



Christ's Kingdom Forecast-Part 2

The Turbulent Intermission

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Well Friday night the pastors and I sat in a plane on the tarmac in Houston grounded for an hour and a half because of a forecast of some impending big storm apparently beyond the horizon of the runway. We realized pretty soon into this sitting around and not going anywhere on the tarmac that it was very warm and getting warmer in our airplane. We were starting to bake and sweat and the pilot in this \$65M Boeing jet got on the intercom and said, "Well I know it's warm back there. Sorry about that. We can't run the AC. It doesn't work as we're idling here on the runway."

By the way, my wife and I had, early in our marriage, a 1975 Datsun B210. It cost all of \$900 probably to us. The AC worked perfectly when we were idling the car. Anyway... The point is it got really hot, people started to complain. It went through the flight attendants, got to the pilot, who got on the intercom again about 30 minutes later, as we were waiting so long to take off, and he said, "Listen, I know it's hot back there. You know, I'm sorry about that but, you know, if we turn this air conditioning on it is going to take our gas, and then the gas, we're going to have to go back and refuel, and lose our place in line." We felt like we're in the back of a minivan and dad was saying, "I'm going to turn this jet around, you know, if you don't stop complaining." So we all sat there, dutifully, baking and sweating in the plane. And, thankfully, we finally took off.

But I'm grateful. I complain about the pilot and I know there are many pilots here. I know you had to do that and I recognize that and I want him to be deferential to the forecast, particularly if it's stormy beyond the runway, because I don't want to crash. And the whole point of your pilot when he has those bad forecasts is to make sure we try to avoid those storms. Even after we got off the ground, we had to fly around this big storm through Texas and I got that, I understand that, and I'm grateful for that. That, perhaps, saved our lives and I'm glad that we give heed to the stormy forecast.

Well, in this passage that we've reached in our study of Luke, Luke Chapter 21, we get a forecast from Christ and, unfortunately, this is one you cannot fly around. There's no way around it, you can't run from it. The pilot may want us to avoid the bad weather, but Jesus is going to say, here is a forecast you cannot avoid. It's not like some kind of storm that you can go into a storm cellar and ride it out. It's not like a regional flood where you can get to higher ground and you'll be alright. This is more like, I suppose for us Southern Californians, where we are in the midst of an earthquake. It doesn't matter what room you're in, it doesn't matter where you go, there's going to be shaking everywhere. And that's kind of the systemic sense of this forecast that Christ gives us that is going to affect not only our culture, it's going to affect all of our connections and our relationships and also, frankly and interestingly enough, even the climate itself, literally, is going to be involved here and contained in this forecast.

I'd like you to take a look at it with me in Luke Chapter 21. We're going to take these 10 verses, versus 10 through 19, and think through what Jesus has to say, that has pertinence and relevance to where we live, even right here in the 21st century. Luke Chapter 21. This forecast is given to us, if you glance up at verse 9, as we started to set this up last week, not to make us afraid. The forecast is not to scare us, it's meant to prepare us. That's the point of it. And he says that in verse 9 when he says, "You're going to hear of wars and tumults, don't be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once." Don't be afraid. The forecast is not here to scare you. And



he's about to tell us, we're not going to be able to escape it. But, it's coming and I just want you to know, it's not going to be over anytime soon.

Now, he wants us to live with this imminent return of Christ in our minds, that at any moment he could return, so we need to be ready, but he gives us enough hints, particularly in the Gospel of Luke, it's not going to happen at once, it's not going to happen at the beginning. Now we learn that the immediate context of this is Christ responding after the Triumphal Entry, after the teaching on the Temple Mount. A couple of days later, a few days before his crucifixion, he's gone out of the Temple Mount now, the disciples have called his attention to the beautiful, newly remodeled and still in the midst of being remodeled, the Herod's Temple. They're gone across the Kidron Valley, they're sitting on the Mount of Olives, they're looking at it and Jesus says, "that temple that you're so impressed with is going to be completely destroyed."

Now he says this in 33 A.D. it's going to be destroyed in 70 A.D., so 37 years later everything Jesus just said is going to be fulfilled. And that fulfillment is one where people often try to read this passage and say, everything in this passage is about what happens in 70 A.D. Well, that's certainly not the case. As a matter of fact, that phrase in verse 9, before we get to the details of the forecast, is all about the end, and the end is not just the end of the temple. As we know in verse 27, this all culminates in the glorious, spectacular return of Jesus Christ, where everyone's going to see him. All the promises of the Old Testament when God appears for this second time, not as the Lamb of God, but as the Lion of God, as he comes back to establish his kingdom. All of that is going to be preceded, the last thing we see, in verse 25, is all these cosmic signs up in the sky.

Now he's going to refer to that in verse 11. He's going to say that, but before that we're going to see all these other things that are going to characterize this intermission, what I call a turbulent intermission between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. We called last week's message, The Postponement of the Kingdom. This kingdom, very specifically, the first phase of the kingdom, which is the millennial kingdom of Christ, where for a thousand years in Revelation 20, Jesus fulfills all of those promises to national, ethnic Israel. All of that that's going to take place at the Second Coming, and on the eternal state after that, is all going to be between two comings, where we're going to have all these turbulent times in between. He's given this statement in verse 9 about wars and rumors of wars and tumults, these crazy, chaotic things that happened, and now he's going to expand on this in verses 10 through 19.

So let's look at this bleak forecast. Your phone is gonna say "stormy." That's what we're going to have between the advents, the coming of Christ, and here's what we have beginning in verse number 10. "Then he," Christ, "said to them," his disciples, "Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there will be great earthquakes, in various places famines and pestilence. And there will be terrors." Now here's the thing, as we'll see in verse 25, things that are going to happen in the heavens. "Great signs in the heavens." Now again, if you're a Jewish first century person who spent any time in the Old Testament, you know that that Day of the Lord, this great coming of God's establishment of the kingdom where everything is made right, crooked ways made straight, rough places plain, is going to be associated with all these cosmic signs up in the sky.

Now heaven, by the way, that word is used in three different ways, both in the Old Testament Hebrew "Shamayim" and in the New Testament Greek "Ouranos" that word, both those words are used in three different ways. I wish they had three different words for them like we do, but they only have one word for all three. The first one is the sphere in which the birds fly. That's up in the heavens, the birds fly up in the heavens. And then there's where the planets and stars hang out, we

call that space, but they call that the heavens, the stars and the heavens. And then, of course, there was that place where God in some dimension, some domain out there, where God dwells in unapproachable light, that's God's heaven, where he lives. Now, I know you're saying, what's wrong with those guys, they don't have different words. Well, you don't have different words for a lot of things. You use the same word "love." "I love my cheez-its." "I love my dog." "I love my wife." It would be great, you know, if the Greeks were looking at us, "Why don't you have different words for that?" They did. But we don't.

