulders." Right? The extent of his rule, it'll know no end." Daniel 7, the Son of Man, he comes. All dominion, all power, everyone will submit to him. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," his anointed one. "His heritage will be the world. His possession will be the earth." When you take that great power and begin to reign, you'll have the scepter in your hand, and you'll break these rebels that constantly spoke against you and did not repent, "You will break them with a rod," that's the word "shebet," the scepter "of iron and dash them to pieces." How hard will it be for God to put down the most vitriolic opponent of Christianity? It's like breaking a little fragile pot. No big deal.

Therefore, David's wise to tell them, "Therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth." You think you're kind of drunk on your own authority. You're nothing. You need to "serve the Lord with fear." You need to know, he's the ultimate authority. You ought to "rejoice" that he'll even take your service and you ought to do it "with trembling." You ought to "Kiss the Son." You ought to kiss his Christ. What is that? That's the picture in the ancient world of like showing your homage to them, even in the medieval days of kissing the ring of the monarch. You're bowing down and you're saying my submission is to you. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled." Have you read the book of Revelation? "Out of his mouth. Sharp sword destroys his enemy." That's the Christ that you worship this morning. "Well, that sounds scary. That sounds all stick. No, no, no carrot." Well, here's the carrot. "Blessed are all who take refuge in him." That's a great Hebrew word, "Esher." Happy, joyful, rejoicing. How good it is when you willfully submit under the Lordship of Christ.

Will all the rebels one day submit? "Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ," is king, "is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." But we do it now. And your job is to get as many of your co-workers, your neighbors, your friends to submit to him now, because those are the people who find the blessedness of forgiveness and redemption. That's our job. And one day we'll be vindicated.

I've got no time for this. Let me end with this. Go to Isaiah 54, Isaiah Chapter 54. Y'all know Isaiah 53. Do you not? We quote it all the time. This is a great picture of the coming suffering servant of Christ. He has given his life as a sacrifice. Well, after that great dramatic scene of the Christ dying as our substitute and then being the intercessor for transgressors, that's how this chapter ends,



Chapter 54 now looks ahead. One day he'll establish his kingdom. Drop down to verse 11. He speaks to those of us who have now willfully submitted to the king who take refuge in him. He says this, Isaiah 54:11, "O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted." Well, I know days like that. Matter of fact, I'm setting you up perhaps for a week like that.

"Behold, I will," this is coming, "set your stones and antimony." Probably not a word you used this week. Shiny, silvery rocks. So the stones of your city, they're going to be shiny. And I'll "lay your foundations with sapphires." That's not a credit card. That's like a blue jewel. Right? It'll be beautiful. The foundation, the big foundation stones of your city. "I will make your pinnacles," all the towers, "of agate." Look that one up on Google images. It's this multi-color ornament. You know, it just an amazing like stone. It has like rainbow colors in it. I'm going to make your towers like that. I mean, now you go there to Jerusalem, you see those old Turkish walls. It's sandstone. And that's going to be an amazing thing to walk up on that. "And your gates," the things you walk through, "of carbuncle," which that one you didn't use this week either. These red precious gemstones of the ancient world and today, obviously, they're still around. "And all your walls will be of precious stones."

Can you imagine coming up to Jerusalem, if you go to Jerusalem with us next year, we're going to go, I'm going to lead the tour. I haven't gone for a while. Pete's been leading it, but I'll be back, Lord willing, next year, leading that tour. When you come into Jerusalem, we ride in on the bus and you'll see the old city. Right? It's all that gray, beige sandstone. Can you imagine pulling into a city where it's just glistening of shiny like silver and blue and red and sapphire colors? That's an amazing thing. Well one day that's what it's going to be. You will not be a people that "are afflicted and storm-tossed." "Your children shall be taught by the Lord," verse 13, "and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness you shall be established; and you shall be far from oppression, you shall not fear; and from terror." It's not going to happen. Why? "It shall not come near you. If anyone stirs up strife," and they wouldn't dare, "it is not for me." Matter of fact, "Whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you." It's like they touched the apple of my eye.

We have an over-realized eschatology and always trying to apply these things now. No. Right now we live in verse 11, "afflicted, storm-tossed ones," and in the externals of our life we are "not comforted." We're only comforted by the fact that one day he's going to establish his people. He's going to establish those who stood under his lordship and willfully did what he asked us to do, which is taking his message to our generation. Does anyone wants to give us problems then? They're not going to be able to do it. There'll be no books written against Christianity in those days.