Nevertheless, the point is you have to look at the context to know what we're talking about in terms of signs in the heavens. Well, verse 25, which we'll deal with next time, is going to show us that these signs are about the sun and the moon, things up there. Now if you read the Book of Revelation in conjunction with the Old Testament prophets, the great coming of the Lord is going to be characterized by those cosmic signs in the heavens, in space, up in the sky, things, weird things are going to happen. Before that cataclysmic event, it says, in verse 12, "Before all of this..." Now, you can debate me on this because you could say, "All of this must go back to the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., before that. So we're only talking about a prophecy of 37 years." That's not my take on this passage. And even, by the way, if that's your take, Bible study guy, and you may be right, let's just say you're right. I don't think you are, but let's just say you are. OK? I'm going to say this. That paradigm, if you're going to try to squeeze all these events in the Olivet Discourse into those 37 years, I'm going to say is the same exact description that we have outside of the Olivet Discourse as he sits on the Mount of Olives talking about these things, that we see throughout the New Testament. Are you following me on this? In other words, if this is just about wars, rumors of wars, all these things, persecution, all of that is going to happen in these 37 years, I'm going to say, well, he says elsewhere, it's going to characterize the entire Church Age until Jesus comes back. I think that's what this is about.

The end is when Christ appears, verse 27, in a glorious appearance in great glory in the clouds, preceded by the last thing, cosmic signs in the heavens the Book of Revelation talks about, that the Old Testament prophets talk about. So, before that final sign of those cosmic things that usher in the coming of Christ, frankly, at the end of the Tribulation, if you want to get real specific about my eschatology. Right? What you're going to have between the coming of Christ number one and the coming of Christ number two are things like this. People laying hands on you, which obviously they're not going to live 2,000 years. That means the Apostles and all the people after them, like us who sit here 2,000 years later, who are with the band of followers. We call ourselves the disciples as well. They going to lay their "hands on you disciples and persecute you disciples, delivering you", specifically, because most of them were delivered, "up to the synagogues and prisons, and you'll be brought before kings and governors for my name sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness."

Smile at me if you know the word "martyr," if you know the word martyr. Martyr means in the original language, "witness." We get that concept right here spelled out for us. In other words, you think of a martyr as someone who's been forced to deny Christ, renounce Christianity, but they don't, they stand firm. That act of standing firm when you're asked to back down, when someone hates you because of your Christianity, they call that a martyr. Now we know that's used in popular language about other things, but the word comes from Christian martyrs. What does that mean? A witness, a testimony. So, that when you stand firm, when you've got pressure to fold, that's when you're standing for Christ, you're making it clear I'm doing this for Christ. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

"Settle it therefore," verse 14, "in your minds not to meditate," or to ponder, "beforehand how to answer." You don't have to bring your crib sheet about your apologetics, handy book reference and try to figure out what's my speech going to be. Don't sit there and try and stress about what exactly you're going to say. No, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom." Now, I've already got a mouth. Right? So, this is an idiom of what? I'm going to give you the right words to say. I'm going to get your brain filled with the kinds of wisdom that you should bring in those situations when you're pressured to renounce, when you're pressured to back down. Which, by the way, when it's my wisdom working through your mouth, "none of your adversaries will be able to withstand it or contradict."

Back to the theme of verse 12. "You will be delivered up," not just by your enemies, "even by your parents and your brothers and your relatives and your friends, and some of you they will put to death." This is a happy text you've come to church to study today. I'm sorry, "You will be hated by all for my name sake. But not a hair of your head will perish." No, well, wait, you just said, verse 16, some of us are going to die. Yeah, I understand that. "Not a hair of your head will perish." What kind of contradiction is that? Well, we're clearly not talking about the hairs on your head that they actually kill. Right? Clearly, they have been martyrs tied to a stake and burned to death. Every one of those follicles died. Every hair burned up. When Paul got his head chopped off by the Neronian government, his head flopped into a bucket or on the ground and his blood spilled out and every follicle then died.

We're not talking about this life, this world, we're talking about the fact that he's going to get a resurrected and glorious body, where every follicle on the top of his head, to which some of us should look forward to greatly, is going to be working just exactly as it should, properly. Not a hair of your head will perish. "By your endurance, you will gain your lives." Be faithful, because really what's going to happen is "those who are saved who are Christians who stand with me and I will provide you all that you need, your mouth and your wisdom, I'll give you words, I'll give you intelligence and insight. All of that comes from me, your relationship with me and, you know what, that proves you are one of mine. Those who are mine gain their lives."

"What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Well, there are a lot of people who will fold, as it says in the parable of the four soils, when the pressure is applied to some who've grasped on to Christianity and the truth of God's word, as soon as persecution arises because of that word they fall away. When pressure is applied to real Christians they stand firm. And when they stand firm, he says, that is a characteristic evidence of you being one of mine. Those are the people who are going to walk through the gates of the kingdom with resurrected, glorified bodies, who are gonna be his saints, ruling with him in the kingdom of God. "By your endurance you will gain your lives."

It's going to be hard. Some of you going are going to be killed, certainly going to be hated. They're going to put you before people, you're going to get in trouble with the authorities. Not to mention, let's get started with where it started, you're going to have "Nation against nation," verse 10, "you're going to have great earthquakes, in various places famines, pestilence, there will be terrors and great signs in heaven."

Now the "terrors and great signs in heaven," as I said in verse 25, these are the last cataclysmic events that are reserved for the end. It did not happen in 70 A.D. I mean you might poetically try and stretch this into, well, maybe it was the smoke from the fire of the temple being burned by Titus and his army. There are no great signs in that. The great signs in heaven have yet to happen. The



book of Revelation, I'm a futurist, I believe that's all future, is coming and it's coming and we're going to see it, but that's at the very end. Before all that, we're going to have these wars, rumors of wars, we're going to have earthquakes, in various places famines and pestilences, pestilence is diseases and sicknesses.

So let's just try and summarize verses 10 and 11 on your worksheet, jot this down, if you will, number one, you ought to "Expect," here's the forecast, "a Chaotic World." That comes in two parts. A chaotic world. What's the chaotic world? Why is it so chaotic? Well, because, number one, you've got nations that don't get along with other nations. You got kingdoms that don't get along with other kingdoms. And guess what they do? They fight.

They do things that are causing wars and rumors of wars, as we saw in verse 9. This is a weekend, I suppose, I don't have to prove any of this to you because the headlines prove it for me. Right? We are still involved in all these kinds of clashes. Now, if you ask the question, why do people go to war? Or, let's just make it down to your personal workweek, why do individuals have conflict? The question is asked in the Bible, in James Chapter 4 verses 1 and 2. Why do we have fights and quarrels and conflict? Because of the desires that wage war in your own heart, the passions of your fleshly, fallen heart. The things that you want that transgress the rules of God. And when you want those things and you can't get those things and someone stands in the way as an obstacle of you getting what you want, you're going to quarrel and fight and, even as James says, you'll even murder someone. And in our day, I hope you're not here as a convicted murderer, but you've certainly murdered people's reputation and assassinated their character because you don't get what you want. Those people stand in the way. You have conflict with people, the Bible says, because of a sinful heart that says, "I want what I want." Now the rules of God are love your neighbors as yourself, give deference. Consider one another as more important than yourself. Put their interests above your own.

Well, we don't like to do that as individuals and we don't do that in families, we don't do that in clans, we don't do that in states, we don't do that in nations, we don't do that in kingdoms, and we don't do that in the battles that we see playing out all around the world in geopolitics. What's the point? Sin is the reason that we have these chaotic things happening in relationships and in conflicts between kingdoms and nations. If we didn't have a sinful heart, sinful hearts make up sinful cities, sinful clans, sinful states, sinful nations and kingdoms, we would not have this conflict. But we do have this conflict because men's hearts are fallen, we're sinful.

Now go back to the beginning. When we chose to disregard God's rules, which in that case, were very simple in Genesis Chapter 2, don't eat of the tree, Genesis Chapter 3. "Every tree you can eat of, don't eat of this tree." But when you wanted what you wanted and selfishly wanted to take it without any regard for what I said, you committed a moral sin an evil, a personal moral evil. Because of that, God steps on the scene and does something we have in our Bibles labeled the curse. He says this, "Cursed is the ground because of you." "It's going to bear thorns now and thistles. You're going to have to work with it, I'm not going completely destroy it, but I'm going to mess it up a little bit. I'm going to messed it up a little bit so that you are frustrated by it doing what it should do, and therefore the ground that should produce, with all the nutrients in it, a beautiful plant that provides you beautiful food and you eat nourishing food, it's now going to be messed up, you're going to have to be a farmer by the sweat of your brow, you're going to eat your bread, it's going to be hard for you.

Therefore, verse 11 falls right in line with that. Verse 10, moral chaos. Let's put it this way, conflict



and chaos among nations, and now verse 11, conflict and chaos in nature. Those are the two parts of this chaotic world we live in, and I can trace every problem you have, every issue of chaos in our culture and society gets back to these two things. It's either moral evil or it's natural evil. And we see natural evil in the Bible is described and explained because God said, "You want an evil heart and perform your life in an evil way, you're going to have to live now in an evil context.

Now you're going to have, it says in this case, earthquake, let's just think of that. God creates a world, it's ground is stable, you should be able to take a building, lay a foundation on it and build a building and it'll all be fine, it'll stand, because ground is supposed to stay there, stable foundation, not to move. What's the problem with earthquakes? Well, we know here in Southern California, they know in Japan, they know all around the Pacific Rim, they know in a lot of places, in South America. The problem with earthquakes is the ground that should be stable, at times is not stable because of plate tectonics and because of the fault lines and all the rest. Because of that we can't count on the ground to do what it's supposed to do, at least not all the time. Now, God is gracious, most of the time the ground does what it's supposed to do. Sometimes it doesn't.

The moral evil of our hearts has led to this sentence of natural evil and, therefore, we don't get the ground to do what it wants to. Not only that, it says you've got famines in various places. We should be able to plant the seed of a piece of fruit and it should do what it's designed to do, it's encoded to do, it ought to die in the ground and spring up and create a new tree. And now, suddenly, it doesn't always work that way. If I don't have, for instance, the weather patterns working in concert with that, I could have a drought and then I don't get it all to work. Or I could have some kind of disease in the trees or in the vineyards or I could have all kinds of things go wrong. Why? Because of natural evil. The point in these particular passages is, you see that causes all kinds of chaos in your life. Even, this is close to home, pestilences. In other words, you probably didn't use in your everyday discussions this week, like tumults from verse 9, but that word is what? It's basically things in your body, diseases. I've got cells in my body that are designed to do something. The problem is they don't always do what they're supposed to do. Matter of fact, the most vivid example of rebellious cells is this thing we call cancer, your oncologist will tell you all about it.

There are cells that really leave their proper domain to do things that they should not do. They transgress the boundaries of what is designed for them to do and they create this mess in your body and they kill us. Now think about that. We've transgressed the law of God, that's a moral evil. God says, if that's the way you're going to live, we're gonna have a real problem in our relationship, separated by death, relational death. Now, I'm going to conscript the world, I'm going to subject it to futility, to use Romans Chapter 8 language, verse 20, you're going to now have a world that should work one way but it's futile. In other words, it doesn't get to do what it's designed to do, not in every case, most cases, and you're going to have diseases, you're going to have earthquakes, you're going to have hurricanes, you're going to have typhoons and tornadoes.

You going to have all these things take place, deformity, genetic disorders, all of that's going to happen, brain chemistry is going to be messed up. These are the kinds of things you guys are going to have to live with, which, by the way, should all drive us to repentance, it should remind us. Natural evil is a reflection of our moral evil, it all started in Genesis 3, and we ought to be led to recognize, "Hey, that should lead me to Christ. Christ forgives us, reconciles my relationship with God, and then we wait in hope, to quote again Romans Chapter 8, that one day he's going to take that away. I don't have time for this but we got to look at this together, I suppose. Romans Chapter 8. I've been alluding to it, like three times right now.



Put your eyeballs back on this passage and see how clear this is in Scripture, that we are recognizing that, for now, we live in a world that is going to be chaotic and it's going to be all messed up. We're going to have all kinds of problems, conflict and chaos, and in this particular passage, beginning in verse 20, it's all about nature. "The creation was subjected to futility," Romans 8:20, "not willingly, but because of him who subjected it." Who subjected it? Genesis 3, God did. But he did it in hope. In hope "That the creation itself will," future tense, "one day be set free from its bondage to corruption and it will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

God has got people, he's redeeming their hearts. He's, one day, going to redeem the fabric of the universe and all that down to the molecular level of our universe, the fabric of our universe, the molecular level, it reflects the rebellion of the human heart. But one day, I'll be fixing all these hearts, I'm going to send my Son back to add that messianic feature to it at the Second Coming, and we're going to have this fantastic, brand-new thing.

"We know creation," verse 22, "it's been 'groaning' together in the pains of childbirth until now. Not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit." We know what it's like to be connected with God. "We groan inwardly." We know it's messed up, our lives are messed up, our bodies are messed up, creation is messed up. "We groan inside as we wait eagerly for the adoption as sons," the final step in our redemption, "the redemption of our bodies." God making everything new. "For in this hope we were saved."

Now, hope that is seen is not hope." What do we hope for? What we see. No, "hope for what we do not see." And because of that hope, and that means a promise, not a cross-your-fingers hope, but a promise of God's faithfulness to do what he says, "We're going to wait for it with patience."

Now all of that is a great statement about natural evil being reversed. But look up at that verse 18, Romans Chapter 8 verse 18. "For, I consider that all the turbulence of this present forecasts," that can get us so discouraged this morning, "it's not worth comparing with the glory that's to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, creation was subjective to futility." I want to be able to say, in a passage like this, when I look at my phone, so to speak, and it says "Stormy Stormy Stormy" until the coming of Christ, which, by the way, in Matthew 24 says will be increasingly like birth pangs, it'll get more frequent, with more intensity, until Christ comes back, I want you to look at that forecast and say, "You know what? It's bad. It's stormy. I went to church and found out life's going to be messed up, the world's going to be chaotic, I ought to expect that. But I'm not bummed out about that, ultimately, because the good of what's coming is way better than the bad that I'm experiencing here. And I look forward to that with hope."