Verse 16, "I've created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy." There's going to be all kinds of things that are going to keep the peace in this millennial kingdom that's spoken of. Now verse 17. You've seen this probably, I'm sure. Right? "No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed." Again, over-realized eschatology means that you're looking at things that are promised for the future and trying to apply them now. This is not for now. Guess what? Paul had his head cut off with a sword. Guess what? It worked. It succeeded. It ended his life. It cut his vocal cords. He no



longer spoke of the gospel. But then no one's going to rise up against Paul then. No one's going to rise up against you then. "No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment." You will sit in judgment over those who are in judgment over you. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord."

Not only is the Lord the possessor of the earth, he gives the earth to his servants. We now have that heritage of complete protection. One of my favorite words in the English language, here it comes, "and their vindication from me." Do you know what my heritage is? Vindication. Shared the gospel this week with a few people talking about Christianity. Not all of them took it well. One day there'll be vindication. When I've had a particularly hostile response to the gospel, I often say, maybe it's too snarky, I'm sorry, but I say, "One day you'll remember this conversation and you won't appreciate the memory unless between now and then you repent." There will be a complete 100% vindication from God, "from me, declares the Lord."

It's an omnipotent God that we represent in our world. It was years ago that I read *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, C.S. Lewis' third book in his kids fantasy series of books. Maybe some of you've read it or seen the movie. But Lucy, the character we get introduced to in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, she is on this boat. The Dawn Treader is a big ship, if you don't know, and she's on the ship. I think that really dark clouds storm, they start hearing all these scary sounds and she cries out to Aslan, the Christ figure. And here's what it says in the book. "Aslan, Aslan, if you ever loved us, send us help now." What's interesting in the story, and Lewis masterfully says, "the darkness did not grow any less." And yet she began to feel a little, a very little better. Then she ends up saying, "After all, nothing has really happened to us yet. I mean, we're still here. Oh, it's tumultuous. It's afflicted. I'm not comforted right now. But, you know what, I'm comforted in the fact that we're still here. We're still going." And then the bird comes, if you know the story, a little bit of light starts to peek through. Because of the mast of the ship, a cross shadow falls on the ship. There's this Christ, sense of Christ's presence and this bird flies up and whispers to Lucy and says, "Courage, dear heart, courage." And she says, it was the voice of Aslan. Take courage.

Now it's not getting any lighter, at least not at first. It's dark, it's stormy. But she finds comfort in the fact that Jesus says, "take heart. I've overcome the world. There will be a complete vindication." Well, later on the voyage, the darkness turns into grayness and the grayness into sunlight and the sunlight soaks their skin and it becomes warm again and calm. And I love this line, it says, "And everybody realized that there was nothing to be afraid of and there never had been."

I know you're afraid to share the gospel just like I am. I know there's nervousness and sweaty palms. We're afraid sometimes. But even if they take our life, there is nothing to be afraid of. There never had been. And when we step into the light of the kingdom, you're going to look back at the darkness of this time, as it says in Isaiah 54 "afflicted and storm-tossed." And you're going to say, you know what? The storm raged 40, 50, 60, 70 years of our lives, but we had nothing to be afraid of. We never really had anything to be afraid of. I want you to boldly speak up for Christ this week. This message is only really any good if we do. So, I commission you to that basic fundamental Christian evangelical task. Share the gospel with someone this week.



Let's pray. God, help us in a day when we can be scared because the rhetoric is ramping up. People seem to express their vitriol in such hostile ways today. They're going to say things to our face, behind our back, drop anonymous notes, whatever it might be. It's scary, but as the Scripture says, "if they insult us for the sake of Christ, we are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon us." Let us feel that glory in a new, fresh way this week. The you, the omnipotent, sovereign God, as we pray for one another, we know that your good hand lies upon us to represent you in this world, even if what's decreed for us is a rocky road in sharing the message. God what we pray for, and I just pray selfishly as a pastor, wanting to see more of our people this week be able to experience the joy of making a disciple. So God, let us make some gains. Let us get a first down. Let us move the ball down the field a little bit further this week. God, I know that isn't going to happen unless we speak up. So go before us as Moses said of Joshua, the Lord's going to go before you and he'll be with you. Do not be afraid. Do not be dismayed. Do not be terrified. God give us great success this week in representing you, I pray.

In Jesus name. Amen.