Well let's just think this through. We don't have time to look at these either, but jot down Isaiah Chapter 2, just to give you an illustration of how often the messianic passages of Scripture refer to both of these. It says this, one day, when Christ comes back, speaking of the Messiah in that passage, Christ will judge between the nations. Just search through Isaiah 2, "He'll judge between the nations," and he will now sit himself up on this throne and no longer will the nations go to war with each other. Here's the promise, "They're going to take their swords," that they kill each other with and they're going to fashion them into what? Something to farm with, "their swords into plowshares," and they're going to take their spears, that they go out and kill each other with as they march into battle, and take those spears and they're going to fashion them or use them or utilize them as "pruning hooks" to go fishing.



That, God says, is what's coming. Nations will no longer go to war with each other, they "shall not lift up sword against nation, and neither shall they learn war." So here's the forecast. No war. When? When Christ returns after the glorious appearing of Christ. For now, lots of war, with increasing frequency. Rumors of wars, wars, kingdom against kingdom, nation against nation. You can go all the way down to a family member against family member, conflict in relationships. One day, none of that.

Fabric of the universe? Isaiah 11. Isaiah Chapter 11 speaks of the very fabric of the universe. Everything in it that's at odds with each other is now going to be fixed. And it speaks to things, not on the molecular level to these people, but thinking about the natural hostilities in nature. And it starts with just the animals that want to kill each other. Talks about the lion and the lamb, talks about leopards and the fattened calf. I mean, those animals are our prey, the fattened calf, particularly the fattened calf, that's a great dinner, great lunch. The Leopard is going to go kill that. No, now they're going to hang out together.

And it talks about the bear that's going to hang out with the grazing animals. And it talks about the lion eating straw with the ox. They're going to be vegetarians, they're not going to eat each other. This is an interesting picture of the coming kingdom. And then it says, you people, all the things in nature that go after you... Now it's not going to talk about molecular levels or bacteria. This is before Louis Pasteur, obviously, and they say things like this: the cobra that wants to take its venom and bite your kid and kill your kid, you're going to have, "a little child who's going to play with the cobra." You're going to have "a weaned child stick his hand in the adder's den," the venomous snake. No problem. I'd venture to say if you're out here having a doughnut and coffee afterwards and your kid is in the bushes over there and you see a big snake coming up to him, I guarantee most moms aren't going to go, "Hey, have fun." Right? You'll say, "I got to get junior out of there." One day, nature itself will be completely at peace.

There will be everything the way it ought to be. This passage ends with this. "Neither shall there be any kind of hurt or destruction in my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse," it all comes back to the arrival of the Messiah, "He will stand as a signal for the peoples and of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be," here's our word, Old Testament version of this word, "glorious." The glorious, spectacular return of Christ is not the first coming, he comes as a Lamb of God. The next time he comes as the Lion of Judah, he comes back to set up his throne, and nations now all obey him.

Specifically, in my theology, because of Revelation Chapter 20, when Satan himself, for that first thousand years of this end time experience, is chained up so that he can no longer be released there to deceive the nations, our adversary. 54 times that word is used. Satan. It's just a transliteration "sa-tan" from Hebrew and Greek into English. That word, 54 times, Old and New Testament, means we've got an enemy. We know that. He's prowling around like a roaring lion, he wants to devour us. We read the book of Job. We open it up and he's out there trying to destroy this guy and destroy his economy and destroy his family and destroy his health. That kind of curtain that's pulled back and that supernatural war that goes on, that's what we're reminded of in the New Testament, we don't battle against flesh and blood, all of that, the Bible says, you're going to have that adversary, that opponent, taken out of the way. This time that's coming is one that is, after the storm, will come great tranquility and peace. But for now, again, I guess I'm here preaching in the middle of the storm, we're going to have wars and rumors of wars, as wars going on in Syria and we're watching



this on our TV screens, and earthquakes. Well, we haven't had one recently, but you're going to have one and it's going to happen, things are going to go wrong. You're going to have famines and pestilence, you're going to continue to visit people in the hospital who have cancer. You going to still have bad situations, you're going to have a long list of people to pray for on our prayer list who are going to be sick. All that's going to happen. And in the end, you going to see great terrors and great signs from heaven and that's still yet to come.

But before all this, in this happy sermon that we're preaching, verse 12 Luke Chapter 21, "They're going to lay hands on you and persecute you, deliver you up to the synagogues and prisons, you will be brought before kings and governors for my name sake." And not just by your enemies, dropped down to verse 16, "You'll be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends." Some of the pain that Jesus experienced by being kissed, as they did in the ancient Near East, by Judas, who ends up betraying him, man, the pain of that, you're going to experience some of that, "Delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, some of you they will even put to death." You will be betrayed by those close to and you'll have to die. You'll be hated by all. Not all without exception, not every last person. When you come to church, I hope, we're not going to hate you. But when it comes to the culture, all without distinction, all kinds of people throughout our society are going to hate you "for my name sake."

Why are they going to hate me? I don't like the way I look. No. They don't like the way I dress. No. They're going to hate you because you ally with Christ, you ally yourself with Jesus Christ. And the Bible is very clear, he is one that the world, not the phony view of him, but the real biblical view, they don't like him. They don't like him. They don't like Jesus. In John 3, he explained why. "Because I'm exposing people's sins. I'm telling them they're sinners. That's why people don't like me." I mean, if you really looked at Jesus and the message of Jesus, it's not about harmony and love and Coke commercials and let's all get along and, you know, I understand preachers can stand before their congregations all across the country and they can forget any talk of heaven and hell and judgment and sin and conviction and repentance. They can talk about none of that, and everyone's going to go, and I mean everyone, late night talk shows, "Yay, I like that. You're for bunnies and kitty cats and saving animals." They're going to love that. And I could preach on that. You know God is against you torturing your animals. Did you know that? I could preach all kinds of sermons on that. And guess what, people would love me. And I mean people, the people who hate God, would love me.

I could pitch a version of Christ that everyone would like, but if I really stand with Christ and I cooperate with his Holy Spirit who is sent out into the world, it's promised, to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment. If that's my message and if that's your message in your office, your family and your community, here's the promise, they're not going to like it.

So, you can either choose to be liked and popular in our culture or you can choose to stand with Christ and be a faithful representative of Christ. And I hate to make it so either/or, so black and white, but that's what the Bible says. And when it comes down to it you not only need to expect a chaotic world, number two, you need to expect anti-Christian hostility and I don't mean Christian with, you know, quotes around it. I mean real Biblical Christianity. I know there are a million churches you can go to that have "Christian" somewhere in their title. They're going to tell you this: whatever you want to do with your sexual life, it's OK, God understands.

It started with divorce. Right? "Oh, let's not make a big deal out of that." Fornication? "Well, we understand teenagers, you know, they can't they have the backseat of cars." And now, we've gotten



to a place now... I mean, all the biblical rules, what Jesus said about how he's created male and female, "what God has joined together let no one separate."

We can go to just this one passage about Jesus talking about how things ought to be in our sexual ethics, and today, of course, you can find many churches that say, "Well... it doesn't matter anymore. It doesn't matter." But if you stand with Christ and you say, "here's what the Bible says, here's the truth, here's what Jesus taught. I'm not going to back down, I'm not going to be ashamed of it, this is what I'm going to say is the truth. Gentleness and respect, but that's the truth. I can't get around it." See, you're going to be hated by our culture. Don't be deceived by what we've had in the past in America that's kind of been relatively calm when it relates to Christianity and now it's heating up and being hostile. The exception is not the hostility, the exception is the calmness that we've experienced, the tranquility that we've had in our culture, which is relative, I understand, because people were still hated in the 1950s because of things they quoted from the Bible. But today, I'm just telling you, it's over.

I mean jot this one down. Assembly Bill 2943. Are you're familiar with that one? Just look that one up, we got free Wi-Fi, check it out. AB, Assembly Bill, this is in California 2943. That's one example of a bill and everyone that knows anything about what's going on in our state, they're uptight about this and they should be. Here's what it's labeled, this is the bill before our Assembly and they voted on April 3rd. "Unlawful Business Practices." And here's the subtitle of this. It's about me, or you, or anyone else, trying to tell someone, "Hey, if there's anything we can do to help you with these desires or this "lifestyle" that you want to get out of, let me help you get out of it." Right?

This is all about LGBT stuff, so-called. You know, if I want to write a book, pamphlet, have counseling, do something, if I want to help you take those desires and say, "Let's try and rectify this biblically, according to the Bible, I'm now engaged in an unlawful business practice. This is where we're at. And I know people say, "Well, we've got to stop this. We got to stop this." We had a guy at the door in the last service, "We've got to stop this." You're right, we got to stop this. Do you know there's almost 180 of the same kinds of bills in legislatures all over our country right now? Go look up the pro-LGBT web sites that say, "Hey, listen we still got a few bigots out there like Mike Fabarez and the others that don't like what we're all about. But we've moved from saying, 'Would you just let us be?' To now, 'You'd better agree with us or we're going to prosecute you.'" This is where we're at. Almost 180 bills right now going all around the country. I'm just telling you, the precipice of whatever you thought was a Christian culture, BYE, it's gone. Right? It's gone. "Well, we can save it." Great. Let's save it, let's do whatever you have to do.

I'm just telling you, we are in a position of recognizing the fulfillment of this kind of passage, where they're going to say, you want to stand on any part of the biblical message, including sexual ethics and what sin is and what needs to be repented of, I'm just telling you, they're going to hate us. And at some point, they're going to do what they did in the first century in saying, if you do not comply there will be a price to pay. That's what these bills are all about. Certainly what AB 2943 is all about.

It's about prosecuting people, it's about penalizing people for what they call, "contemporary science has confirmed that anything related to LGBT is natural and normal, and no one should try to convince them otherwise." That's where we're at in our culture. That's just one aspect. I know that's an easy whipping boy to look at as an example. But wait, whenever we get to a place in our country, which we're fast approaching, that says this is what we believe as Christians, you're going to have



an equal, vocal, vitriol kind of pushback from our society.

And all I'm asking you to do is to realize that you've got a choice to make as it relates to your Christianity. You either say, I'm going to be unfaithful to Christ or I'm going to recognize there's going to be some anti-Christian hostility that is not just about the church at large, it will be about you. Somebody is going to put a finger in your chest and say, "What do you say about this?" Starting with the exclusivity of the Gospel, how you get saved, what sin is, what we're supposed to repent of, all of that is going to be something you're going to have to make a decision when you stand before those people in that crowd and that office, that family member and say either this is right or this is wrong. There's no way around this.

John 15 made it very clear as Jesus said, "You ought to recognize who I am and what's happening to me." This is right before Jesus gets crucified, The Upper Room Discourse, which we've yet to get to in the Gospel of Luke. He says, "A servant is not greater than his master." Here's the little syllogism of Christ: "the servant is not greater than his master." "If they hated me, they certainly are going to hate you. If they persecuted me, they're certainly going to persecute you." How many Christians do you know who say, "I want Christ but I don't want the persecution." Well, I'm going to say the same thing. I want Christ but I don't want the persecution. I don't WANT it. But they say, "I want Christ but I want to AVOID the persecution." Second Timothy makes it very clear. A great passage, you ought to know this by heart. Second Timothy 3:12. "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be...", you know the verse, "persecuted," every last one of us. At some point, as Jesus already said earlier in the Gospel of Luke, "They're going to exclude you. They're going to revile you. They're going to say all kinds of evil against you because of me."

Now I know we've had a Christianity where your parents and grandparents and great grandparents really didn't seem to have quite as much of this as we're going to have, and your kids and your grandkids are going to have. But you can either throw out the message of Christ, you can worship a Christ of your own imagination, or you can say, "forecast: stormy," not just in culture and in the world. Forecast for my life: "Stormy." If I'm gonna be faithful to Christ, there's going to be some bumps on this road and I've got to be ready. It's coming.

The Apostle Paul was traveling with Barnabas in Acts 14. They'd won a lot of people to Christ. Christianity 101 was what? Repent of your sins, put your trust in Christ, you can get your sins forgiven. Everyone cheered, they got baptized, they were excited. Yeah, it's great. Welcome to the family of God. It says then he went back to Lystra and Iconium, he was in Derbe. Derbe is part of southeastern modern Turkey, I guess to you, it's over here, Malatya. The book of Galatians was written in the region and Derbe was a key city in Galatia. He travels then West, which is this direction for you, 100 miles to Lystra and Derbe and he says, We got to go back now to the places where we've already given them the message of repentance and faith, they've all gotten saved, and now we got Christianity 201, and Christianity 201 is you knowing this, it says, here's the quote from verse 22, we need to go back and "Strengthen the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue, persevere in the faith, saying through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

There is a day when there's not going to be war, there's a day when there is not going to be conflict, there is a day when there's not going to be disease, there's going to be a day when everything in the fabric of the universe is exactly as God designed it. That's the hope of the Christian life. Hope, not like this (with our fingers crossed), but the confident hope of a God who always keeps his promises. In the meantime though, we've got a bumpy road between here and there. And it's going to come,

not just from the outside, but even close to home. I know modern Christianity has no use for verses like Micah Chapter 7 verse 5. Listen to this: "Put no trust in your neighbor; have no confidence in your friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms; for the son treats his father with contempt, the daughter rises against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the members of his own house. But as for me," here's the result, "I'll look to the Lord; I'll wait for the Lord, the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." I know modern Christianity has no place for that kind of defensive posture, even in my own life, thinking that there may be a Judas lying in a bed next to me. But Jesus was faithful to quote that passage. And he said, when it comes to Christianity, "Don't think I came to bring peace to your life. I came to bring a sword."

He said, "I came to bring the separation and distinction where people who are loyal to me in a world that's not. I come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A person's enemies will be the members of his own household," quoting Micah Chapter 7. The challenge for us is to not love our father or mother more than Christ. "Whoever loves father, mother more than me, is not worthy of me. Whoever loves a son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. Whoever doesn't take up his own cross and follow me is not worthy of me." That's not real Christianity.

Whoever finds his life, if that's what it's about, you being popular, accepted, at peace with your culture, you want late night talk shows, to what they joke about, not be what you believe, then he says, "You're going to lose your life." "Whoever loses his life for my sake, he finds it." Real Christianity is going to cost and, in our day, and I guess I'm a preacher, not in the 1950s, but in the 21st century, I've got to remind you the forecast is stormy. Are you ready to stand with Christ through the turbulence of the Christian life? I'm glad it's not, as this passage says, that I'm being put to death. I suppose you're right, I'm not being put to death, but you understand people are who believe the exact same things you do in a culture that's more hostile against their Christianity than we are. I mean this is not fakenews.org. Are you ready? Jot this down. Persecution.com. Persecution.com. That's "The Voice of the Martyrs" website.

Just read through the stories of what's going on around our world right now, against people just like you, reading the same Bible you're reading, praying to the same Christ you're reading about, singing the same worship songs that you sing, at least in content, and they're being killed for their faith right now all around the world. And I'm telling you, I'm not giving you sensational websites. How about this one MorningStarNews.org. MorningStarNews.org. No spaces. OK? This is a very conservative, they vet their stories here. It's all about persecution in our world right now all around the world. The fastest growing religion is not real keen toward Christianity. Have you noticed that? Cultures and countries that are dominated by the growing militant brand of Islam we see all over and it's spreading in all kinds of places. I mean most of the stories in here that you'll find and I'm telling you, these are not embellished stories, these are news stories with reliable reporters involved in them. These are the kinds of stories that we see all over the place, particularly, and it's not just Islam. I mean, there's even stories I read this week about Hindu zealots killing Christian pastors. I mean this is going on in many places. They'll do it for lots of reasons.

But it's no different than the first century, I hope you understand. In the first century, it was a kind of religion that was tied up in the state. Rome was killing Christians. And I know you think, it was so dramatic, this is..., if you really study what was going on in the first Roman persecutions, particularly the vitriol ones under Nero, in the 60s of the first century, I love the way one historian put it. He said it wasn't like you imagine, like they were going to feed the Christians to the lions,



and it's like the main show. I love the way he put it. He said, it's like the little exhibition they do between periods in a hockey game. You know, everyone's going to the latrine, as he put it, in the Roman theaters, or going to get a sandwich, if you will. And they were killing a few Christians between the real main event. They so hated the Christians, it wasn't like "Yeah, kill them." It was like, "Ah, kill them, I'm going to go to the bathroom, I'll be back Carlynn." I mean that's what was going on in the first century. They were killing Christian.

Nero, of course, you know was famous after the fire in Rome, he would put Christians on sticks, dipped them in tar, and burn them in his garden. Look this one up: Pliny the Younger writes letters to Trajan, the Roman emperor. This is late first century, early second. It's the really first extensive discussion about how to solve the problem in the Roman Empire of the growing Christians. They were trying to... "what do we do with these?" And Pliny the Younger writes to Trajan and he says, "Well here's the protocol of what I've been doing." And he speaks about bringing these Christians, which he's baffled by... I mean, Pliny says, "I bring them into court." He says, "I've set up a statue of you, Trajan, of course..." because you had to give deference not only to the gods, but you had to give deference to the Emperor who was a god in his own right. He had Trajan now before the Bema Seat, he would bring Christians in, from the slave girls all the way up to the upper echelon that claim Christ, and he said, "I would tell them, 'renounce Christ, burn incense and frankincense to Trajan, bow down to Trajan, and to the Roman gods,'" which he said that, "I also set up statues of, and we'd bring them and just say, 'Now's your chance.'" He said, "I give them one chance to recant, I'd say, 'Are you a Christian?' And if they said, 'Yes,'" He'd say, "Tell me again. Are you sure you're Christian?" And he said, "After the third time we would execute them." The pressure was on.

Are you standing with Christ? This is nothing new. What's new is for you to be able to talk about Christ or to have your grandparents grow up in a school, your parents grew up in a school, where they actually prayed or read the Bible in school. That's the exception not the rule. Around the world today and certainly back through church history, the context in which biblical Christianity was presented to the world, it was in an environment that was hostile toward Christianity. So much material in the early church about what was happening for those who would say, "I am a Christian." The culture said, "Then we hate you." And just as this text says, "They will put some of you to death. You'll be hated by all for my name sake." I know you'd like to go to church and hear a sermon where you don't have that. Where you're going to say, "Hey, the whole world will like us."

And you know what? There are strategies that pastors, all over the country right now, giving sermons that all we have to do is focus on the fact that the kitties are fluffy and children are cute and we shouldn't torture our animals. I understand that. You can preach those sermons and everyone will applauded it. But when it comes to teaching the truth of the Gospel, there is a price to pay.

Now, the whole time, the Bible says, and even as Pliny says, I mean these Christians are not criminals. I mean, it's almost baffling to read the early extant writings of these Roman officials because it's like they're not doing anything wrong, they're not criminals. The best they could come up with, they had a threefold accusation, that we think that they must be incestuous because they call each other brother and sister. They have this weird meal that they talk about the death of Christ, they must be cannibals. I mean, they did have accusations, but none of them were true. No one had a higher sexual ethic in the first century than the Christians did. I mean the Romans were crazy when it came to their sexual practices.

But all I'm saying is, when it comes down to it, we've got to make the decision that we're going to stand in a culture that may be increasingly hostile. It may start with you having to pay the price in



terms of money, then it may be that you lose your job and, who knows, maybe, as it says in Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 3, that we'll have to remember those among us who are in prison. It may be that your pastor is in prison. Maybe we'll put a picture up during the service one day and say, "There's Pastor Mike in prison because he's preaching the Gospel."

I know you can say, "Ah, scare tactics, he's just a crazy man. I don't know. Let's just watch and see what happens." I mean, they're knocking down churches in China. Read a little bit about what's going on with our brothers around the world, which, by the way, is a biblical command, First Peter Chapter 5 verse 9. We ought to remember the sufferings "being experienced by our brotherhood around the world." So going to persecution.com and MorningStarNews.org, which are just two of many websites that I think do a reliable job getting this information, is probably the most convenient way a generation of Christians have ever obeyed First Peter Chapter 5 verse 9.

So what's the point? "Just here to encourage us this morning Pastor Mike?" Here's the point. Verse 13, "This will be your opportunity," Luke 21:13, "to bear witness," testifying that you stand with Jesus Christ who will one day, gloriously return, set up his kingdom and be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, "Settle it therefore in your minds." I mean you're standing with the King. But you're not going to meditate before him in how to answer, don't stress out, don't put the cheat sheet or carry around this pocket speech, you know, dictionaries, encyclopedias, so you can give an answer to your critics. No. "I'll give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand."

The truth is really hard to argue with as we said at Easter. Were you here at Easter? We put up stuff about what the world's getting to. You know, we got to look at Dawkins, the smartest guy in the world, apparently, talking about aliens spitting out the spaceship window to kind of seed life on the planet, or we're talking about the big bang, of course, which is the point of Singularity, is run by a whole set of physical principles that we don't really have today, and we kind of change the rules as we go along. I mean you've got to see when it comes to what God is calling us to do, we are standing firm on the truth, it makes sense, they can mock us, they can malign us, but God has said, listen, the truth, it's going to stand and one day we'll all be vindicated.

Actually verses 18 and 19, in the end you're going to be the winners, even if they chop your heads off, "The hair of your head will not perish. By your endurance, you're going to gain your lives." There's a good thing on the other side of this storm, but for right now, be witnesses.

I know this passage in verse 14, "Settle it in your minds not to prepare..." Please don't take this wrongly. If there was absolutely zero preparation that you're supposed to do, then this passage wouldn't be here. Why give us a forecast, if you don't need to know... If we were supposed to be blindsided by this, he would never give us the forecast. The forecast, as I said, it's not to scare us, it's to prepare us.

It's not about you, though, cramming with crib sheets to be able to come up with a perfect response when in the workroom and you're opposed because you're a Christian. I would just say this: you need to resolve, let's just put as broadly as we can, number three on your outline, just "Resolve to Stand Firm." You're going to stand firm. That's the resolve. It's not, "Say these 15 points when you're backed into a corner" or if ever you have to lose your job say this. It's about you just saying, I'm going to stand firm, be faithful to Christ. I'm going stand with Christ, I'm going to ally with Christ.



Your life, in terms of preparation, should be so rich simply because you read the Bible every day. You know it says in First Peter 3, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart. Be ready to make an answer, be prepared," even that word is used, "to give an answer to everyone who asks you." How in the world can I be prepared to give an answer? But this passage says, "Don't prepare your answer." Well, the point is it's not about you cramming and coming up with some kind of list. It's about you being prepared because Christ is your King, because you have a real relationship with God. It's about even, as it says to the pastor, young pastor Timothy in Second Timothy 2, it's about you studying to "show yourself approved unto God, a workman doesn't need to be ashamed..." Ashamed before who? Before God. "Who rightly handles the words of truth." When you get up in the morning and you study your Bible, are you studying it so you can have an apologetic defense to your Christianity at the office? I hope not. Don't do that.

Read your Bible to know the God of the Bible. Study the Bible, care about Christianity, care about loving God because you want to know God. Then I guarantee you, when you're pressed in a corner, you'll be ready to give a defense and it will be the truth. And though they may mock you, malign you, walk away, yell at you, at the end, the truth is going to stand. No will be able to withstand or contradict that. And in the end, you're the winner. "Not a hair on your head is going to perish." Even if they ask you to move aside, to pay a penalty or, who knows, maybe in our lifetime, maybe in the next generation or the generation after, they start killing us, even here in our own country for this. If you think that's outlandish and crazy, I guess you're not as informed as most of us are about the reality of what's going on, not only in our culture but around the world.

So let me ask you this, as uncomfortable as it is, as you sit in a comfortable place with a padded seat and air conditioner running. If this passage says some of you were going to be put to death, I hope that's not going to happen in our lifetime, in our country, in this place, but let me just ask you, are you ready to do that? Are you prepared in your mind, resolved to stand so firm with the Christ that you love that you say, "OK. If it costs me my life, fine."

Let's just ratchet it back. If at work on Monday you go to work and they say, "Listen, there have been some things passed in our country and if you hold to this version of Christianity, which really takes the words of Christ and the Bible seriously, so you can't work here anymore, are you ready to say, "I can't sign that. I guess you're going to have to fire me." Oh, say it with gentleness and respect, but are you ready to lose your job over this? Are you ready that, if they said, "Well, not only that, now we're at a place, run the clock forward, you're not only lose your job here, but we're going to incarcerate you if you have that view." You don't think that's happened? I'm just saying, are you ready? Would you be ready to put out your wrist and say, "OK, I guess I'm going to have to be arrested then." And if, as crazy as that might sound, as it's happening all over the world, if they said it is a capital offense for you not to deny Christ, and that you have to deny Christ, then that the whole point of your life is going to hang on whether or not you stand with Christ. Are you ready this morning to say, "I'm not only ready to go to prison but I'm ready to die for Christ."

If you say, "Pastor Mike, that's stupid and sinful and I'll tell you why, and I'll quote a passage, Luke 22. Peter said that and Jesus said, 'You're stupid, you're a fool.' Remember when Peter said that? 'I'm ready to not only be in prison for you, I'm ready to die for you.' And Jesus said... What did he say immediately after that? 'You're going to deny me three times before a rooster crows.' See, we shouldn't be doing that. See, you shouldn't think that way. It's not about us, not about resolve, it's not about manning up, it's not about any of that." Let me tell you this. That's not a sinful thing for you to say this morning. That's not a silly thing, it's not a foolish thing to say.



Let me give you another example. In Acts Chapter 21, the Apostle Paul said the same thing, the same thing. He said to the people after Agabus said, "You're going to go to Jerusalem and you're going to get arrested and you're going to die." Paul said, "I'm not only ready to go to prison for Christ, I'm ready to die there." Well, you do know the story of Paul, he ends up going to Jerusalem and he does get arrested and he gets shipped off to Rome and he gets released, but he comes back incarcerated a second time and he dies there. He gets his head cut off by the Neronian leadership of the Roman Empire.

What's the difference here? The difference is, apparently, that Peter, when he said I'm ready to die for you, clearly by the time the sun came up, he was denying Jesus in front of a teenage servant girl in Caiaphas' court. He clearly wasn't there. There was a problem. Apparently, this was another one of the things that we might read between the lines and see as Peter just trying to say, "Oh yeah, yeah, I'm with you. Hey guys, I'd die with him."

The Apostle Paul wasn't trying to inflate his chest and prove anything to anybody. He was stating a fact. He said to Agabus and the rest of the leaders at Ephesus, "I am ready to be imprisoned and die," and he proved it because, he did it. Peter, by the way, who denies Christ, felt awful about it. So awful, that the reverberation of his guilt led him, even after the resurrection of Christ, to, in John 21, go fishing when he should have been out preaching, you know the story. If you want the difference between the Apostle Paul and Peter it comes down to this. As a matter of fact, if I say to you, you ought to be resolved to stand with Christ, even if the pressure is you lose your job, you lose your money, you lose your freedom, you get your property confiscated, or you go and die like our brothers and sisters around the world are being threatened with their lives. I'm just saying this: if you say, well I need to do that, I guess I'll try. Here's the answer. Four letters, one word. It's the word "love." Do you love Christ?

Because isn't that what Jesus says to Peter after he fell on his face? "Peter, do you love me?" And if you do then get out there and testify. "Feed My Sheep." I want you to stand up as a preacher, not as a fisherman, I pulled you out of this life. "Go preach." "Well, you know, I'd like to..." "Go preach." "Peter, do you love me?"

Let me tell you this: the difference between you being willing and resolved to suffer with Christ comes down to whether you love him or not. I'll prove it to you. If your kid... You've got a kid? Do you love your kids? Pick the kid you love the most, envision him. Okay? That kid is out on the patio and you see someone falsely accusing your kid and mocking him and ridiculing him and browbeating him. I just wonder if you're going to go, "Well, you know, everyone's entitled to their opinion and I'm kind of a pluralists when it comes to reputations and character, you know. Are you done? When you're done, I'd like to talk to my son." No. I trust you're going to stand in and intervene.

What if there were three people doing it? What if 10 people on the patio when you're getting a doughnut hole, you see them surrounding your child and browbeating him, unjustly, because, you know, the people who hate Christ hate him unjustly. He gave his life to redeem people, you understand. Would you intervene? Let me ask you this. What if everyone on the patio, every last one of them, you didn't have one advocate, and they were attacking your child. Or how about your spouse? Would you say, "Well, you know, she is a little unreasonable. I mean, I understand why everyone doesn't like my wife." You'd be a lousy husband. You love your wife and she's being falsely accused and ridiculed and slandered, because you love her, I guess you're going to say, "Oh well, everyone can hate me, but I'm going to stand with my wife, turn my shoulders with my wife



against that crowd and go, 'Stop it everybody.'" See the difference between you saying, "I don't know if I could really have the courage to die for Christ," comes down to whether you love him or not. God has called you to love him, love him with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.

It's not about you trying to think through what would it be like if he's really at the end of a spear and had to die. Just think right now, just work on loving Christ. "We love him because he first loved us." That means you need to understand how much he loves you, and if he loves you that much, can you just start to work on saying, "I got to love him more."

July the 6th, 1380. That was a long time ago, 1380, July the 6th. There was a man, a resolute Christian led to his execution and his love for Christ was not hard to see in all the accounts of his death. His name was John Hus. Do you know that name? One of the early lights of the Reformation was willing to stand against whoever hated him because he was going to stand with the truth of the Gospel, the truth of Christ, the truth of the Bible. They brought him to his execution and it says that they brought chains and they put chains around him. As they secured those chains as they're going to tie him to a stake and burn him to death, the account reads that he said, "My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this for my sake, why then should I be ashamed of these rusty ones." He said, "You know, Christ went to a cross," as Second Corinthians 5 says, "who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him I might become the righteousness of Christ. Christ died on a cross so that I could be forgiven. He was bound by a chain of sin that I put on him, I can bear some chains for his sake."

As they piled wood at his feet and he was chained to this post, historians say that he said, "What I taught with my lips, I will now seal with my blood." Willingness. Sounds like Polycarp, by the way. Polycarp, the disciple of John at the end of first century, beginning of the second century, died in the second century as a martyr. And they were going to pin him and affix him to this stake and he said, "You don't need to affix me to the post." Right? I mean, my loyalty, my commitment, I mean as Mike Fabarez paraphrase, "My loyalty, commitment and resolve to love Christ, that's going to hold me here. I'll gladly die for him."

Even as he was chained and they were about ready to light the wood around his feet on fire, he humbly and with self-deprecation, used his name, his Bohemian name, to speak about the smallness of his life. His name, Hus, means "goose." And he said, "Today you're going to burn a goose." Read the account of Polycarp, by the way, when he died. It was so much earlier. I know in the histories is extant and small and scant in places, but he did the same thing and just kind of made light of this, like it's not a big deal.

Well, the flames were applied to the wood. John Hus was starting to burn. He began to sing a worship song. John Fox, as I often recommend his book along with a few others on the back of the work sheet, this particular one captures these words. It says, "Our martyr," speaking of John Hus, "sang a hymn with a loud and cheerful voice," He was set on fire at this point, "he was heard through the crackling of the combustibles," of the wood, "and the noise of the multitudes of the crowd. At length in time his voice was interrupted by the severity of the flames which soon extinguished his life."

I know we live in a day when we can watch some gross stuff online, but, actually, I think I'm kind of happy I've seen this one, but it was an awful burning of people alive that took place. You've seen this? As Muslims burn these guys, these pilots. As I watch those men being burned to death in a cage. Did some of you see that? They writhe in pain in the corner and they burned and I thought,



man, I mean, you can't help but think, what would that be like? I think I'd be doing the same thing just, get me out of here.

The distinction of guys like John Hus, who sing as they're burning to death, before they can't sing anymore, is incredible. Polycarp, "You don't have to put a cage around me. You want to kill me for my allegiance to Christ? Have at it." Paul, who as I said would be beheaded by Nero, wrote in the very last extant paragraph that we have from his writings in Second Timothy Chapter 4, he'd already talked about being poured out as a drink offering. He knew he was going to die under the persecution of the Romans. He said, "But the Lord," speaking of his past, he took heart by God's provision, says "God has strengthened me and stood by me, so that the message might be fully proclaimed." He said, "I want to testify to Christ, I'm not going to shut up." And in the past, he said, "I was rescued from the mouth of a lion." Apparently, some scene that we don't even know about. I mean, he's been rescued before and he says, I know this, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed." Listen to this paradox, "and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom." The Kingdom? I want to march through that with every follicle in place.

Wait a minute, you just told us, you know you're going to die. You're going to be poured out like a drink. Yeah. But I know the death in my life, the confiscation of property in this life, the inconvenience, the torture, the persecution, the exclusion, the hatred, it has zero impact on the glory that's going to be bestowed on me in the kingdom. Put it in the words of Romans 8:18, "I consider the present sufferings of this world are nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed to us." Sounds a lot like this apparent contradiction here. They're going to put some of you to death, but not a hair of your head will perish.

I know this has been a somber and very painful text of Scripture to read. Just like if we were reading of the worst storm ever is coming our way and it's only going to get worse. But this forecast is not meant to scare us, it's meant to prepare us. Not so we can get speeches together in our back pocket, but so we can be resolute in love with Jesus Christ, who died for us so that you might not be condemned. I hope you can stand proudly in a society where it's getting increasingly difficult to be a Christian without being mocked. And march out there as salt and light in this community this week.

Let's pray. God, help us in a day that is undoubtedly and arguably, at least in the recent past, one of the toughest to be an American Christian, to stand up for what's right, to say that, yes, the message is about sin that we need to repent of, lots of sins, a lot of different sins. But in a day that everyone's hailing sin as righteousness and as undeniably right, God, we recognize that we've got a hard road ahead of us. No harder than those who were the original recipients of the New Testament documents because we know they were being hauled off and tortured and crucified, some of them upside down, some of them burned at the stake. God, I just want to get into my world, my culture here and just say we're not going to back down. Sure we'll be respectful, we'll be gentle, we'll be kind, but our goal is to tell the truth about Christ. Give us courage, give us strength, let our hearts be filled with the reasons to love you this week, knowing that, really, that's the key. We love him, we'll go speak up, we'll do what he asked us to do. And I pray in our day, in this church, that might be one church that stands without compromise among many others, right here in our community even. God, strengthen the church everywhere, that we might be able to be the kinds of spokespersons, the kinds of ambassadors, you've called us to be. Thanks for this reminder from your Word of the forecast. Let us not be surprised, let us not be disheartened, let's not be freaked out, stressed, worried. Let's be resolute.



In Jesus name, Amen.